

Humanitarian Traditions and Russia's Problems

'Thou must go to Russia.' These were the portentous words 'audibly uttered' to Joseph James Neave, a Quaker from Suffolk, in 1890, and later recounted in his published journal. In his telling of the episode, Neave first replied 'I cannot', and 'trembled all over', before being calmed and accepting his call. Although the precise nature of his service was not revealed, Neave discovered later that he was to plead to end the oppression of Russian dissenters (Stundists and Molokans) who had been exiled to the Caucasus.¹ Once another more senior Quaker, John Bellows, had found himself similarly moved, the London Society of Friends agreed to support the trip.² The pair travelled to Russia where they visited imprisoned Stundists to comfort and pray with them, in addition to visiting Tolstoy. While Neave expressed hope for true religious and political liberty in Russia, his journey was spiritual, not political, in nature and he restricted a letter to the Tsar to assurances 'that [the Tsar] had not more loyal subjects in his entire Dominion anywhere than these exiled Stundists'.³ Neave's and Bellow's attempt to help the Stundists was not the most famous or influential example of advocacy from the time, but

¹ Joseph James Neave and Joseph Joshua Green, *Leaves from the Journal of Joseph James Neave* (London, 1911), p. 105.

² On the conventions of ministerial inspiration see Elfrida Vipont Foulds, 'Travel under concern: 300 years of Quaker experience,' *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* 50, no. 4 (1964); Rufus M. Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism* (London, 1921), p. 196.

³ Neave, *Leaves from the Journal of Joseph James Neave*, pp. 143, 150.

it does demonstrate the diversity and particularity of British engagements with Russia. Neave was acting as part of a longstanding Quaker tradition of travelling ministry, in which such inspirations were common. The subject of his calling, Russian dissenters, brought this tradition into contact with a broader humanitarian discourse on religious liberty in Russia. It is with the meeting between such local traditions and a growing discourse on Russia's problems that this book is concerned.

Russian problems were firmly lodged in the British consciousness by the 1880s, so it is perhaps unsurprising that Neave would be aware of the Stundists' plight. Contacts between Russian exiles, liberal politicians, radicals and journalists led to the formation of a pressure group for Russian reform. At around the same time, religious groups showed renewed interest in Russian dissenters and Jews, while the Russian famine in 1891–1892 saw British donors send thousands of pounds, and the press condemn Russia's malfunctioning agricultural economy. Humanitarian campaigns had emerged in response to the slave trade, Greek nationalism and aboriginal rights since the eighteenth century, but there was no continuous, coherent 'humanitarian' movement. This chapter thus looks at the factors that facilitated humanitarian interest in Russia as a basis for broader conclusions about the role of humanitarianism, the connections between local interests and faraway causes, and the longevity of these movements. Surveying the wellsprings of the humanitarian interest for Russia that emerged in this period, it traces the charitable, political and religious landscape of Britain, the prevalent views of Russia's condition, and the role of 'humanitarian' claims in international relations and civil society at the time in order to understand why a humanitarian view of Anglo-Russian relations emerged. It seeks to help locate humanitarianism in British civil society and political debates, and thus contribute to a history of humanitarianism 'from below'. The chapter first discusses the place of Russia in the British imagination, asking whether this image made Russia the object of intervention for the British. It then moves on to discuss what outline the forms of humanitarianism at the time, and concludes by analysing the role of humanitarianism in the Society of Friends, as a case study of the most prominent group in the book.

RUSSIAN AND INTERVENTION

What made Russia amenable to humanitarian engagement? Scholars have traced the concept of humanitarian intervention in international relations, asking whether atrocities could trigger humanitarian interventions.

Public opinion, as articulated by the news media and pressure groups, did push for various interventions in the nineteenth century and Western European states did include the sufferings of Christian populations, although not Muslim ones, in their calculations regarding the fate of the Ottoman Empire.⁴ Given the variety of other interests governing the behaviour of European states, it is perhaps too much to say that humanitarian intervention was a completely independent principle, responding primarily to suffering or the violation of rights.

