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## **The Fellowship of Reconciliation**

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By: John Ferguson

Right at the end of December 1914, as the war which was expected to finish by Christmas dragged on, 130 people met in Cambridge. Their leader and chairman was a Quaker named Henry Hodgkin. Henry Hodgkin was a man large of body and mind. He was much travelled, 'in journeyings often', and he used to describe the operation of fitting his long frame into a railway sleeping berth as 'the double-diagonal doze'. I never knew him - he died after an operation in 1933 - but knew in her later life his widow, aptly named Joy, a quality she radiated. Henry Hodgkin had a strong but genial presence and great gifts of persuasive leadership.

The nineteenth century had seen the growth of a vigorous peace movement in Europe and North America. John Bright had raised his voice against the Crimean War; Joseph Sturge had led deputations to the governments of Germany and Denmark in the hope of averting the Schleswig-Holstein clash of 1864-6; Bertha von Suttner, friend of Alfred Nobel, had written her powerful novel *Die Waffen Nieder*. A Quaker named Fox had made private witness to Tsar Nicholas II that war was contrary to the will of God, and that had led the Tsar to call the Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907.

A large benefaction from Andrew Carnegie had established an organization in the USA called the Church Peace Union; its secretary was Frederick Lynch. It was through this body that invitations were issued to some 150 Christian leaders to meet in Constance at the beginning of August 1914.

Among them were Henry Hodgkin and Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze. Siegmund-Schultze was a remarkable man, whom I was privileged to know in his later years. Born in 1885, he carried about with him some of the authoritarian attitudes of a nineteenth-century paterfamilias. He was chaplain to the Kaiser. His upbringing was conventional, and he was deeply distressed when he was prevented from military service on physical grounds, but his reading of the New Testament led him to become a Christian pacifist.

This brought him into touch with British Quakers, including J. Allen Baker (Philip Noel-Baker's father) and Henry Hodgkin. As they met at Constance, war between Germany and Austria on one hand, and Russia and France on the other, was breaking out. Those gathered at Constance appealed to the heads of the warring states, but, when those appeals failed, had to go their several ways. Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze and Henry Hodgkin travelled together as far as Cologne.

There they shook hands and said 'Whatever happens, nothing is changed between us. We are one in Christ, and can never be at war.'

In England Henry Hodgkin and his fellow-Quakers began to take the initiative. They drafted a 'Message to Men and Women of Goodwill', printing nearly half a million copies, and in addition using it as an advertisement in nine leading dailies. A copy reached Germany and circulated there.

The statement made six points:

1. The conditions which created the war were unchristian;
2. Christians must not forsake Christ;
3. This meant courage in the cause of love and in the hate of hate;
4. There would be a stupendous task of reconstruction;
5. The war must not be fought vindictively and must be ended quickly;
6. Faith in God was needed for the future.

Hodgkin began to get together with other concerned Christians. Foremost among these was Richard Roberts, a Presbyterian minister, whose evening congregation was among the largest in North London. He suddenly observed that some young Germans, regular in worship at his church, were not there. He realized that the members of his own church might shortly be killing one another. He knew that his commitment to Christ meant that he could give no support or sanction to the war.

These two brought together a wider group which included G. K. A. Bell (later Bishop of Chichester), William Temple (later Archbishop of Canterbury), Edwyn Bevan and others. But they found that most of the group, however reluctantly, supported war 'as the lesser of two evils', believing that the relative justice (as they saw it) of the British position justified the war, and not remotely foreseeing the degradation into which the nations would one and all slide.

Hodgkin and Roberts began to talk with a different group, notably Lucy Gardner (later a key-figure in COPEC). Out of this they felt that a common statement of a more radically Christian nature might be made. They chose Cambridge as their rendezvous. They asked a student named Rendel Wyatt to make enquiries.

He approached Ebenezer Cunningham, a young fellow of St. John's, a mathematician who was said to be one of the minute handful of English scholars capable of understanding Einstein, and who lived to a great age. "Somewhat daring I asked the Vice-Chancellor if he could give me permission to use a room known as the Arts Theatre - a University Lecture Room accommodating about 200 hearers, often lent to bodies needing such an auditorium. This was graciously granted and the promoting group set about gathering a larger body of sympathizers."

