



# JOURNAL OF CHURCH<sup>AND</sup> STATE

VOLUME 36

SPRING 1994

NUMBER 2

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# The "Other" Civil Religion and the Tradition of Radical Quaker Politics

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In 1981, an Arizona Quaker named Jim Corbett established the Sanctuary Movement,<sup>1</sup> and used his church's involvement in the Underground Railroad as precedent. In defending his illegal aid to Central American refugees entering the United States, Corbett articulated a vision of American society that differed profoundly from the traditional civil religion identified by Robert Bellah two decades ago.<sup>2</sup> Rather than seeing the U.S. as a divinely destined nation whose institutions and leaders were acting out God's plan on earth, Corbett saw the American government as perpetrating evil. Its institutions and leaders, he argued, were acting against God's desire for peace. In Corbett's own words:

When the government itself sponsors the torture of entire peoples then makes it a felony to shelter those seeking refuge, law-abiding protest merely trains us to live with atrocity. . . . The presence of undocumented refugees here among us makes

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1. For an overview of the Sanctuary Movement, see Ann Crittenden, *Sanctuary: A Story of American Conscience and the Law in Collision* (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1988), 28-33; Miriam Davidson, *Convictions of the Heart: Jim Corbett and the Sanctuary Movement* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988); Renny Golden and Michael McConnell, *Sanctuary: The New Underground Railroad* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1986); Robert Tomsho, *The American Sanctuary Movement* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1987); and Linda Witt, "Lifeline," *People Magazine* (9 August 1982), 18-23.

2. Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96 (Winter 1967): 1-21.

the definitive nature of our choice particularly clear. Where oppression rules, the way to peace is necessarily insurgent.<sup>3</sup>

In this vision, government is immoral when it stifles freedom and justice anywhere in the world. If its laws contribute to oppression, then they are to be disobeyed. Under such circumstances righteousness lies in rebellion, not obedience.

Perhaps without meaning to do so, Corbett put forward a civil religion quite at odds with the one dominant in American life—and every bit as comprehensive. Both emphasize “a theme that lies very deep in the American tradition, namely the obligation, both collective and individual, to carry out God’s will on earth.”<sup>4</sup> Only the dominant view, however, sees American institutions as providentially guided. Only it sees the American experience as somehow paradigmatic for the rest of the world.<sup>5</sup> Corbett’s vision is more universal: all people are called to work for peace and justice. When political institutions do not further these ends, then those institutions must be opposed.

Recently several scholars have noted the existence of two American civil religions. Their ways, however, of distinguishing the two differ widely. Robert Wuthnow, for example, calls them “conservative” and “liberal,” noting that only the former sees American institutions as divinely inspired. The latter “challenges Americans to act on behalf of all humanity rather than their interests alone.”<sup>6</sup> Liberal civil religion:

focuses less on the nation as such, and more on humanity in general. According to this interpretation, America has a role to play in world affairs, not because it is a chosen people, but because it has vast resources at its disposal, because it has caused many of the problems currently facing the world, and because it is, simply, part of the community of nations and, therefore, has a responsibility to do what it can to alleviate the world’s problems.<sup>7</sup>

He calls the conservative version “priestly” and the liberal one “prophetic.”<sup>8</sup> This designation focuses on the styles of their respective leaders and the nature of their message.

Dividing things somewhat differently, Martin Marty distinguishes between a vision of “the nation ‘under God’” and a vision of “national self-transcendence.” The former sees “a transcendent deity as the pusher or puller of the social process;” the latter sees the nation itself

3. Quoted in Golden and McConnell, *Sanctuary*, 37.

4. Bellah, “Civil Religion,” 5.

5. *Ibid.*, 17-18.

6. Robert Wuthnow, “Divided We Fall: America’s Two Civil Religions,” *The Christian Century* 115 (1988): 398.

7. Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 250.