Interventions which did not breach state sovereignty, such as famine relief or the SFRF's advocacy, took on a greater variety of forms. While voluntary action such as that described in this book perhaps did not have to overcome as high a bar as that which threatened the balance of power, this form of intervention was nevertheless highly selective and sporadic. Barnett classifies the nineteenth century as one of 'imperial humanitarianism', in which humanitarianism was linked to Western civilisation, but beneath this periodisation lie a number of competing humanitarian forms, representing a number of ideologies.⁵ For example, the relief efforts under study in this book sought to position themselves in opposition to British foreign policy and values. Another, more technocratic form of humanitarianism, centred on 'diplomatic conferences and international cooperation to combat' transnational crimes, was also developed in the period.⁶ Civilisation was a central, if malleable, concept through which the objects of intervention, and the right to intervene, were understood. In international relations the standard of civilisation was fairly fixed, signifying the European nations and North America as well as Japan and the Ottoman Empires in some estimates. In general discourse, its meaning fluctuated somewhat, and included notions of economic development, morality and political capacity. As Engerman shows in his analysis of American modernisers' relationship with Russia and the USSR, as views of Russian character, capability and social structure changed, so did the possibilities of modernisation in Western eyes. A

⁴Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁵Michael N. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

⁶Philippa Hetherington, "'The Highest Guardian of the Child': International Criminology and the Russian Fight Against Transnational Obscenity, 1885–1925', *Russian History*, 43.3–43.4 (2016), pp. 275–310 (pp. 277–278).

universalist belief that all, including Russians, were capable of modernisation competed with particularist beliefs in the ‘Russian character’.⁷

By the 1890s, two features dominated in analyses of Russia: its backward economy and its repressive institutions.⁸ The former was for some a deeper condition that necessitated government repression, or at least prevented too much reform. For others, Russia’s poverty was just another symptom of a ruthless autocracy and landowning class, unwilling to overturn the unfavourable conditions of the 1861 emancipation, or to invest in educating the peasantry. Anti-tsarism was propagated vigorously by the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom and its liberal supporters from the 1890s (see Chap. 5). Of course many countries were poor or politically repressive, but the presence of a European, or Europeanised, elite and a Christian peasantry, made Russia a different proposition. As Watenpaugh shows with respect to the Ottoman Empire and its remnants after the First World War, humanitarian interventions often rested on a prior engagement with a part of the population. Protestant missionaries had for many years sought to convert and help the Armenian populations in the Middle East, and these missionaries, along with the American University in Beirut, formed the network on which humanitarian aid was based. While aid flowed freely to Christians connected with the institutions of American modernisation or confessional preference, disasters affecting Muslim populations were met with shrugs and silence. Watenpaugh uses the concept of a ‘humanitarian imagination’ to describe the interlinking of contacts and ideas that promote humanitarian crises in Western eyes.⁹

Russia too was imagined as a place worthy of help long before any intervention took place. Its place in the British imagination, or at least the liberal imagination, was the fruit of a number of intellectual trends, travel works and scholarly books on the country. In the early nineteenth century, the country was seen to be divided both geographically, as it was

⁷David C. Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁸Teodor Shanin, *Russia as a ‘Developing Society’* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), p. xi; Engerman; for Western views of Eastern European underdevelopment in general see Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

⁹Keith David Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015).