Among those who gathered were of course Henry Hodgkin as Chairman, Richard Roberts as one speaker and Lucy Gardner as Secretary. Another Presbyterian minister, W. Fearon Halliday, also gave an address. Others present included George Lansbury, later Leader of the Labour Party, Leyton Richards, who was to exercise a notable ministry at Carrs Lane Congregational Church in Birmingham, Maude Royden, a woman of great eloquence, W. E. Orchard, and Alan Knott (the Congregational minister rather than the wicket-keeper, though he too was a useful cricketer).

Ebenezer Cunningham told me once how an address by Maude Royden converted to Christian pacifism my own beloved minister at Emmanuel Congregational Church, Cambridge, H.C. 'Polly' Carter, who ministered there from 1910-42. Polly had been a conventional supporter of the war, and Ebenezer said that he was literally writhing in agony at her words. Wyatt's young sister alone survives from that gathering in 1914; I knew Ebenezer Cunningham, Alan Knott and Harrison Jackson, and met Leyton Richards.

The name 'Fellowship of Reconciliation' was chosen for the new movement. It was a careful choice. It could not be confused with the old Peace Societies. It gave a positive drive to the movement; it was not just saying 'No' to war, but 'Yes' to the expression of the Christian faith in the whole of life. It had a firm New Testament basis in words of St. Paul: 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God who hath

reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation' (2 Cor. 5, 17-9).

The hoped-for statement emerged. It consisted of five points, which still form the FOR basis:

1. That Love, as revealed and interpreted in the life and death of Jesus Christ, involves more than we have yet seen, that it is the only power by which evil can be overcome, and the only sufficient basis of human society.

2. That, in order to establish a world-order based on Love, it is incumbent upon those who believe in this principle to accept it fully, both for themselves and in their relation to others, and to take the risks involved in doing so in a world which does not as yet accept it.

3. That, therefore, as Christians, we are forbidden to wage war, and that our loyalty to our country, to humanity, to the Church Universal, and to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, calls us instead to a life service for the enthronement of love in personal, social, commercial and national life.

4. That the Power, Wisdom and Love of God stretch far beyond the limits of our present experience, and that He is ever waiting to break forth into human life in new and larger ways.

. That since God manifests Himself in the world through men and women, we offer ourselves to Him for His redemptive purpose, to be used by Him in whatever way He may reveal to us.

There are three things to notice about this statement. First, it was not intended as a creed; it was rather guidelines for commitment and action. Second, the repudiation of war forms only one part of one of the five points; pacifism is one conclusion of a total Christian stance. Third, when from time to time we have tried to rewrite the Basis, we have been again and again impressed by the care with which our forerunners worded their affirmation, and every change proposed has so obviously weakened the meaning that we have rejected it. The wording is strong: I entitled my own first book *The Enthronement of Love*.

A Central Committee was formed with Hodgkin as Chairman and Lucy Gardner as Secretary. After some time an office was found in Red Lion Square in rooms once hallowed (if that is the word) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris. Lucy Gardner was not able to continue in the new location, and Richard Roberts took over on 1 July 1915.

He was succeeded a year and a half later by Leyton Richards. The Fellowship was dependent upon voluntary help. Among early volunteers was Lewis Maclachlan, a delightful Scot with a dry sense of humour, who was still editing the Fellowship's monthly Reconciliation after the Second World War, and who died not long ago.

Another was George Llewellyn Davies, a Welshman, an aristocrat and banker, with a commission in the Territorials which he resigned when his conscience was convicted, and went to prison. In an unusual life after the war he found himself President of the Caernarvon Eisteddfod in company with Lloyd George and Marshal Foch, Christian Pacifist MP for the University of Wales, and a great reconciler in industrial disputes in Wales and religious conflicts in Ireland. Handsome still when I knew him, he had a charisma which sprang from the deep roots of personality.

The Fellowship grew in membership. By November 1915 there were over 1500 members meeting in 55 branches. They published a magazine called *The Venturer* (from *avers* by F. W. H. Myers) and a number of books in a series called 'The Christian Revolution'. They went out to witness round the

country in a caravan, only to be set upon and see their caravan burned.

When conscription was introduced, most of the members stood out, and 600 went to prison. There was support for the efforts to end the war, such as that of Lord Lansdowne in 1916. There were occasionally processions and demonstrations, including one in which East Enders from Bow were involved with Sir John French's sister, Sylvia Pankhurst, and the future Lady Parmoor; this was broken up violently by soldiers and hostile gangs.