8. Wuthnow borrows these terms from Max Weber’s discussion of religious leadership types. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 4th rev. ed., ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978): 439-51.

as transcendent, with a vital role to play in the world.<sup>9</sup> Each of these “religions” can assume priestly or prophetic modes. Thus for Marty:

Civil religion “under God,” in its priestly form, normally appears as a fusion, then, of historic faith (as in Jewish or Christian traditions) with autochthonous national sentiments. Usually it will have as its main priest the president . . . Dwight D. Eisenhower was a particularly gifted priest.<sup>10</sup>

As an example of civil religion in its nationally self-transcendent and prophetic form, Marty cites the end of Bellah’s 1967 essay. Bellah calls for “an understanding of the American experience in the light of ultimate and universal reality.” For Bellah, “world civil religion could be accepted as a fulfillment and not a denial of American civil religion.”<sup>11</sup> America still is special, but only as part of a universal human project rather than as an end in itself.

Both Wuthnow’s and Marty’s schemes capture aspects of Corbett’s vision. That vision, however, is not based either on liberal politics or on a universalization of the American experience. Most apropos is the lead taken by Roger Betsworth, who borrows Ernst Troeltsch’s church/sect typology to distinguish between the “established type” and the “sectarian type” of civil religion. The established form of civil religion “believes that the present American order is good and ought to be universal, and cover the whole of humanity, dominating the world for the sake of its own salvation.” In contrast:

the sect type of civil religion rejects the pretensions of the present to universal goodness and rightful empire. It seeks to replace the social order by a new, purer, more just one. It sees in its own band of faithful the hope of a new society.<sup>12</sup>

This classification draws attention to the ideas of each civil religion’s supporters. It also focuses on the institutional implications of each vision. As shall be seen below, these implications are crucial for understanding the various embodiments of each vision in American history.

Betsworth describes the established and the sectarian civil religions in depth, drawing upon examples from the Cold War (1944-1960), the civil rights movement (1960-1970), and the Vietnam War era. His analysis would have been strengthened, however, had he been able to identify the theological origins of each of these competing worldviews. This article undertakes that task. Following E. Digby Baltzell,<sup>13</sup> we argue

9. Martin Marty, “Two Kinds of Civil Religion,” in *American Civil Religion*, eds. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 144.

10. *Ibid.*, 146.

11. Bellah, “Civil Religion,” 18.

12. Roger G. Betsworth, *The Radical Movement of the 1960’s* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press), 10.

13. E. Digby Baltzell, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979).

that the basic split between these civil religions stems from differing theological assumptions about the nature of humanity.

### TWO THEOLOGIES, TWO TRADITIONS

Baltzell's *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia* compares the upper classes in those two cities "in order to show how and why Boston Brahmins produced a long tradition of class authority, whereas Proper Philadelphians did not."<sup>14</sup> As the author remarks, "Boston was the home of the most influential upper class in American history. Philadelphia, on the other hand, has never produced a man or woman of such preeminence."<sup>15</sup> The contrast, he argues:

lies in the very different roles played by religious and class authority in the two cities. From its founding, the Puritan culture of New England produced an extremely authoritative upper class that provided leadership in a whole homogeneous society for over two centuries. . . . Not only did this class possess the confidence born of the Calvinist theory of election, but Calvinism also produced a strong sense of anxiety and sin, which drove generations of men like the Winthrops and Mathers to take the lead in community building, education, and government. In [Quaker-dominated] Philadelphia, however, a series of atomized members of the elite . . . tended to take the lead while all too many members of the upper class were satisfied to sit back and rest on their privileges, often in the name of preserving their perfectionist virtues.<sup>16</sup>

In sum, "Bostonians and Philadelphians were and still are motivated by the hierarchical and authoritarian ethic of Puritanism, on the one hand, and the egalitarian and anti-authoritarian ethic of Quakerism, on the other."<sup>17</sup>

At the risk of oversimplifying, we can summarize Puritan/Quaker theological differences in a series of dichotomies<sup>18</sup>—the classic dichotomies from which so much Christian thought has sprung. First, while both claimed to follow the Old Testament as well as the New, Puritans more often spoke the language of the former, especially in their notion of a political (or later a national) covenant. "Over and above His contracts with persons," Puritan specialist Perry Miller summarized, "God settles the social terms with a band of men, which thereupon becomes committed, as a political entity, to a specifically enunciated political program." This notion of a political or national covenant was borrowed directly from the Old Testament.<sup>19</sup> Puritans also allegorized the Old

14. Ibid., x.

15. Ibid., 38.

16. Ibid., 49-50.

17. Ibid., x.

18. Ibid., 94.

19. Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (1953; reprint, Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1961), 21.

