

**THE TWENTY-THIRD JAMES BACKHOUSE LECTURE  
1987**

**THE VISION THAT CONNECTS –  
BUILDING THE FUTURE WE CHOOSE**

**Carol and Dougald McLean**

## **The James Backhouse Lectures**

This is one of a series of lectures instituted by Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends on the occasion of the establishment of that Yearly Meeting in 1964.

This lecture was delivered in Hobart on 5 January 1987 during the Yearly Meeting.

James Backhouse was an English Friend who visited Australia from 1832 to 1838. Backhouse was a botanist who published full accounts of what he saw, besides encouraging Friends and following up his deep concern for the convicts and Aborigines. He and his companion, George Washington Walker, travelled widely but spent most of their time in Tasmania. It was through this visit that Quaker Meetings were first established in Australia.

Australian Friends hope that this series of lectures will bring fresh insights into truth, often with reference to the needs and aspirations of Australian Quakerism.

Bronwen Meredith  
Presiding Clerk  
Australian Yearly Meeting

### **About this lecture**

This essay looks at the perils we face today which are both an unprecedented danger and a unique opportunity. Our deep feelings of inter-connectedness challenge us to use our "power-with" to build a global society based on a reverence for all life. This hopeful spiritual vision of an evolutionary shift towards planetary consciousness is beginning to transform our social, political and economic institutions.

We must develop our capacity and our courage to make the personal and collective choices needed for this evolutionary struggle to build the future of our vision.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

Carol and Dougald, members of Hobart (Tasmania) Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, were born in the United States and migrated to Australia in 1963.

Though they both came from a Presbyterian background, they joined an unprogrammed Friends Meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska 26 years ago.

Before that time, Dougald took a medical degree and spent over 10 years in the US Army Medical Corps during World War II and the Korean War. He then practiced family medicine before specialising in psychiatry. He worked in the field of child psychiatry in the U.S. In Sydney he helped develop and administer programs in adolescent, drug and alcohol, rehabilitation and community psychiatry.

Carol has a university degree in education and did social and community work with minority groups in New York City and the Midwest.

Their involvement in peace issues grew out of the time in the armed forces. A developing disillusionment with military answers to conflict led to a search for non-violent solutions which, in turn, introduced them to Quakerism. Over the years they have been active members of the peace movement and, at present, are involved in the Quaker Peace and Social Justice Committee, People for Nuclear Disarmament, and the Hobart Peace Centre. Dougald serves as State Coordinator for the Medical Association for the Prevention of War.

While living in Sydney, they helped establish the SAGE program, a holistic group process for older people and the Parents and Friends of Gays Group. Carol was involved in the early women's movement in the churches in Sydney.

As concerned Quakers, they have served on the Australian Yearly Meeting Committees on Race Relations and Peace over the years as well as Ministry and Oversight and other Quaker committees.

They have four children and seven grandchildren, all living in Australia.

# THE VISION THAT CONNECTS – BUILDING THE FUTURE WE CHOOSE

## PART 1

We're not here to give a lecture but to begin a process - or to open doors. Maybe you've already gone through these doors - and we will meet you along the way and we can support each other in opening other doors.

Talking and listening are both active parts of the process which complement one another. We see you, the listening audience, as an active part of this evening's journey.

We will be using three symbols for the process we hope to explore together here: the Mushroom Cloud; the Chinese character for crisis; the view of our Planet from Space. They represent the dangers we face today; the crisis which is both an unprecedented danger and a unique opportunity, and the hopeful vision of our collective future.

As we begin this journey of awareness, these symbols will be guide-posts along the way.



The Mushroom Cloud symbolises the collective death of our civilisation and perhaps humankind itself. We associate this symbol with a possible global nuclear catastrophe, but we want to widen our vision and look at a number of planetary threats to human survival and well-being.

Since the threats to our survival are human-caused, they are symptoms of our individual and collective limited vision and immaturity. We have created a situation which is forcing us to grow up, to mature. This growing up that is required of us calls for a developing awareness of our inter-connectedness - an evolution of a new kind. We now have the opportunity to choose our future. It has become an evolutionary imperative.

## THE NUCLEAR DANGER

We personally have been acutely aware of the danger of nuclear war since the late 1950s. We lived in the same U.S. city as the "Dr. Strangelove War Room", the headquarters of the Strategic Air Command. The countryside bristled with underground missile silos. B-52 planes flew overhead around the clock, each carrying nuclear weapons. We were told to build fall-out shelters to protect our families and to arm ourselves with guns to shoot our neighbours if necessary. In school our children were taught "duck and cover" exercises which supposedly would protect them from nuclear blast.

As we felt so deeply alienated from the direction of US foreign policy of that period, we made the difficult decision to leave our home country and migrate with our four children. Along with many other Americans at that time, we chose Australia.

