

The Seven Points of the Message to all Friends,

issued by the Conference held at Devonshire House, by Direction of the Yearly Meeting,
October 19th to 22nd, 1916.

The Conference on War and the Social Order

“We desire that the Society of Friends may affirm the following positions as springing from its central view of truth:—

1. “That Brotherhood, as taught by Jesus Christ, knows no distinction of Social Class: Human worth is something deeper and broader.
2. “That a man should in large measure be free to order his own life is a spiritual necessity; it should not be cramped or spoiled by evil conditions, or crushed by economic pressure. Whenever this happens it is a spiritual loss to the world, and indicates failure on the part of the Christian Church. Rather we must see that the fullest opportunity of human development—both in childhood and in adult life—should be assured to every member of the community.
3. “That the spiritual force of trust and loving kindness is mighty because of the appeal it makes to the best in every man, and, when applied even to the conduct of industrial relations, achieves great things.
4. “Our belief in the futility of the methods of outward domination, and of the appeal to force, applies not only to international affairs, but to the whole problem of industrial control and to the resort to industrial strife. Not through antagonism, but through co-operation in its widest sense, will the best be achieved for each and all.
5. “That if human need has a claim to service, and if service is the key to the best of life, this great truth cannot be confined to the casual encounters of life, but should be recognised and relied upon in the very motive and method of its chief activities. It is upon this basis of need and service that life should be organised.
6. “That our membership one of another involves the use of all our gifts, powers, and resources for the good of all. No system which uses these for mere money-making or private gain, alienating them from their true end, can satisfy.
7. “That we shall seek for a way of living that will free us from the bondage of material things and mere convention, that will raise no barrier against brotherly comradeship with all, and will put no oppressive burden of labour upon any by reason of our superfluous demands.

“The Yearly Meeting of 1917 decided to refer the above points to the Quarterly Meetings for their consideration and report, in order that the matter may be more fully gone into in the Yearly Meeting of 1918.”

Bedfordshire Quarterly Meeting

“We recognise that as Friends in the past have always stood for liberty of the oppressed, we in our day cannot remain satisfied with the present industrial conditions. We are agreed that something more than palliatives is required, and that any proposed remedies must be radical and fundamental.

“We are agreed that the principles underlying the seven points of the message of the Conference are true, notwithstanding the difficulty that we have found hitherto in carrying them out. Our

discussion of possible solutions has disclosed some divergence of view. We think it likely that a closer study of the subject might make for greater unanimity, and we urge upon all our members the necessity of seeking to follow the Divine guidance in their personal lives in order to carry out these high ideals in daily life.”

Devon and Cornwall Quarterly Meeting

“We have had a full and sympathetic discussion, and we feel a fresh call to the personal application of the teaching of Christ to all the relationships of life, but, at the same time, are not prepared to commit ourselves, or the Society, to the seven propositions as a whole, at present.”

Foundations of a True Social Order

(Prepared by the War and Social Order Committee after reviewing the responses of 15 quarterly meetings and the General Meeting of Scotland. It represents a slight revision of a draft offered by London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting in their response of March 1918)

1. The Fatherhood of God, as revealed by Jesus Christ, should lead us toward a Brotherhood which knows no restriction of race, sex or social class.
2. This Brotherhood should express itself in a social order which is directed, beyond all material ends, to the growth of personality truly related to God and man.
3. The fullest opportunity of development, physical, moral and spiritual, should be assured to every member of the community, man, woman and child. The development of man’s full personality should not be hampered by unjust conditions nor crushed by economic pressure.
4. We should seek for a way of living that will free us from the bondage of material things and mere conventions, that will raise no barrier between man and man, and will put no excessive burden of labour upon any by reason of our superfluous demands.
5. The spiritual force of righteousness, loving-kindness and trust is mighty because of the appeal it makes to the best in every man, and when applied to industrial relations achieves great things.
6. Our rejection of the methods of outward domination, and of the appeal to force applies not only to international affairs, but to the whole problem of industrial control. Not through antagonism but through co-operation and good-will can the best be attained for each and all.
7. Mutual service should be the principle upon which life is organised. Service, not private gain, should be the motive of all work.
8. The ownership of material things, such as land and capital, should be so regulated as best to minister to the need and development of man.

A note on “personality”:

The word ‘personality’ had a broader meaning early in the century than it usually does today. In the 1880s, it came to mean ‘personalty’, one’s personal goods and personal estate in an economic sense. As used in these documents, the word seems to carry some of these connotations, as well as the broad sense of those qualities which make a person what she is, as distinct from other persons, and which distinguish personhood from ‘thingness’.