a 'European power with an Asiatic territory',¹⁰ and sociologically, as it had a Europeanised noble class and a large, 'backward' peasantry.¹¹ Later in the century, the characterisation of civilisation overlaying barbarism was flipped as more positive views of Russia were sought in her peasantry and 'ancient' constitutional institutions, the *mir* (village commune) and the *veche* (public assembly) in Novgorod.¹² The influential *Times* journalist and author Donald MacKenzie Wallace asserted that the Russian village communes were 'capital specimens of representative constitutional government of the extreme democratic type'.¹³ MacKenzie Wallace's praise of the *mir* was shared by many others, including those who saw it as a potential revolutionary resource.¹⁴ Discussion of the 1861 emancipation of the serfs brought the question of the capability of Russia's peasants to the fore. McKenzie Wallace's 1877 book, while optimistic about the peasants' future, and warning against 'monstrous' depictions of serfdom as might feature in 'sensation novels', still questioned the efficacy of Russia's institutions. The peasants were not poor because of inherent qualities, but because of serfdom, followed by the 'rack rents' in post-emancipation Russia. McKenzie Wallace's book and others like it were important not for advocating any one political position on Russia (he was more conservative than most of the SFRF, for instance), but rather for putting Russian problems into the terms of Western social and political categories. For example, Wallace talked about Russian Christian sects as nonconformists, using terminology from British history, which would be important in leading British Christians to identify with Russian ones. Focus on the deliberative arrangements of the *mir* allowed the

¹⁰Lyall, *The Character of the Russians: And a Detailed History of Moscow. Illustrated with Numerous Engravings. With a Dissertation on the Russian Language, and an Appendix, Containing Tables, Political, Statistical, and Historical, a Catalogue of Plants Found in and near Moscow; an Essay on the Origin and Progress of Architecture in Russia*, &C. &C. (London: T. Cadell, 1823), p. 10.

¹¹David Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 22.

¹²"ART. III.—I. History of the Russian Empire", *Quarterly Review*, 113: 225 (1863: January), p. 60.

¹³Donald MacKenzie Wallace, "Russia," in Francesca Wilson, *Muscovy Russia Through Foreign Eyes 1553–1900* (London: George Allen & Unwin), p. 276.

¹⁴Teodor Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and 'the Peripheries of Capitalism'* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983).

peasants to be seen as capable subjects, worthy of help in liberal eyes, and at least partly allayed images of peasant lethargy. This more detailed image of Russia combined with the growth of nationalism in the West to mean that, instead of being merely separate from the Roman–Germanic world, Russia was now a distinct nation like any other, and was to a greater extent seen on its own terms.¹⁵ According to Malia, the reforms of Alexander II meant that Russia was seen in terms of Western political categories, and given a ‘political personality’.¹⁶

A belief that Russia’s energies were fettered by the autocracy was not limited to revolutionaries. Racial or civilisational generalisations—of an ‘Asiatic’ peasantry, or the torpor induced by the endless steppe—were less common than critiques of institutions. MacKenzie Wallace was broadly conservative in outlook. He did not dispute the common view that the peasants were apathetic and lethargic, but still displayed faith in the emancipation to allow some degree of enlightenment:

I have endeavoured to represent serfage in its normal, ordinary forms rather than in its occasional monstrous manifestations. Of these latter I have a collection containing ample materials for a whole series of sensation novels, but I refrain from quoting them, because I do not believe that the criminal annals of a country give a fair representation of its real condition. Imagine an author describing family life in England by the chronicles of the Divorce Court! The method would, of course, seem to all men incredibly absurd, and yet it would not be much more unjust than that of an author who should describe serfage in Russia by those cases of reckless oppression and inhuman cruelty which certainly did sometimes occur, but which as certainly were exceptional. Most foreigners are already, I believe, only too disposed to exaggerate the oppression and cruelty to which serfage gave rise, so that in quoting a number of striking examples I should simply be pandering to that taste for the horrible and the sensational which is for the present in need of no stimulus. It must not, however, be supposed that in refraining from all description of those abuses of authority which the proprietors sometimes practiced I am actuated by any desire to whitewash serfage or attenuate its evil consequences. No great body of men could long wield such enormous uncontrolled power without abusing it, and no great body of men could long live under such power without suffering morally and materially from its pernicious influence. And it must

¹⁵ Malia, *Russia Under Western Eyes*, p. 190.