Testament's Song of Songs in many of their more mystical writings.<sup>20</sup> Although Quakers used some Old Testament narrative themes in their writing,<sup>21</sup> "the Johannine writings, the *Gospel*, the *Revelation* and the *Epistles* alike, were the very heart of the Scriptures for the seventeenth-century Quaker."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, their writers "allegorize[d] the story of Jesus in the Gospels."<sup>23</sup>

Second, while neither religious group cared to relinquish Law or Gospel, Puritans more often affirmed the Law (in the forms of the Ten Commandments and the use of biblically-justified "reason").<sup>24</sup> Quakers, in contrast, emphasized the Gospel (in the forms of the Sermon on the Mount and an emphasis on feelings of love).<sup>25</sup>

Third, while both sought God in Bible and in prayer, Puritans emphasized the Bible as the source of religious authority. For them, "the Bible is fiat, it cannot be questioned, it alone is authority."<sup>26</sup> Quakers, in contrast, emphasized prayer and the "Inner Light" of which they so often spoke.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, one analyst of Puritan and Quaker autobiographies concluded that Quakers' "inner Light seems to have performed the function of both the Law and Grace of Puritan theology."<sup>28</sup>

These differences, of course, are not overtly civil religious, nor are they arguments about the role of America in world history. They create, however, different visions of the relationship between God and the civil order. To see the different visions, we must examine three key issues that capture the opposition between the two groups: their views of the relationship between God and the world, their views of human nature, and their views of the role of human action in the world.

### GOD AND THE WORLD

As Baltzell points out, for both Puritans and Quakers all life was God-centered. Civil society was, or should be, ordered according to God's will. Despite their differences, both groups assumed the transcendental sovereignty of God and His—they were sure of the pronoun—authority over the world.<sup>29</sup>

20. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Puritan and Quaker Mysticism," *Theology* (October 1975): 528.

21. Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience: Studies in Spiritual Autobiography* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 210.

22. Jackson I. Cope, "Seventeenth Century Quaker Style," *Modern Language Association* 71 (1956): 740.

23. Nuttall, "Puritan and Quaker Mysticism," 528.

24. Baltzell, *Puritan Boston*, 94; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind*, 20.

25. Baltzell, *Puritan Boston*, 94.

26. Miller, *The New England Mind*, 20.

27. See Baltzell, *Puritan Boston*, 94.

28. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience*, 177.

29. See Baltzell, *Puritan Boston*, 95.

Within this framework, however, the two groups saw God's sovereignty quite differently. For the Puritans, God was transcendent and historical. They were convinced that God acts in history, and that they themselves were the means of His action in their time. They saw themselves as literally His servants, hewing civilization out of the rough American landscape and taming it to His glory. As one Puritan historian interpreted the migration from England to the colonies, "God sifted a whole nation to bring choice grain into the wilderness."<sup>30</sup>

For Quakers, in contrast, God lived in the human heart. In theological terms they saw God speaking from within, and they believed that the Inward Word guided them in a way that outward words and institutions could not.<sup>31</sup> As the Quaker itinerant preacher, Edward Burrough, admonished in 1656, "to the light in your conscience take heed, it is your teacher to God if you love it."<sup>32</sup> Again using theological terms, Quaker worship attempted to unite the Meeting with God's will. It attempted to do so entering into deep personal and collective silence, out of which individuals occasionally were moved to speak. Authority rested in the human soul rather than in professional preachers or paid ministers. These points were appropriately summarized in the classic book on Quakerism written by a convert to the faith:

The intention [in Meeting for Worship] is to wait in patient quietness, knowing ourselves to be ever in the presence of God, but by our quietness making ourselves open to him, so that we can know his will. Thus, in spoken ministry we do not speak ourselves, but from the guidance of God within us.<sup>33</sup>

From the vantage point of these theological underpinnings, Quakers viewed the Puritan effort to legislate morality as an activity undertaken in vain. God saved His people, they thought, by an inward movement of conscience rather than by any outward control.

Puritanism was outward oriented, Quakerism was inward. So too are America's two civil religions divided. The establishment version believes the hand of God is at work in American institutions. The sectarian version believes in the superiority of God's work in the individual conscience.