In Germany Siegmund-Schultze had secured a copy of the early Quaker statement, and circulated it, together with his own witness against the war. He was, as he expected, summoned to the police station to give an account of himself, which he did, frankly and fearlessly.

Then, as he told it to me forty years later, they drew a curtain at the back of the room in which he was being interrogated, to reveal a fullscale military tribunal.

The chairman said "What you have been saying is high treason. We condemn you to death. Have you anything to say before the sentence is carried out?" Siegmund was, not surprisingly, taken aback. However, he rallied, and said that he had a supportive letter from a member of the Reichstag. They dismissed it.

He produced a letter from a Baron. They were not interested. Then he said "I have here a letter from his Imperial Majesty, saying that what I write is the only true Christianity, but that as Head of State he dares not practise it." In telling me of this, Siegmund said that he was never so ashamed of his country, for at the mention of the Kaiser the court martial not merely rescinded the death sentence, but offered him a senior post in the Ministry of Information -which he naturally refused.

The war saw the growth of similar movements in the United States, Holland and Sweden. After the Armistice, in October 1919 there was a notable gathering at Bilthoven in Holland at the invitation of Cornelis (Kees) Boeke and Henry Hodgkin.

In addition to those from Britain, and Holland, Siegmund-Schultze and others came from Germany, and there were delegates from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, France, Switzerland and the USA. J. B. Hugenholz, one of the Dutch hosts, was still there to welcome us after World War II.

One of the Swiss present was Pierre Ceresole, the legendary founder of Service Civil (once known in Britain as IVSP), who believed that actions matter more than words and fostered international camps to practise 'pick-and-shovel peacemaking'. Romain Rolland called him 'the supreme conscience of Switzerland', and added that 'such consciences are the salvation of humanity'.

Lilian Stevenson wrote of this gathering "We met as strangers: we parted a Fellowship." They faced responsibility for the massacres and said 'We all stand condemned before God. None can cast a stone at his brother.'

At this conference was formed 'The Movement Towards a Christian International', later called 'International Fellowship of Reconciliation'. They took the truth across frontiers and became messengers of peace.

International groups including Germans came to the devastated areas of France, groups including French moved into Germany. Groups visited Estonia, Latvia, Poland. They brought children together.

They established centres at Oberammergau for the Passion Play and Geneva for the Disarmament Conference. As tension rose in the east they brought Japanese and Chinese together. They organized summer schools and youth camps. They worked for the right of conscientious objection to military

service. They worked with, among and for the unemployed.

Through Embassies of Reconciliation, in which Charles Raven of Cambridge played a leading role, they essayed political mediation. The movement spread among Roman Catholics, notably through Max Josef Metzger (Bruder Paulus), who was to become a martyr under Hitler, and the Austrian Kaspar Mayr.

In addition to the countries represented at Bilthoven groups arose in the Baltic States, Russia, Belgium, Austria, Czechoslovakia, China, Japan and India.

The Fellowship's connections with Cambridge remained strong through two people, who, as it happens, were instrumental in my own introduction to the Fellowship. Charles Earle Raven, Regius Professor of Divinity, Master of Christ's, and Vice-Chancellor, had been a Chaplain at Cambrai in 1917, and the experience of fellowship in the trenches made its mark on his life.

Theologian and scientist, he worked with Temple and Lucy Gardner over COPEC. He did not come out as a pacifist until 1930, and it was the self-effacing Quaker Percy Bartlett who led him to that conviction. I heard him speak at Bishop's Stortford in 1937 or 1938. He had a striking presence - someone once described him as St. Sebastian just after the first arrow had struck home - and a magnificent voice. I regard him as the finest speaker of his generation, and for years I never heard him without having to sort out my life afresh. He never swept you off your feet on a tide of emotion; he sent you away to think things out for yourself. By the time I had completed my inward wrestling I was clear that commitment to Christ made participation in war impossible.

The following year I heard Alex Wood. He was the best integrated man I ever knew. Old John Oman once remarked: 'When I say "Christian", I mean one with whom to see is to act. I've only known three, and one of them's Alex Wood.' Where Raven had challenged the deep springs of my life, Alex Wood helped me to sort out in a down-to-earth way what it meant in actual living. He was not a great scientist, but a great teacher of science.