¹⁶ Malia, *Russia Under Western Eyes*, p. 168.

be remembered that this pernicious influence affected not only the serfs, but also the proprietors. If serfage did not create that moral apathy and intellectual lethargy which formed, as it were, the atmosphere of Russian provincial life, it did much at least to preserve it. In short, serfage was the chief barrier to all material and moral progress, and it was, therefore, natural that in a time of moral awakening such as that which I have described in the preceding chapter the question of Serf Emancipation at once came to the front.¹⁷

Just as important as these sociological perspectives was Russian culture. Russian literature began to be translated into English from the 1860s, and went a long way to improving foreign perceptions of the country's level of civilisation.¹⁸ Authors such as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky demonstrated the distinctiveness of the 'Russian soul', giving the country a voice of its own and marginalising the views of Western travellers.¹⁹ Growing appreciation of Russian artists and Russian peasants meant that for many the ruthless autocracy and venal bureaucracy came to be seen as fetters on the 'real' Russia rather than the civilised veneer of an 'Asiatic' country. For all the 'Russianness' of the characters in these works, they were nevertheless made subjects possible to empathise with, distinct but not wholly 'other' or uncivilised. The importance of Russian literature in generating support for humanitarian and anti-autocratic measures can be seen in the novels of the Russian terrorist, Stepniak, which sought to make his motivations comprehensible, and admirable, to westerners.

Lev Tolstoy was among the most influential voices denouncing tsarism and extolling the virtues of Russia's peasants. Quotes from the novelist were common in newspaper reports on the 1891 famine as well as the repression of non-Orthodox Christians. His programme of spiritual Christianity and simple living won him disciples across Britain and elsewhere.²⁰ In this sense, Tolstoy was important not just as a source of news on Russia's problems, but because he put forward a vision of Russian life that British readers could identify with, or even wish to imitate in

¹⁷Donald MacKenzie Wallace, *Russia* (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1877), pp. 483–484.

¹⁸Malia, *Russia Under Western Eyes*, p. 194.

¹⁹Wilson, *Muscovy*, p. 215.

²⁰Charlotte Alston, *Tolstoy and His Disciples: The History of a Radical International Movement* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

some aspects. Russian peasants were not just labourers in an economically backward system of agriculture, but evinced virtues and maintained institutions not found in the industrialised West, such as the *mir*. These ideas were not created by Tolstoy, but the role of his and others' writing in the West shows how images of Russia and its problems created the basis for humanitarian intervention. Both the depth of identification with Russian life and the angles with which Britons approached Russian problems owe something to Tolstoy and his contemporaries. Of course, few Westerners went to Russia to implement Tolstoyan humanitarian solutions—although support for the Doukhobor sect drew heavily on such ideas—instead taking their own professional techniques and ideological baggage with them.

VARIETIES OF HUMANITARIANISM

In tracing the changing meanings of humanitarianism, Davies shows that 'across the nineteenth century, there was a general shift from moral philanthropy or the "good of humanity" as an abstraction, to an imperative of transformation and social and political change.' If humanitarianism was defined no more precisely than as an 'affection for humanity', a large variety of activities could follow from this feeling.²¹ The best way to deploy compassion was a matter for debate and experiment as towards the end of the century, statisticians, philanthropists and reformers interested in what was called 'the social question' sought to refine and reposition compassion in various social and economic frameworks.²² Gilbert Murray, a classics professor and internationalist, discussed the history of humanitarianism in a letter: 'In cases of very good government, humanitarianism seems to dwindle away or exist invisibly in another form. There is a Burmese civil servant here, high up, who speaks of all subjects in the high official tone, unsympathetic and "illiberal". At a time of high grain prices, he did not collect revenues, but this was a matter of "administration" not

²¹Katherine Davies, 'Continuity, Change and Contest: Meanings of "Humanitarian" from the "Religion of Humanity" to the Kosovo War', *HPG Working Paper*, 2012, pp. 1–31 (p. 3).

²²Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians*, 1st edn (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

“humanitarianism.”²³ Some, such as the Humanitarian League, sought to promote humanitarian rationales as a guiding principle for many areas of national life and public policy.²⁴ For most, however, humanitarianism was seen as Murray saw it: a way to ameliorate destruction beyond the reach of normal administration, and as an outgrowth of a more civilised, or more Christian, society, more than a philosophical or social system in itself. It was, therefore, characterised by diversity of practices and political orientations.