30. Quoted in Miller, *The New England Mind*, 432.

31. Douglas Gwynn, *Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox (1624-1691)* (Richmond, Ind.: Friends United Press), 188ff.

32. Edward Burrough, *The Visitation of the Rebellious Nation of Ireland* (London: Giles Calvert, 1656); in Hugh Barbour and Arthur O. Roberts, eds., *Early Quaker Writings 1650-1700* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 92.

33. Geoffrey Hubbard, *Quaker by Convincement* (London: Penguin, 1974), 191.

## HUMAN NATURE

This distinction, of course, is connected with Puritan and Quaker notions of human nature. Puritans held that all souls were damned, and deserved to be so for their sins. In Baltzell's words, the Puritans "assumed that sinful man needs an earthly and institutionalized hierarchical authority structure."<sup>34</sup> Corrupted souls need social institutions to limit their destructiveness. The governance of those institutions is a duty of the elect—those saved from hellfire by the free grace of a merciful God. Like today's establishment civil religion, the Puritans believed God blessed their rule and used that rule to save the world from evil.

Quakers, in contrast, "argued that perfectible man needs no such" authority structures.<sup>35</sup> Individual people may be bad (though never irredeemably so); humanity as a whole, however, is good. God loves all people, for He made them in His image. They all have within them His Inner Light, which can guide them without need of earthly authority.

Indeed, for early Quakers the world's institutions were themselves evil. As an historian on the period puts it: "Fox and the early Friends saw their message and mission in the most radical terms. It was their calling to raze the structures of the churches to the foundations and to restore men and women upon the foundation of Christ's direct teaching, for which there could be no substitute."<sup>36</sup> As with the churches, so too with civil institutions. The Quaker antipathy to "hireling ministers," their refusal to take oaths, their refusal to grant "hat honor" to ministers and magistrates alike all testified to their belief that the world's authorities ruled them not.<sup>37</sup> This antipathy bred an attitude toward civil authority much more in keeping with the sectarian civil religion mentioned above.

## HUMAN ACTION IN THE WORLD

The differing ethical visions that Puritans and Quakers held invariably led to contrasting attitudes both toward God's role in the world and toward human nature. Each religion put forth a different image of ideal human action, and these images had consequences for the civil religious visions that they each engendered.

Both Puritans and Quakers believed in "callings" or vocations for their members. Indeed, "that every man should have a calling and

34. Baltzell, *Puritan Boston*, 95.

35. Ibid.

36. Gwynn, *Apocalypse*, 179.

37. Baltzell, *Puritan Boston*, 103-04.

work hard in it was a first premise of Puritanism."<sup>38</sup> Both traditions held that one must follow God wherever He leads. Where the Puritans raised calling to an art, however, and saw their professional lives as an arena in which to fulfill their duty to God, Quakers maintained a more Thomistic view.<sup>39</sup> They felt called to be good Quakers first, and professionals and businesspeople only second. When business and profession violated Quakers' Inner Voice, they felt bound to follow that voice rather than their civically defined duty. So in 1925 when the London Yearly Meeting (the world's most prestigious Quaker gathering) contemplated Quakers' activities in labor unions and federations, it advised that a "Christian is right in combining with others to obtain justice for himself and his fellows, but he should set his face against oppression and violence as being inconsistent with the example and teaching of our Lord."<sup>40</sup>

Quaker perfectionism, more than any other quality, separated the two denominations. While Puritans believed that they should not kill, they also believed that their God-given duty as magistrates outweighed their personal qualms about killing. They therefore stayed in power during wars and civil strife, believing it their duty to make the best of trying situations. Quakers, however, left the colonial Pennsylvania legislature rather than vote for war taxes.<sup>41</sup> Faced with a choice between outward duty and inward conviction, they chose the latter.