We very quickly became part of the Australian community and soon felt at home in the Sydney Friends Meeting. However, in the years since, Australia has become increasingly drawn into U.S. nuclear strategy with U.S. bases on Australian soil, B-52s using the Darwin area and U.S. warships making port visits. During these years we also saw the hopeful signs of detente. Following the Cuban crisis both the USA and the USSR took initiatives to de-escalate the arms race. Since this happened once, we know it is possible and offers us hope. The detente, alas, was not to continue. We have seen the re-emergence of the Cold War mentality with the intensifying of the build-up of new and more dangerous weapons systems.

This is the situation in which all of us find ourselves today.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PERIL

Another threat to our existence, though longer-term, is the progressive destruction of our life-support systems through toxic wastes, acid rain, rising rates of radioactivity, the greenhouse effect and loss of topsoil. We hear these every day on our news reports and know some of them from personal experience. Many of us live in cities where both air and water are heavily polluted; many of us have seen the erosive effects of clear-felling of our forests. We feel concern for the

future of the world's children as we consume resources faster than they can be replenished. The increasing world population continues to put nearly intolerable pressures on the environment and greatly exacerbates human suffering.

## TODAY'S SILENT GENOCIDE

A catastrophe, not in the future but today, and affecting the greater part of humankind, is the hunger, homelessness and disease, caused by unequal distribution of the world's resources. Those who control these resources often use oppressive means to maintain their power.

Our present human behaviour has been termed the silent genocide of the poor and hungry of the world.

## ROOT CAUSES OF OUR DILEMMAS

These three present or impending catastrophes are not unrelated. As Quakers we seek to find root causes while, at the same time, attempting to deal with the symptoms. The nuclear arms race, the destruction of environmental life support systems, and massive poverty and injustice in an affluent world are symptoms of our present human condition. At the risk of oversimplifying complex issues, we are going to look at some of the causes that we see as basic to our dilemmas.

Our culture has conditioned us to view ourselves as separate competitive beings. This feeling of separateness - of alienation from our deepest selves, from others, from the natural world, and from the Divine Source - is a basic cause of fear, greed and selfishness. This leads to materialism, competition, exploitation, violence, and a patriarchal system which has further divided us from one another. These last qualities have led us into the crises which confront us.

Through greed and selfishness we have set up institutions that seek to acquire wealth and power. This wealth and power we feel then needs to be protected and defended from others. We thus build elaborate military and economic forces to defend our property and ourselves, and in doing that, create more wealth for the few who demand more protection.

Psychoanalyst Erich Fromm has described this condition as the "Mode of Having".<sup>1</sup> It concentrates on acquisitiveness, power and aggression which he said will almost inevitably end in nuclear war. He pointed out, however, that we may choose a "Mode of Being" based on love and faith in human potential which fosters meaningful, non-exploitative, productive activity devoted to the preservation of life.

Though we see these potential disasters as inter-related in their basic causes, we will concentrate our attention in this section on the nuclear peril and the arms race.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

What are some of the psychological factors that have allowed us to reach this point of crisis? We will mention three: repression/denial, limited identity and habituation.

The human mind has certain ways of functioning that are both protective and dangerous. When we encounter events, feelings, worries or terrors that we cannot handle, we may repress or deny them. How often have we heard or said "The future is too overwhelming to think about" or "God will not let it happen" or "There is nothing I can do about it anyway".

We all lead a double life. Each day we awaken and make our morning "cuppa" and plan our day's activities - going to work, taking the children to school, preparing meals. Yet beneath all the dailiness of life, there lies buried the knowledge that today may be the day that someone, somewhere, pushes the nuclear button. It may happen by computer error, or as a result of escalation of tensions in some far-off conflict area where the superpowers confront each other through "client nations". And so, feeling helpless, we repress or deny this knowledge.

We like to see ourselves as trusting and peaceful, yet we share a human characteristic of fearing and distrusting members of groups other than our own. Thus we build the concept of the enemy. This is done by individuals, groups and nations. As psychiatrist Jerome Frank explains "Enemy images mirror each other; that is, each side attributes the same virtues to itself and the same vices to the enemy. 'We' are trustworthy, peace loving, honourable and humanitarian. 'They' are treacherous, war-like and cruel."<sup>2</sup>

We have seen in our own life time our national enemy change a number of times. During World War Two the Germans and Japanese were seen as cruel, barbaric and sub-human. Our allies, the Russians, were seen as brave, stalwart and courageous. Today the West Germans and the Japanese are seen as industrious, reliable and friendly. The Russians have now become our national enemy and are seen as dangerous and aggressive. Studies done in the USA in 1966 found that Americans saw the Chinese as "war-like, treacherous and sly". In a later study after President Nixon's visit to China, these adjectives disappeared and were replaced by "hard working, intelligent, artistic, practical and progressive".