In understanding these orientations, a useful point of departure is to note that humanitarianism was, until the twentieth century, an almost wholly voluntary activity. The interests and skills of the volunteers were therefore a key ingredient in the interventions under study. As such, the ideals of humanitarianism intersected with class, gender, ideology and profession, and intervention in Russia should therefore be understood as a product of the personal and professional aspirations of the humanitarians as much as of images of Russia's suffering population. The humanitarians under study came from several overlapping groups. Most could not be described as professional humanitarians. Those seeking to defend Russia's revolutionaries were often journalists, politicians, writers or religiously affiliated. The famine relief commissioners in 1891–1892 worked as merchants, manufacturers and in similar jobs. Jewish and Christian causes tended to be taken up by already existing bodies within these groups. Many of these amateur humanitarians had experience in previous fields or campaigns such as the Franco–Prussian War, even if it had not been their main occupation. By the time of the 1921 famine, however, a number of ‘career humanitarians’ can be identified.

Although the famine relief and advocacy efforts in Russia clearly differed from domestic charity, they nevertheless echoed some of the latter's motivations, personnel and practices. One important factor was gender. As has been shown by historians, middle- and upper-class women became increasingly engaged in various forms of social service, and particularly ‘slumming’, in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Charity work offered an outlet for many women denied entry into other

²³Gilbert Murray, letter to H.N. Brailsford [an SFRF member], 5 September 1905, GB 394/HNB 4, *The Papers of H.N. Brailsford*, LHA.

²⁴Dan Weinbren, ‘Against All Cruelty: The Humanitarian League, 1891–1919’, *History Workshop Journal*, 1994, pp. 86–105.

fields. Ross argues that ‘The various kinds of women’s education, charity, and parish work that intensified in the 1860s can all be seen as wedges with which women could pry their way into national life as they moved across the shifting divide between the public and private spheres.’²⁵ In the last decades of the century schools and universities began to promote social service among female students. Brewis shows how:

Voluntary work at girls’ schools was promoted as a means of building character. It was also seen as a way to prepare middle-class girls for work in the world, paid or unpaid. Hence even very small private schools looked for opportunities to promote an ideal of service among pupils. Many such schools aimed primarily to equip their pupils for a life of leisure, but also aimed at making ‘useful’ women who would live responsible lives and fulfil social duties.²⁶

While the ideal of service was echoed in the motivations of volunteers for Russia, more evident, however, was the model of action promoted by such training (and path to professional, or spiritual, fulfilment). Without speculating too much on motives or personal satisfaction, it is clear that much can be illuminated by looking at the skills and habits of humanitarian workers. Gill, for instance, argues that ‘institutional prerogatives, occupational protocols and unspoken assumptions are as consequential as acknowledged ideals and ethical resolutions’.²⁷ The late nineteenth century saw a growing, and sometimes polarised, array of relief organisations, practices and workers. The Charity Organisation Society (COS) was formed in 1869 with the aim of applying scientific principles to charity and trained many social workers and humanitarians in the subsequent decades. The scientific orientation of the COS put it at odds with charities such as Barnardo’s, whose ‘sensationalist’ and sentimental methods the COS sought to discredit.²⁸ Yet, as Gill argues, traditional notions of

²⁵Ellen Ross, *Slum Travelers: Ladies and London Poverty, 1860–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 19.

²⁶Georgina Brewis, ‘From Working Parties to Social Work: Middle-Class Girls’ Education and Social Service 1890–1914’, *History of Education*, 38.6 (2009), 761–777 (p. 763).

²⁷Rebecca Gill, *Calculating Compassion: Humanity and Relief in War, Britain 1870–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 210.

²⁸Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 88–139.