Baltzell argues that the key explanatory concept regarding Quaker social ethics is the tradition's sense of equality. If God lives in us all, and speaks to us all in the center of our hearts, then by what right do we, as mere mortals, impose death and destruction—or even control—on others? On this basis, "the Friends rejected all earthly authority." Quaker scorn of hierarchically-imposed secular authority grew directly

38. Miller, *From Colony to Province*, 40.

39. As Weber noted: "Barclay [the most prominent Quaker theologian] looks upon the obligation of one's calling not in Calvinistic or even Lutheran terms, but rather Thomistically." Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 1904-1905, revised, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 121. Robert Barclay's *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* was published "in Latin in 1676 and in English two years later." William Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* 1919, reprinted with corrections, 1921; second edition prepared by Henry J. Cadbury (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 386. Contemporary Quakers refer to a modernized version, and in it Barclay refers favorably to Thomas Aquinas. See Dean Freiday, ed., *Barclay's 'Apology' in Modern English* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Religious Society of Friends, 1967), 38, n.

40. London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, *Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Society of Friends*, 1960, reprinted with minor corrections (London: Religious Society of Friends, 1966), no. 554.

41. Richard Bauman, *For the Reputation of Truth* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 19-26.

out of the doctrines of perfectionism and the Inner Light and long antedated the testimony of pacifism and conscientious objection.<sup>42</sup>

The result of this theologically presumed egalitarianism was an unwillingness to rule or to tolerate rulers. Where the most famous Puritan journal—that of John Winthrop—displays a person concerned with his performance as a magistrate, the equally famous journal of Quaker John Woolman recounts the efforts of a man to know God and to be a truly good person.<sup>43</sup> Where Winthrop worried about social order and how to structure institutions to maintain it, Woolman worried about the evil that all such institutions do. He spent his life working for the equal treatment of the downtrodden, Indians, and slaves. In Baltzell's words, "while Woolman and the Quakers were quietly concerned with the mysterious workings of divine love in the world, Winthrop and the Puritans were worried about divine authority and how best to carry out their duty to lead the damned."<sup>44</sup>

#### SUMMARY

In Baltzell's view, Calvinistic Puritanism's teachings about the duty of the elect became a civil religious vision of a nation and its leaders doing God's will in political life. Puritanism encouraged learning and erudition, plus an ethic of citizenship ideally carried out through public office. Non-predestinarian Quakerism, in contrast, fostered a civil religion that questioned the role of educational, social, and political institutions and their leaders in carrying out God's purposes. Its civic calling emphasized spontaneous charity and a gloom about any lasting good that institutions by themselves can bring.

These two ideologies have dramatically different effects upon the production of nationally prominent political, judicial, and social leaders, which is the point of Baltzell's book. Where Puritanism produced civic leaders eager to serve God by building social institutions, Quakers distrusted the institutions that these Puritans built. To demonstrate this insight, Baltzell charted the effects of these attitudes on the secularized upper classes of the two American cities that each influenced most. Boston was the source of great wealth and great leaders, Philadelphia only of great wealth. Phrasing this argument in civil religious terms, Puritan Boston produced leaders who believed in the divine role of civic institutions and felt duty-bound to staff those institutions for the greater good. Quaker Philadelphia did not share this civil religious vision, and so did not produce leaders of similar type.

42. Baltzell, *Puritan Boston*, 102.

43. *Ibid.*, 100-01.

44. *Ibid.*, 101.

Baltzell, however, only notes a lack in Quaker life; he focuses on what Quakers did not do, to the exclusion of their accomplishments. He fails to draw out the different vision Quakers have of society, a vision that has startling implications for the role of individuals in civic life. Their theology, he notes, led Quakers to distrust civil institutions, and thus to abstain from public office. This distrust, however, fused with strict Quaker principles and a sense of calling to spark a tradition of creative and radical protest—an anti-establishment spirit that Baltzell simply fails to note. It is to that protest tradition that we now turn.

#### HISTORY OF QUAKER CIVIL ACTIONS

No religious group has been more involved in sectarian civil religious action than the Quakers, and this insight holds as true for Britain as it does for the United States. As one scholar observed,<sup>45</sup> "Friends, in fulfillment of their peace testimony, have remained at the core of nearly every important twentieth-century peace organization and, indeed, in every movement that defends and insists upon the sanctity of human life."<sup>46</sup> What makes Quaker radicalism worthy of sociological scrutiny is its religious basis. In the three and a half centuries since its founding, Quakerism has opposed an array of governmentally sanctioned policies on religious grounds.