The psychological factor which allows us to maintain the concept of the enemy is our human need for a "belonging-identity". Quaker Adam Curle uses this descriptive phrase in his book **Mystics and Militants**.<sup>3</sup> When we maintain a limited identification (to ourselves, our family, our nation, our beliefs), we are able to believe in an "us or them" world.

Another psychological mechanism which prevents the reality of our perilous situation from activating us is **habituation**. Like all living creatures, we humans stop attending to stimuli which have persisted over long periods such as the forty years of the nuclear danger. We use the word "habituation" to describe this phenomenon. For example, each day as we drive through heavy traffic, we lose the consciousness of ever-present danger and often drive as if an automatic computer were at the wheel. So it is with living with the bomb.

Before going on to the second symbol, it may be helpful to summarise briefly what we have been saying. We have mentioned three catastrophes which face us today and in the next decades - the threat of nuclear holocaust, the degeneration of our environment, and the "silent genocide of the poor and hungry". We have said that separation from our inner selves, one another and the Eternal is a basic cause of the fear, greed, selfishness leading to the present and potential disasters. As Ken Wilber has said, "Whenever there is **other**, there is fear."<sup>4</sup> We described briefly three of the psychological factors which keep us divided and separate - denial/repression, our limited identity which allows us to think in "us **or** them" terms, and habituation.

## PART 2

### CRISIS / OPPORTUNITY



We now move on to our second symbol, the Chinese character for crisis. The idea that crises have both negative and positive aspects is captured in the Chinese ideogram for crisis - the first part of the word means "beware" or "danger". The second part has a very different implication - "opportunity for change".

Friend Kenneth Boulding has said "Our precious little planet is in one of the critical stages, perhaps the most critical stage, of its whole existence. It is in a position of immense danger and immense potentiality".<sup>5</sup>

### ADDICTION

We all know that danger can awaken in us that deep survival sense that seeks for new and radical life-preserving solutions. Those of us who have sought to help people in the throes of chronic addiction, as I (Dougald) did for years in my medical practice, know that "hitting bottom" sometimes elicits such a survival response. The emotional as well as intellectual realisation that one will lose family, health, job or life itself brings new strength to be able to envisage living without the addictive agent. Following that vision, this survival strength allows the addict to live a drug/alcohol free life, a day at a time with the support of family, friends and fellow sufferers. For the addict, this often involves the discovery of the spiritual dimension of life.

Nations, like individuals, may become addicted. In the last part of the twentieth century, nations are using arms like a hard-drug addict uses heroin. The weapons increase as the addiction progresses. The ability of nations to seek peaceful solutions to conflict diminishes.

For many centuries, societies have relied on force of arms to settle differences - at great cost to individuals, families and nations - but never before has all life been under threat from the weapons of destruction. Never before has such a huge proportion of the world's resources (one trillion dollars annually) been used to fuel an arms race; never in history have we lived with such massive insecurity. It is as if the nations of the world were in the grip of an insane addiction - totally out-of-control.

We searched the literature for nations which are reducing their arms expenditures, and found only China, Argentina and Peru; in all the other 156 countries, military budgets are burgeoning and threaten global economic bankruptcy. It is obvious that we have reached a point where war itself is obsolete. The addiction to weapons which threaten continuing life on our planet must be viewed as an illness which, at any moment, could be terminal. We must focus on the two super-powers which hold 90% of the potentially omnicidal nuclear weapons as their addiction is the immediate and on-going threat. We have used the word "omnicidal" in place of "suicidal" as it more aptly describes the death-of-all rather than that of a single nation.

Our neighbour, New Zealand, is attempting to tell its powerful friend, the USA, that it will not support its addiction and does not wish to be a part of U.S. nuclear strategy. If other nations such as Australia would take similar action, to seek to persuade their addicted friend to give up its suicidal (and omnicidal) behaviour, change could take place (wouldn't we do as much for an alcoholic friend or family member?).

As friends of the super-powers (as well as acting for the common security of all the citizens of the planet), six countries (Mexico, Argentina, Sweden, India, Greece and Tanzania) have given a lead to other countries by issuing the "Five Continent Initiative". In it they urge the USA and the USSR to freeze nuclear weapons, discontinue nuclear testing, strengthen the United Nations, and begin the disarmament process. They have also offered to act as third-party mediators between Moscow and Washington. We would hope that Australia might join this effort to make it the "Six Continent Initiative"! This is an appropriate act of rescue for nations locked into a fatal addictive illness.