'heartfelt compassion' co-existed with a new emphasis on standardisation and efficiency.²⁹ Some charity remained highly gendered and conservative. Kate Marsden's contemporary book, *On Sledge and Horseback to the Outcasts of Siberia* (1892), for instance, documents her trip to help Siberian lepers, which she calls 'essentially women's work', and which carried endorsements from the British and Russian monarchies.³⁰ Perhaps more typical was the tendency from the late nineteenth century, and particularly after the First World War, for humanitarian organisations to grow internationally and to systematise their practices and principles.³¹ The League of Nations and associated technical bodies formalised the transnational co-operation that had been growing for decades.³²

Humanitarian work was defined as much by the problems it sought to solve as by its methods. As well as domestic charity, war relief came to prominence in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Aided by journalism and driven by willing volunteers, the war in Northern France was accompanied a concerted relief effort. Two organisations came to the fore: the British National Aid Society (NSA), later the British Red Cross Society, aiding wounded soldiers, and the Quaker Friends' War Relief Committee, focused on innocent civilians and seeking to advance pacifism and Christianity. The latter objected to what they perceived as the NSA's endorsement of militarism. The FWVRC would persist as a vehicle for Quaker values, particularly pacifism, working in Eastern Europe and the First World War. Humanitarianism here was entwined with the debates on British foreign policy so that undertaking war relief was for the FWVRC to comment on war.³³ In the period under study, relief had strong ties

²⁹ Gill, *Calculating Compassion: Humanity and Relief in War, Britain 1870–1914*, p. 7.

³⁰ Kate Marsden, *On Sledge and Horseback to the Outcast Siberian Lepers* (London: The Record Press, 1891).

³¹ Barnett, p. 83.

³² Susan Pedersen, 'Back to the League of Nations: Review Essay', *American Historical Review*, 112.4 (2007), pp. 1091–1117; Frank Trentmann, 'After the Nation-State: Citizenship, Empire and Global Coordination in the New Internationalism, 1914–1930', in *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c. 1880–1950*, ed. by Philippa Levine and Frank Trentmann Kevin Grant (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Paul Weindling, *International Health Organisations and Movements, 1918–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³³ Rebecca Gill, '"The Rational Administration of Compassion": The Origins of British Relief in War', *Le Mouvement Social*, 227.2 (2009), pp. 9–26.

with liberal internationalist political culture.³⁴ Anti-war sentiment had seen a deputation of Quakers intended to prevent the Crimean War visit Moscow in 1854, and the Quakers would later undertake relief work in the parts of Finland bombarded by the Royal Navy so as to signal their disapproval of British policy.³⁵ Persistent tension between Britain and Russia in Central Asia and elsewhere meant that pacifists such as the journalist W.T. Stead were particularly enthusiastic about the prospects of the Hague Peace Conference proposed by the Tsar in 1899.³⁶ There was also considerable support for Russian anti-tsarist movements. Greek liberation in the 1820s, support for Giuseppe Mazzini in the 1850s and other broadly liberal causes had similarly won support in Britain, and many of those supporting the victims of Russian oppression saw themselves as part of a tradition of solidarity. The humanitarianism generated from this tradition was decidedly non-professional and usually took the form of advocacy. As will be shown in Chap. 3, however, this solidarity with liberal and radical movements also helped to buttress relief work in Russia (as well as in the Christian provinces of the Ottoman Empire).

QUAKERISM AND HUMANITARIANISM

The chapter now turns to focusing on the relationship between the Society of Friends and humanitarianism. Quakers led the British famine relief in 1891–1892, aided the Doukhobors from 1898, raised a small famine fund in 1907, and worked in the Buzuluk famine district from 1921. They therefore provide a thorough example of the process by which humanitarian work is taken up at the micro-level. They had specific procedures for humanitarian or other work, debated such issues at conferences,

³⁴Casper Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism, 1880–1930: Making Progress?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

³⁵Andrew Newby, “‘Rather Peculiar Claims Upon Our Sympathies’: Britain and Famine in Finland, 1856–1868,” in M. Corporaal, C. Cusack, L. Janssen, & R. van den Beuken, eds., *Global Legacies of the Great Irish Famine: Transnational and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 61–80; Andrew G. Newby, “The Society of Friends and Famine Relief in Ireland and Finland, c. 1845–1857,” in Patrick Fitzgerald, Christine Kinealy and Gerard Moran, eds., *Irish Hunger and Migration: Myth, Memory and Memorialization* (Connecticut, 2015), pp. 107–120.