In Cromwellian England, for example, Quakerism harbored those who opposed paying tithes to ministers and gentry.<sup>47</sup> During the bloody persecution that followed the return of the Stuart monarch, fifteen thousand Quakers were imprisoned for their refusal to conform to the established church. At least 450 died in jail,<sup>48</sup> making their group the most persecuted religious faith in England during the Restoration era.<sup>49</sup>

45. The scholar, an American, was writing about the impact of British Quakerism on pacifist and related social movements. He could just as easily have been speaking about the United States.

46. Thomas C. Kennedy, "The Quaker Renaissance and the Origins of the Modern British Peace Movement, 1895-1920," *Albion* 16 (1984): 3:272.

47. See Bruce Gordon Blackwood, "Agrarian Unrest and the Early Lancashire Quakers," *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 51 (1965); Stephen A. Kent, "Relative Deprivation and Resource Mobilization: A Study of Early Quakerism," *British Journal of Sociology* 33 (1982); Stephen A. Kent, "Puritan Radicalism and the New Religious Organizations: Seventeenth Century England and Contemporary America," *Comparative Social Research* 10 (1987): 11-13, 35n. 16-17; Stephen A. Kent, "Mysticism, Quakerism, and Relative Deprivation: A Sociological Reply to R.A. Naulty," *Religion* (1989): 160-66; Barry Reay, "Quaker Opposition to Tithes 1652-1660," *Past and Present* 86 (February 1980).

48. William Charles Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 1919, 2nd ed. prepared by Henry J. Cadbury (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 115.

49. The Quakers made the first explicit formulation of their Peace Testimony—"We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or

A few generations later, prominent Friends began a trans-Atlantic movement to oppose slavery. By the end of the century, even George Washington knew of the Quaker-run "underground railroad" (as it later came to be called) for slaves who were trying to escape their bondage. In this effort, "the Friends were undoubtedly the most persistent Anglo-American lawbreakers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."<sup>50</sup> By the early nineteenth century, of course, the anti-slavery cause had been taken up by other groups. But in reaction to these groups' exclusion of activist women, a Quaker, Lucretia Mott, issued a call for the full rights of women in society.<sup>51</sup> The Equal Rights Amendment, a celebrated cause for American feminists in the 1970s, got its name from Mott's early efforts.<sup>52</sup>

Quakers have continued their interest in civil rights into the current century. Prominent civil rights organizer and pacifist Bayard Rustin—the person most responsible for the success of the 1963 "March on Washington"—was raised by his Quaker grandmother, and "through the Quakers, Rustin was introduced early to the idea of pacifism, of service, and of racial equality."<sup>53</sup> The legendary peace and civil rights leader A.J. Muste—who, among other things, was head of The Fellowship of Reconciliation and a founding member of the Congress of Racial Equality—joined the Society of Friends sometime after World War I.<sup>54</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. first encountered Gandhi's teachings through a book by a Quaker he read while a divinity student. This book, Richard Gregg's *The Power of Nonviolence* (1934), "more than any other source helped to popularize Gandhi's teachings in

under any pretense whatsoever"—in response to government accusations of treason. Quakers took pains to distinguish themselves from religious groups (such as the Fifth Monarch Men) that advocated armed rebellion to speed the expected Second Coming of Christ.

50. Staughton Lynd, *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 101-02.

51. Rufus Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 2 vols. (Westport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1921, reprint 1970), 573-76.

52. The American Equal Rights Amendment of 1923 was named the Lucretia Mott Amendment. See Margaret H. Bacon, "Lucretia Mott: Holy Obedience and Human Liberation," in *The Influence of Quaker Women on American History, Biographical Studies*, ed. Carol and John Stoneburner, Studies in Women and Religion (Queenston, Ontario: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 21:218. This amendment served as the basis for the 1972 Equal Rights Amendment, that fell three states short of ratification in 1982; see Amelia R. Fry, "Alice Paul," in *The Influence of Quaker Women on American History, Biographical Studies*, ed. Carol and John Stoneburner, Studies in Women and Religion (Queenston, Ontario: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 21:391-92.

53. Milton Viorst, *Fire in the Streets: America in the 1960s* (New York: Touchstone, 1979), 200.

54. Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 39.