## DESPAIR AND PERSONAL POWER

In this section we are using some of U.S. psychologist Joanna Macy's work from her book **Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age**.<sup>6</sup> She has expressed so well the working-through-pain process that we now accept as part of grieving and bereavement work. This process is a way forward beyond the psychic numbing of denial and repression, the limited identification which leads to building the enemy image, and habituation.

## PAIN FOR THE WORLD

Joanna Macy tells us, "The responses that arise, as we behold what we are doing to our world, are compounded of many feelings. There is fear - dread of what is overtaking our common life and terror at the thought of the suffering in store for our loved ones and others. There is anger - yes, and bitter rage that we live our lives under the threat of so avoidable and meaningless an end to the human enterprise. There is guilt; for as members of society we feel implicated in this catastrophe and haunted by the thought that we should be able to avert it. And above all, there is sorrow. Confronting so vast and final loss as this brings sadness beyond the telling."

"Even these terms, however - anger, fear, sorrow - are inadequate to convey the feelings we experience in this context; for they connote emotions long familiar to our species as it faced the inevitability of personal death." These feelings cannot be equated with dread of our own death. "Their source lies less in concern for the personal self than in apprehension of collective suffering - of what happens to others, to human life and fellow species, to the heritage we share, the unborn generations to come, and our planet itself, wheeling there in space."

For those who fear to feel the pain and despair for the world and say "Let's not get emotional," our answer is to say, as Dr Helen Caldicott has said, "Not to be emotional about the death of our children is to need the attention of a psychiatrist."<sup>7</sup>

Sometimes I (Dougald) have a concern that as gentle Quakers we may avoid what we call the "negative emotions" of anger and fear as we attempt to see ourselves, one another, and the world in exclusively positive terms. An attender at Friends Meeting has called it a "tyranny of niceness".

## BEYOND DESPAIR

T.S. Eliot has said, "Where do we go from a world of insanity?  
Somewhere on the other side of despair." <sup>8</sup>

How do we respond to this "world of insanity"? We may use denial or repression and pay the price of psychic numbing. As Robert Murphy, Quaker psychiatrist, said, "The mind pays for its deadening to the state of the world by giving up its capacity for joy and flexibility." <sup>9</sup>

Habituation to this "world of insanity" results in accepting insanity as reality and living life as though no threat exists.

Or do we see this "world of insanity" for what it is and feel pain for the world? Look into the abyss so that we can look beyond it? As Joanna Macy tells us, "Feelings of pain for our world are natural and healthy and a measure of our humanity."

The Buddhist poet Thich Nhat Hanh has said that "what we need in our time is to hear within us the sounds of the earth crying." <sup>10</sup>

At the time of the Cuban crisis, many years ago when we were living in the USA, I (Carol) wrote out of my feelings of anguish words that tried to express my despair and fear but also my hope. Those words, written when our children were young, still grip me when I think of our grandchildren, the symbol to me of all the world's children and of the future. Sometimes my despair nearly overwhelms me and I long to be able to deny or repress the reality of the pain I'm feeling.

`I'm wondering how many of you share these feelings - or do sometimes?

`As we acknowledge and feel this pain, we release the energy which has been blocked by repression and denial. "Unblocking our pain for the world reconnects us with the larger web of life," Joanna Macy observes. "It is a testimony of our inter-connectedness . . . By recognising our capacity to suffer with our world, we dawn to wider dimensions of being." <sup>11</sup>

*I would like to suggest we pause for a few moments of quiet reflection - to allow ourselves to feel the pain for our beautiful world. . . Let us close our eyes and take a few deep breaths and allow ourselves to feel relaxed and centred. . . allow yourself to see in your mind's eye an image which is meaningful to you of*

*the anguish you feel for our planet or its inhabitants my image is of a hungry child . . .*

*Then ask yourself why you feel pain for whatever image you see. . . is it because you know that you are somehow connected to that image? . . . are you part of that image at your deepest level? . . .*

*Try to visualise some symbolic way in which you are connected to that image . . . you may see yourself and the image as part of a vast living river flowing into the sea. . . or as part of the living circle of life with the Divine Light as its centre and as part of you and of your image . . .*

*Still sensing these connections, open your eyes and slowly come back to the present moment . . .*

As we feel our anguish for the world, there is "pain still, but a lot more. There is wonder, even joy, as we come home to our mutual belonging - and there is a new kind of power."<sup>12</sup>

When we speak of feeling our personal power, we mean "power-with", not "power-over", as insights from feminist analysis have described. This new kind of power is not the old "power-over" (I win, you lose) but a new feeling of energy that is "power with" (I win, you win) - or we may choose to call it the energy of love - the kind of love that wants to work with the other to develop each one's full potential. We need to re-claim this kind of power-energy, to move beyond the old forms of power-over, the adversarial model.