³⁶W.T. Stead, “The Great Pacifist: an Autobiographical Character Sketch,” *The Review of Reviews for Australasia*, August, 1912, pp. 609–620.

and produced a large volume of written reports and memoirs. By looking at their organisation and ideals, we can discern how humanitarian campaigns were formed, why they took particular shapes, and how these changed over time. What principles and techniques underlay this engagement with Russian problems, only one of which was religious? The section considers an aspect (humanitarianism) of the worldly role and self-perception of the Quakers, a religious group that evolved from a radical sect in the seventeenth century³⁷ to respectable middle-class dissenters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries³⁸ and, in one Quaker's words, 'a spiritually-driven association of activists defined by a strong social commitment and enduring pacifist ethic' in the early twentieth century.³⁹ These stances towards society reveal broader attitudes to historical phenomena such as individual rights, economic morality and political techniques.⁴⁰ As David Feldman argues, a minority's significance—the Quakers were a numerical minority in most humanitarian campaigns and within nonconformist and liberal society more generally—lies in its 'axis of interaction' with the state or dominant groups.⁴¹ Here the Society can show how an insular group saw humanitarianism as a way of expanding its influence, and how the resultant activity mediated the place of humanitarianism in the broader society and polity.

The abolitionist Thomas Clarkson's early nineteenth-century description of Friends as 'more highly professing Christians' is symptomatic of the common elision of Quakerism and charitable behaviour.⁴² The book weighed a number of factors including the Quakers' 'principle of vigilance and interference in moral conduct' and traced the diffusion of Quaker principles into society.⁴³ It narrated how:

³⁷ Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1975).

³⁸ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

³⁹ Roger C. Wilson, quoted from conversation by Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism, 1860–1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 6.

⁴⁰ As argued in Bernstein, *Cromwell & Communism: Socialism and Democracy in the Great English Revolution*.

⁴¹ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture 1840–1914*, p. 8.

⁴² Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism Volume 3*, p. 263.

⁴³ Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism Volume 1*, p. 181.

On their first appearance as a society they suffered as tradesmen, because others, displeased with the peculiarity of their manners, withdrew their custom from their shops. But in a little time the great outcry against them was, that they had for the trade of the country into their hands. This outcry arose in part from a strict execution of all commercial appointments and agreements between them and others, and because they never asked too prices for the commodities which they sold.⁴⁴

Clarkson offered a rational choice model of religion. He stated that if he were asked whether he would like to be a Quaker, he would consider what the advantages of any particular religion are by considering scripture, creed and character.⁴⁵ Rather than debating doctrinal truth, his main object was to show the ‘various springs, which act upon the moral constitution for the formation of character’ in the habits and customs of the Quakers.⁴⁶ The religious thinker Rufus Jones, writing around this time, similarly put forward a progressive view, wherein Quaker charity was a natural outcome of its theology. Describing the transition from eighteenth-century Quietism to nineteenth-century social concern, he described how ‘a new interest appeared that was destined in the ripening of time to bring the Society once more to an era of real spiritual life and power. This new interest was a rediscovery of the beckoning social tasks of humanity.’ These were new ‘forms of expression’ of a ‘social spirit’ in the tradition of early Friends such as George Fox or John Woolman. Nevertheless, the Evangelicals who led this first revival did not understand the ‘environmental causes’ of suffering like Jones’s generation because ‘it has taken a whole century to ripen and define our problems and present methods of solving them.’⁴⁷ Jones’ talk of ‘ripening’ does not explain why certain causes were taken up in certain ways. He does not sufficiently explain the Quakers’ involvement in some campaigns and not others, or why they would conceive of politics as out of bounds, but charity as fitting, for example.