America."<sup>55</sup> Both Quakerism and Gandhianism—and their mixture—had a significant influence on other civil rights leaders as well.

Working for peace always has been at the heart of the Quaker agenda. In 1801, the American Congress so disapproved of the peace efforts of a self-appointed Quaker diplomat that it passed the Logan Act to keep private citizens from negotiating with foreign governments. Quakers, though, continued to violate that law as a matter of conscience. During the Vietnam War, for example, a Quaker delegation tried, though unsuccessfully, to negotiate directly with Hanoi.<sup>56</sup>

World War I saw the birth of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), which, despite its somewhat patriotic origins, became "one of the world's leading charitable organizations."<sup>57</sup> Along with its British counterpart, it won the 1947 Nobel Peace Prize for its relief work in a Europe devastated by World War II.<sup>58</sup>

In its years of operation, however, the AFSC's "less popular" projects often have found it at the forefront of disputatious causes, to the occasional discomfort of government officials in the United States.<sup>59</sup> The AFSC's Stewart Meacham, for example, was a key figure in the New Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, under whose direction grassroots anti-war groups were established across the U.S. Perhaps the most famous non-violent protest against nuclear weapons took place in 1958, when a Quaker convert named Albert Bigelow attempted to sail his boat into a nuclear test zone in the Pacific.<sup>60</sup> After U.S. agents in Hawaii seized Bigelow's boat, his friends, Earl and Barbara Reynolds, rerouted their round-the-world voyage through the area. They were arrested by the U.S. Navy on the high seas, in violation of international law. Though not Quakers at the time, both Reynolds later converted and became well-known Quaker activists.

Moving into the next decade, one Quaker's dramatic form of anti-Vietnam protest "shocked many Americans into asking—for the first time—why are we in Vietnam?" In November 1965, Norman Morrison doused himself with kerosene, lit a match, and immolated himself within sight of the Secretary of Defense's office. Seven other Americans replicated Morrison's protest by 1970, including an eighty-two-

55. Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer . . . The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 132.

56. Baltzell, *Puritan Boston*, 196.

57. Allan Kohrman, "Respectable Pacifists: Quaker Response to World War I," *Quaker History* 75 (Spring 1986): 41.

58. Baltzell, *Puritan Boston*, 448-49.

59. Kathleen Teltsch, "Philanthropy from Friendly Persuaders," *New York Times*, 6 September 1981, 18E.

60. David Weber, ed., *Civil Disobedience in America: A Documentary History* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), 255-60.

year-old Quaker named Alice Herz.<sup>61</sup> Quakers later sustained a ten-month peace vigil in front of the White House, and frequently were arrested for their anti-war activities.<sup>62</sup> To keep the anti-war movement peaceful, they set up programs to train demonstration marshals in non-violence techniques, a tactic that has been used in demonstrations ever since.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps the most famous Quaker antiwar protester from the 1960s was Joan Baez, the protest singer who assimilated the tradition from an early age under the influence of her father.<sup>64</sup>

The fundamental right to dissent in American society is guaranteed by the Constitution and a Bill of Rights whose very foundations early Quakers helped to lay. When the first-generation Quaker, Edward Byllinge, acquired land in the trans-Atlantic colonies, he (perhaps working with another Quaker, William Penn) enacted into law "what has been termed one of the most remarkable documents in American history: 'The Concessions and Agreements of the Proprietors, Freeholders, and Inhabitants of the Province of West New Jersey'."<sup>65</sup> These Concessions of 1677 guaranteed religious liberty (even more broadly than did the liberal Rhode Island Charter of the period), "trial by jury, fair public trials, and freedom from imprisonment for debt." These ideas mark "an important step in the development which culminated in the federal Bill of Rights."<sup>66</sup> Moreover, its provisions about "the common law or fundamental rights and privileges . . . agreed upon . . . to be the foundation of the government," against which no contradictory laws were to be passed, represent an early form of "a binding Constitution and the doctrine of unconstitutional legislation" that serve as pillars of American governmental protections.<sup>67</sup>

Byllinge's contemporary Quaker, William Penn, instituted two documents for his colony of Pennsylvania that were, "in many ways, the most influential of the Colonial documents protecting individual rights."<sup>68</sup> Arguably the most significant of the two was the Pennsylvania Frame of Government of 1682. It established "for the first time the fully representative type of government that has come to characterize the American polity," and it even contained an amending

61. Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?* 1-5.