*Perhaps we might have a few moments of silence in which we allow ourselves to feel the "power-with" - the energy of love - Perhaps we can think of a time when our feelings of "power-with" brought some sort of positive change in an area of our lives . . .*

## USING OUR POWER FOR TRANSFORMATION

As we learn to believe in and trust our "power-with", we can begin to use it to transform ourselves and our society. James Robertson in **The Sane Alternative**<sup>13</sup> looks at our present global crisis as opportunities for transformation to a sane, humane, and ecological future.

According to Robertson, our over-developed political and economic institutions are at the point of break-down. We are propping them up with escalating weaponry; they are bringing environmental disasters and a continuation of Third World poverty and injustice.

These institutional break-downs, which we are seeing the beginnings of, provide the opportunity for a new paradigm shift. Robertson defines a paradigm shift as the "change that takes place from time to time in a basic belief or assumption or a constellation of the above, underlying our perceptions and actions. It can be seen as the cultural equivalent of an evolutionary leap."<sup>14</sup> A well known example is the shift in perception which took place in the 16th and 17th centuries influenced by Copernicus and Galileo, from the view that the sun goes around the earth to the view that the earth goes around the sun.

Powerful global forces are combining to create this break-down of existing institutions. These forces include domination by big technology, impending exhaustion of natural resources, pollution on a world-wide scale, overspending on the arms build-up, unemployment, inflation, widespread personal helplessness and general inability of institutions to meet human needs. We are seeing evidence of these forces in Australia today.

Meanwhile, Robertson claims that new growth points, leading to the paradigm shift, are emerging which may transform the old into a new and better society. These growth points include "a new emphasis on self-help, self-reliance and self-sufficiency; a new balance between the sexes; a growing interest in social, economic and political structures which serve people rather than dominate them; a growing commitment to appropriate technologies which do the same; a growing feeling that we are all inhabitants of the same planet, citizens of the same world; a growing ecological consciousness; and an increasing interest in a spiritual and cosmic approach to life".<sup>15</sup>

We don't yet know how permanent or how profound these transformations are or whether we are seeing a true "paradigm shift".

In her book **Creating Alternative Futures**<sup>16</sup>, Hazel Henderson has explained that the dominant institutions of a society often increase their efforts to reassure the public while their leaders "privately express doubt and fear". Not surprising "as it is precisely these institutions of government, business, academia, labour and religion, as well as their leaders, which are in decline and whose power is threatened and eroding!"

We know from studies being done at the University of Southern California the way that social transformations are accepted and adopted depend on a number of factors. Dr Everett Rogers and his co-workers have shown in their research studies that when 5% of a society accepts a new idea, it becomes "embedded". Prior to this point, proponents of the new idea must work incessantly just to keep the idea alive. We who work on peace issues know this to be true from our experience of the ebb and flow of public interest in peace. And even when the idea is "embedded" with a 5% acceptance, additional work and steady effort is needed until it is accepted by approximately 20% of the population at which point it becomes unstoppable.<sup>17</sup>

Over the past decade, we have seen two examples of a change in attitudes which have profoundly affected Western societies. One is the emergence of the environmental movement which continues to gather momentum to protect our living Earth. The other social change has been the unexpectedly rapid growth of the consciousness of women's role in our society. In our tertiary institutions there are now departments of environmental studies and of women's studies; there are branches of government dealing with these issues. We cannot imagine these changes fading away. They are both truly embedded and unstoppable.

## INSTITUTIONS IN TRANSITION

Some of us may feel that institutions are inflexible, but since they are made up of people, they are capable of change from within. Even now, many of these institutions are undergoing transitions. If we look around us, we see personal changes in awareness and consciousness in our own lives; probably all of us are involved in at least one - if not more - of these break-through areas which are changing our society.

The following are examples:

1. As Quakers we are part of a radical spiritual movement in which we are open to new leadings from the Divine Centre. Though our tradition reaches back over 300 years, it is still a radical departure from conventional and historical Western religious practice. There is also a new awareness of what other faiths, especially Eastern religions and spiritual traditions from older cultures such as the Aboriginal culture, have to teach us.