I suppose he and G. F. C. Searle were the supreme teachers in the Cavendish at that time. He used to tell with delight how he was once staying with a Lord Lieutenant who confessed to dabbling in science; he had a book he called his Bible which he kept by his bedside, Sound by Alexander Wood; would his guest have had anything to do with it? Alex admitted it. 'Thank God.' said the Lord Lieutenant. 'I was so afraid you might be that other Alex Wood, the dreadful pacifist feller!' Needless to say, the dreadful pacifist feller confessed, and a friendship of mutual respect followed.

When I went up to John's in 1939 the FOR group used to meet in my rooms. The Senior Friend was J. B. Skemp, later Professor of Greek at Durham. Among the leading lights were Charles Carter, later Vice-Chancellor of Lancaster, Michael Horne, later Professor of Engineering at Manchester, Max Walters, later Director of the Botanical Gardens, Jack Newport, later President of Cheshunt, and numerous others. As rationing developed we ate charcoal biscuits, "disconcerting to the uninitiated, being blackish in colour".

After I finished at John's in 1948 I found myself increasingly involved with the movement nationally. Profound theological leadership was provided by Raven, Garth MacGregor, H. H. Farmer, L. W. Grensted, George MacLeod and Donald Soper. Alan Balding of Poplar was Chairman, a man who could tell you that you were a fool without breaking fellowship and who could achieve a common mind without needing to take a vote. The General Secretary was Clifford Macquire, a man with all the gifts, strong integrity, intense commitment, powerful speech, unobtrusively efficient organization, pastoral concern, rich humour and warm friendship.

I was privileged to be Chairman for three years with him to guide, before I left Britain for Nigeria.

A few leaders from the international scene must be mentioned. From America came Nevin Sayre, an indefatigable traveller and faithful optimist, and A. J. Muste, an ex-Marxist, who was responsible for the challenging epigram "There is no way to Peace. Peace is the way."

There was a remarkable group of French Reformed Pastors, Andre Trocme, Edouard Theis, Henri Roser, Jean Lasserre. The story of the nonviolent resistance to the Nazis by the community at Le Chambon-sur-Lignon has been told by Philip Hallie in *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*; it remains one of the most powerful and moving stories of Christian witness in time of tyranny.

Andre was another of those with whom to see is to act. Kaspar Mayr's daughter Hildegard married a French ex-soldier Jean Goss, and between them they have maintained a magnificent witness, not least in Latin America.

Since those days much has happened. In Germany Martin Niemoller had a deep effect on Gustav Heinemann, who resigned from the Vice-Presidency of the Republic over rearmament, was recalled to be President, and at his installation made it clear that he would never sign a bill to introduce military conscription or to make the FRG a nuclear military state.

In the United States the FOR was in the forefront in campaigns for desegregation of the south, and, not least, in support of Martin Luther King.

Danilo Dolci faced the Mafia in Sicily with Christian nonviolence.

Albert Luthuli was involved with the Fellowship, as was Michael Scott; nonviolence has not liberated South Africa, but neither has violence.

In Latin America Dom Helder Camara and the Nobel Prizewinner Adolfo Perez Esquivel have shown a different way from that of Che Guevara and Camilo Torres.

In Japan and Vietnam Buddhist members of the IFOR have astonishing stories to tell; witness the poems of Thich Nhat Hanh.

In Northern Ireland, the work of the Peace People and of Corrymeela has FOR connections; FOR members have gone to do ordinary jobs there, living reconcilingly in the situations; and a maverick Quaker named Will Warren, working with FOR and Northern Friends Peace Board, won the confidence of Catholic and Protestant extremists alike. In Britain the Peace Pilgrimage from Iona to Canterbury was an imaginative act of witness.

So the movement formed in Cambridge ninety years ago is still active, and still - alas! - needed. The work goes on.

John Ferguson was educated at Bishop's Stortford College, and St John's College, Cambridge, where he graduated with first-class honours and double distinction. He also has a BD with first-class honours. He was Professor of Classics, University of Ibadan 1956-66, Professor of Classics, University of Minnesota 1966-9, Dean of Arts, Open University 1969-79. He was Chairman, Fellowship of Reconciliation 1953-6, Chairman, United Nations Association 1980-4, and is joint-editor of *Reconciliation Quarterly* and author (among other books) of *The Enthronement of Love*, *The Politics of Love*, *War and Peace in the World's Religions and Disarmament: The Unanswerable Case*.