62. *Ibid.*, 380.

63. *Ibid.*, 287.

64. See Joan Baez, *Daybreak* (New York: Avon, 1966), 52-53; Joan Baez, *A Voice to Sing With: A Memoir* (New York: Summit Books, 1987), 23-24.

65. Bernard Schwartz, *The Roots of the Bill of Rights* (New York: Chelsea House, 1971, reprint 1981), 125.

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*, 126.

68. *Ibid.*, 130.



clause—"the first in any written Constitution."<sup>69</sup> Penn drew directly upon "his own experience as a persecuted Quaker" by conceiving "of a government limited in its powers by the rights possessed by the governed." The Frame of Government's most direct influence on the American Bill of Rights had to do with judicial procedure, whereby citizens were guaranteed trial by a jury whose members had the freedom to decide guilt or innocence of accused parties.<sup>70</sup>

With the changing decades have come changing issues, but the tradition of protest has remained. In the 1980s, Quakers formed a major part of the Sanctuary Movement. Recently the AFSC challenged the legality of a law directed against illegal aliens.<sup>71</sup> (The challenge failed.) The organization continues to counsel victims of political torture,<sup>72</sup> and remains active in international efforts to provide food and material to underprivileged nations.<sup>73</sup> Demonstrations against war and nuclear weapons, of course, continue as well.

#### CONCLUSION

Taken together, Quaker social activism represents a primary model of the sectarian civil religious vision of America. It embodies what Betsworth described as "a persistent tradition in America of those who . . . have opposed the direction which the ruling group has chosen."<sup>74</sup> Firmly embedded in this tradition of opposition, Quakers have been unwilling to participate in the more established forms of civil religious life. Unlike the Puritan-influenced Bostonians Baltzell studied, Quakers—not merely Philadelphia ones—seem averse to elitist political hierarchies. Quaker public service takes anti-establishment forms.

The Calvinistically-inspired tradition of elitist political obligation, however, also seems most likely to embody established civil religious assumptions that "the present American order is good and ought to be universal, and cover the whole of humanity, dominating the world for the sake of its own salvation."<sup>75</sup> Against this attitude, and against the social policies that go along with it, Quakerism and other sectarian civil religionists remain indefatigable foes.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid., 131-32; see 144-58.

71. "Quakers Challenge 1986 Immigration Law," *Washington Post*, 26 November 1988, B10.

72. Christopher S. Wren, "Salvaging Lives After Torture," *New York Times Magazine* (17 August 1986), 18ff.

73. Michael Valpy, "Sudan Relief Fights Dealt Final Blow," *Globe and Mail* [Canada], 8 October 1986, A10.

74. Betsworth, *The Radical Movement*, 9.

75. Ibid., 10.

Those in the sectarian civil religious tradition rarely assume public office. Yet history reveals the prescient, ethical, and even prophetic role that they serve in a society whose rulers often subordinate conscience to their sense of mission and godly election. Quakers, therefore, and other sectarian civil religionists, have a vital role to play in the American political process. Their deep-seated suspicion of power and obedience, coupled with their affirmative view of human nature, provide new ways for citizens to interpret the past as they look toward the future. Moreover, their translation of belief into radical action serves as a theater for political innovation. In that theater, new and heretofore unexplored ideas appear to the public about social problems and their suggested solutions.

Implicit in Quakerism is a civil religious statement about the idealistic, anti-nationalist, and humanitarian role that should be played by political and social institutions. Bellah himself may share these principles, since, in his first civil religion essay, he wrote of the formative role played by religious assumptions concerning human rights and political legitimacy. He claimed that "the rights of man are more basic than any political structure."<sup>76</sup>

The religious dimension in political life as recognized by [President John] Kennedy not only provides a grounding for the rights of man which makes any form of political absolutism illegitimate, it also provides a transcendent goal for the political process.<sup>77</sup>

Implied in Bellah's description, therefore, was the radical, sectarian strain of thought that this essay has highlighted, and which continues to enrich American political life.

76. Bellah, "Civil Religion," 25.

77. Ibid.