2. The women's movement is helping us to recognise and appreciate the "feminine" values: the intuitive, nurturing, trusting, compassionate, Non-hierarchical to replace the confrontational, adversarial, competitive. We hasten to add these values are not exclusive to one gender. We are also liberating ourselves from rigid sex-identity roles. We are learning that love and tenderness are not exclusively heterosexual qualities.
3. We are seeing the growth of global non-governmental organisations, communication and information networks which transcend national boundaries; for example, Amnesty International, Live-Aid, spacebridges using satellites for people-to-people discussion which happened between the USA and the USSR. When we watch spectacles such as Sport-Aid on our television screens, we feel the beginnings of a global community as people come together for a common cause. Greenpeace is an example of a transnational group for the protection of the natural environment.
4. Attitudes towards work and work-patterns are changing. People are choosing to give up full-time paid employment before retirement age in order to devote their time to creative and life-enhancing activities. Some are choosing part-time employment and are sharing jobs and parenting. People no longer see their entire identity in terms of their job. Hopefully, we are no longer asking young people "What do you want to **be** when you grow up?", meaning their choice of vocation.
5. We are assuming more personal responsibility for the way in which our money is used, ego ethical investment and income-sharing. The use of our tax money for military expenditure is being questioned and challenged.
6. There is more participation in the birth and dying process. We are looking at health holistically, appreciating the unity of mind-body-emotion-spirit.
7. Liberation movements, self-help and grass-roots initiatives are evolving in Third World countries and among indigenous people. As Aboriginal writer and lecturer Lilla Watson has written:

"If you have come to help me  
You are wasting your time.  
But if you have come because your liberation is bound  
up with mine,  
Then let us work together." <sup>18</sup>

8. Education systems are changing with growth of peace studies, training in conflict resolution, and studies which transcend national boundaries to 'I see problems as global in nature.
9. Many in the affluent countries are choosing voluntary simplicity as a lifestyle, developing a "gift-and-barter" economy outside the present economic system. By living more frugally in a material sense we may find we are living more richly in a personal sense. This is an area in our personal lives which gives us feelings of guilt as we struggle with balancing our beliefs in simple living with our middle-class affluence.
10. The world-wide peace movement has rapidly grown in numbers and expanded to include a wider cross-section of the community. "Green politics" in a number of countries has gained a significant following, particularly in Europe. The common denominators seem to be concern for the environment, a strong social conscience, a belief in grass-roots democracy, consensus decision-making, and non-violence. In Australia in 1984, a "peace Senator", Quaker Jo Vallentine, was elected on a nuclear disarmament ticket.
11. Continuing exploration of our inner selves, our relationships with one another and with the Eternal Spirit through meditative practices and the personal growth movement is gaining wide acceptance. As medical science and better nutrition offer an extended lifespan, this on-going exploration assumes enormous potential for personal fulfilment in our older years. If millions of retired people are meditating on a peaceful planetary vision, who knows what might happen?

These eleven areas of social change have all touched our lives; you no doubt can add others.

We would like to mention here a vitally important global organisation which, though it is not a new phenomenon, is unique in world history - the United Nations. Through its specialised agencies, world-wide conferences and special years such as the Year of Peace, the UN identifies planetary issues and attempts to find solutions. We will need to reform and strengthen the UN in both its peace-

keeping role and its potential for building a global world order to protect our planet and its peoples.

In addition, there are two hopeful growth areas we would like to mention which need our study, support, and promotion.

The first is the field of mediation and conflict resolution<sup>19</sup>, which is developing into a discipline using acquired skills. These techniques are being increasingly adopted by family and marriage counselors, labour-management negotiators, even the court system in some areas. In the case of disputes between nation-states, there are endless possibilities - through the auspices of a strengthened United Nations, the International Court of Justice, or specially trained mediators from neutral countries.

Civilian-based nonviolent defence<sup>20</sup> along Gandhian lines is another area which offers hope. The government of Sweden is looking seriously at a plan to add civilian units trained in nonviolent social defence to its conventional military forces. Harvard University has a Program on Nonviolent Sanctions headed by Dr. Gene Sharp, whose trilogy **The Politics of Nonviolent Action**<sup>21</sup> is considered a classic in this field. His most recent book **Making Europe Unconquerable**<sup>22</sup> outlines steps towards setting up a civilian-based defence system.

As Friends with our long peace witness, we are familiar with both these areas - conflict resolution and nonviolent defence. However, here in Australia there is much to be done to encourage and promote the study and adoption of these two peace-making and peace-keeping disciplines.

Before we move into the final section, we would like to return to our earlier mention of the break-down of many of our over-developed political and economic institutions. As anyone who has ever been a gardener knows, break-down is the signal for break-through. We watch the death and decay of last year's plants nurture the tender young shoots of new life as spring brings green renewal.

Brain-researcher Jean Houston says we are the people of the breakthrough.<sup>23</sup> There is no doubt that we are living in a time of unimaginable potentiality as well as unimaginable dangers.

We have been looking at the opportunities the present crises offer us. We have compared our world addiction to weapons to a personal addiction and suggested hopeful possibilities for change. We have felt our personal pain for the

world, and have tried to see in it the power and energy that comes from our identification with our nurturing earth and with one another - all of God's creation. We've described beginnings of a paradigm shift and the urgent need for an evolutionary leap since stress is evolution's tool. Lastly we have mentioned some of the institutions in transition which give us hope.

In the final section, symbolised by the view of our planet from space, we hope to show the spiritual basis for these social changes that will lead to the mode of "Being" rather than "Having".

## PART THREE

Sir Fred Hoyle, a British astronomer said in 1948, "Once a photograph of the Earth, taken from the outside is available. . . a new idea as powerful as any in history will be let loose." <sup>24</sup>



Our third symbol represents such a photograph of our planet as seen from space. The first cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, said he was fascinated by the beauty of the Earth, our small island of life in the ocean of the universe. <sup>25</sup>

Edgar Mitchell, the sixth man to stand on the moon, found the experience deeply moving and felt a strong mystical connection to the planet. <sup>26</sup> "It was a beautiful, harmonious, peaceful-looking planet, blue with white clouds, and one that gave you a deep sense of home, of being, of identity. It is what I prefer to call instant global consciousness."

Russell Schweickart, another astronaut, similarly felt a profound change in his relationship with the planet. "You realise that on that small spot, that little blue and white thing, is everything that means anything to you - all of history, music and poetry and art and death and birth and love, tears, joy, games, all of it on that little spot out there. . . you recognise that you are a piece of this total life. . . and when you come back there is a difference in that world now. There is a difference in that relationship between you and that planet and you and all those other forms of life on that planet, because you've had that kind of experience." <sup>27</sup>

*Let us take a few minutes to close our eyes. . . take some deep breaths and feel centred. . . then, surrounded by a golden light . . . we are transported far into space. . . so that we may look back at that lovely little round jewel . . . blue with swirling clouds here and there. . . that is our home. Let us really visualise it . . . surrounded by the jet blackness of outer space. It's so small we can cover it with our thumb. . . We note that there are no boundaries of nations. . . All the land*

*masses blend into one another. Let us allow ourselves to feel our love and affinity with the whole of our planet home . . . Let us feel our commitments to preserving this beautiful home which is God's creation. . . We are God's caretakers and in our hands lies its fate . . . let us allow ourselves to feel our sense of belonging.*

*Now let us return and be present where we are.*

## INTER-CONNECTEDNESS

The view of our earth from space has given a new meaning to the concept of inter-connectedness. We live on one planet, with one life support system.

Humanity, all life, is totally interdependent. Our future requires a new mode of thinking based upon this reality.

New discoveries in the sciences validate the knowledge that we are one, that everything is inter-related in one unified system. Nothing is isolated. This unity principle is manifested in every aspect of our existence.

In modern physics, matter is not seen as autonomous particles acting and reacting against one another. Rather, matter exists as a network of relationships, more like a wave than a particle. All matter in the universe is connected like a circle of fine thread. If any part moves, it sends a wave all around the circle, back even to the part that started the movement, expressed in the aphorism "move a stone and disturb the universe".

The study of ecology too has given us an understanding of the unity and inter-connectedness of all life. We have only one life support system. If we disrupt the ecosphere in one place, it creates unpredictable and undesirable effects in another.

As a result of this unity principle, we are seeing the emergence of what might be called the "scientist-mystic" - people such as Teilhard de Chardin, the late Sydney Friend Rudi Lemberg, Fritjof Capra, Gregory Bateson. Bateson taught that seeing things separately and putting them into categories to analyse is only one level of reality. He advised teachers and learners to focus on what connects the crab to the lobster and the orchid to the primrose and all four of them to you and me. Bateson saw this as a spiritual quest as well as a scientific one.<sup>28</sup>

At the core of every world faith is the need to break through the illusion of separateness and realise the unchangeable fact of our interdependence. We said earlier that separateness is a basic cause of fear, greed and selfishness - and it seems important to emphasise it here again. In centuries of religious institutionalisation and patriarchy, the theme of unity-consciousness is often hidden or distorted, but it is still there. As Joanna Macy says, "From Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Native American and Goddess religions, each offers images of the sacred web into which we are woven. . . We interexist - like synapses in the mind of an all-encompassing being." <sup>29</sup> For example, in the American Indian spiritual tradition, in smoking the peace pipe together, each person is remembering their centre, understood to be the same centre of every person, and of the universe itself.

Theodore Roszak in his book **Unfinished Animal** states, "We are religious beings down to our core; that there is no wholeness, no sanity, for us until we make spiritual need even more fundamental than all the others." <sup>30</sup>

As Friends we are familiar with these feelings of inter-connectedness. Our belief in the Divine Presence in every person and in the world, our meetings for worship when we seek to tune in to the Whole, to find "the still point of the turning world" align Friends to the widening awareness within the world community of this unity-consciousness.

In our long history many Friends have sought to articulate this mystical consciousness. John Yungblut, writing in **The Friend**, reminds us that the mystical faculty is present in all of us, as humans. "As Meister Eckhart implied, 'A mystic is not a special kind of person; every person is a special kind of mystic'." <sup>31</sup>

As Quaker Elizabeth Watson has written, "I became aware of a river flowing through (my religious searching) - the clear stream of mysticism in which time past and time future come together in the Eternal Now - and God is not sought outside, because we know beyond intellectual argument that we are part of God, that God is the sum total of all the members of creation, down to and including the basic rock, water and space of our universe. We know what Kenneth Boulding calls 'the burning oneness binding everything'." <sup>32</sup>

John Yungblut speaks of the "growing edge of continuing evolution on this planet as it reaches forward toward higher consciousness in the human species". <sup>33</sup> He identifies this emerging, evolving human consciousness as the mystical or

contemplative faculty. He goes on to say, "The cultivation of the inward journey through contemplative disciplines has assumed evolutionary and therefore cosmic significance. Our languishing earth and endangered human species cry aloud for this development under pain of extinction. Only a sense of mystical identification and solidarity can save our beleaguered planet by fuelling world-wide movements for reform - social, political and economic."

One of the fundamental challenges facing us is the recognition that we are in an evolutionary stage which we have not yet acknowledged - an emerging paradigm shift towards a shared unity-consciousness.

What does recognition of this expanded awareness mean for our lives? It means that it is impossible to see a Russian worker - or even a member of the Politburo - as an enemy - for who can have an enemy when we are One. It is frightening to recognise that the starving child on the TV screen is your sister, or that man being tortured in a faraway prison is your brother and so is the torturer. When we acknowledge our own deepest shadows, we can then look at the torturer - or the scientist at work in a nuclear weapons lab - and recognise **our** shadows as part of theirs. We also recognise the Divine Seed in all of us. This presents difficult challenges to our feelings of unity-consciousness and for both of us is an on-going struggle and discipline.

It's really a change in compassion at the deepest level. Teacher and writer Ram Dass tells us that "Compassion is a shared space, like love."<sup>34</sup> That kind of empathy with suffering, either in the present or possible future, comes through our expanded consciousness, not separateness. If we live only in an intellectual left-brain space, we are closed, separate, and feel alienated. We need to allow ourselves to trust our intuitive power, that power which comes from the Divine Centre, which we tune into in worship and meditation.

This intuitive knowledge of expanded consciousness, arrived at when we feel most centred, is difficult to maintain. It requires continual practice of mindfulness. We get it and we lose it. We need not feel despairing as we struggle to maintain higher levels of awareness in our everyday lives, recognising this as the natural ebb and flow of the growing process.

## VISION OF A NEW GLOBAL ORDER

This evolving planetary consciousness provides a basis to develop a new ethic and lifestyle needed for our survival. To make this radical new mode of thinking and being a reality in our lives, we need a vision of a world beyond war, beyond the present exploitative institutions, beyond competitive materialism, beyond nation-state loyalties.

We need to find a balance between "the culture of the hunt" and "the culture of the hearth". The "culture of the hunt" emphasises competition, materialism, aggression while "the culture of the hearth" embodies the values of cooperation, nurturing, building community.

We may be viewed as "starry-eyed idealists" but our answer would be that authentic change must begin in the imagination and is in our own self-interest. We need to build into our hearts and minds the vision of a peaceful world community so that this vision affects our daily lives. I (Carol) know from my own experience how this sort of vision, upheld and supported in a group of people with a similar vision, is a constant source of renewal. My deepest sense of despair at our present situation comes at times when I am least connected and active in a social-change group. The weekly Meeting for Worship fills a deep need for me as I join with others in our common search for that sense of belonging to one another within the circle of God's love - that circle which extends to include all of life - past, present and future, and of the planet itself.

A new global, spiritually-based world order will be grounded in a deep reverence for life, all life, a reverence for Being rather than having. We need to build global structures beyond national sovereignty which are equal to solving global problems, always remembering that we are part of the whole and what we do affects the whole. We need to believe this so deeply, so passionately that we will individually change the priorities of our lives.

We need to build strong support systems for one another as we face the turbulence that comes with radical social change.

As long as we are able to imagine alternatives to our present predicaments, make intentional decisions to set off in another direction and act on those decisions, we can reverse our present suicidal course. We **must** develop our capacity and our courage to choose. We **can** take part in our own social and spiritual evolution.

And finally, how do we as Friends, individually and collectively, respond to this evolutionary leap which we are being pushed to make if we are to survive as a civilisation? We said earlier that we were hopefully beginning a process - opening doors. That's the way we'd like to leave it, hoping we can remain open, trusting our Inner Light, letting the Light guide us not away from the world, but **into** the world. It will mean difficult choices and sacrifices, perhaps chaos and confusion in our lives. But as well there is love, joy and deep fulfillment to be found in the evolutionary struggle to build the future we choose.



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