In line with the ideas of Jones and Clarkson, several modern historians have identified the Quakers as source of innovations in social and

⁴⁴ Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism Volume 3*, p. 226.

⁴⁵ Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism Volume 3*, p. 395.

⁴⁶ Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism Volume 3*, p. 435.

⁴⁷ Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism, Volume 1*, pp. 314–316.

humanitarian thought, or at least the first to put them into action.⁴⁸ While this is often exaggerated by historians and others, it is true that the group have been a distinctive and influential group.⁴⁹ It is also true that they offer an interesting example of the translation of 'religion' into 'society'.⁵⁰ Analysing the role of Quakers in broader historical processes is, however, problematic. The main difficulty is linking the specificity of Quaker doctrine and their small numbers to more widely significant events. Vanessa Morton suggests that relatively few studies 'examine the development of the Society of Friends as a denomination within the political, economic and social context.'⁵¹ Indeed, many internal histories of Quaker humanitarianism have been written, which offer limited consideration of external factors. John Ormerod Greenwood's comprehensive trilogy *Quaker Encounters* is typical of this approach. It covers Quaker relief from war and natural disasters as well as the development of Quaker missionary work in the late nineteenth century but, inevitably given its depth and focus, offers little in the way of social or political context.⁵² Where attempts are made to distinguish Quaker positions, they can sometimes involve unjustified interpretive leaps, such as in Helen Hatton's analysis of Quaker famine relief in Ireland, where she describes the Inner Light, perhaps the Quakers' most distinguishing theological belief, as 'a spirit moving without a theoretical superstructure',⁵³ which enabled the Quakers to

⁴⁸For example, abolition: David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770–1823* (London: Cornell University Press), pp. 213–254; Helen Hatton, *The Largest Amount of Good: Quaker Relief in Ireland 1654–1921* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press) 1993; Rebecca Gill, "'The Rational Administration of Compassion': The Origins of British Relief in War," *Le Mouvement Social* (227), pp. 9–26; Eduard Bernstein, *Cromwell & Communism: Socialism and Democracy in the Great English Revolution*, trans. H.J. Stenning (London: Cass, 1966; first published in German in 1895; first English edition 1930), pp. 225–252.

⁴⁹For example, James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals* (London: John Murray, 1998).

⁵⁰Collinson, 'Religion, Society, and the Historian'.

⁵¹Vanessa Morton, 'Quaker Politics and Industrial Change c. 1800–1850' (PhD Thesis, the Open University, 1988), p. 8.

⁵²John Ormerod Greenwood, *Quaker Encounters: Vol. 1, Friends and Relief* (York: William Sessions Limited, 1975); John Ormerod Greenwood, *Quaker Encounters: Vol. 2, Vines on the Mountain* (York: William Sessions Limited, 1977); John Ormerod Greenwood, *Quaker Encounters: Vol. 3, Whispers of Truth* (York: William Sessions Limited), 1978.

⁵³Helen Hatton, *The Largest Amount of Good: Quaker Relief in Ireland 1654–1921* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p. 27.

reject orthodox economic theory. Equally reductive is Elizabeth Isichei's assertion that 'all the prominent Victorian Quaker philanthropists were evangelicals.'⁵⁴ Far more convincing is David Brion Davis' analysis of Quaker motives in the abolition cause, which intertwines the socio-economic positions of Quaker abolitionists, the intellectual climate, Quaker theology, the sectarian and organisational structures of Quakerism, as well as carefully evaluating the significance and timing of Quaker action to determine the Quakers' typicality, effect and significance.⁵⁵

Elizabeth Isichei asks, 'when one attempts to analyse the role of "Quakers" in philanthropy or politics, one has to consider whether religious affiliation was indeed the dominant consideration in an individual's life. Can one meaningfully isolate the Quakers from the other supporters of the temperance movement?'⁵⁶ Indeed the distinctiveness of Quakerism may be seen as having been constantly under assault from all directions: by similarly enthusiastic and egalitarian Methodists; by similarly serious and efficient Evangelicals; by deists and Unitarians; by liberal humanitarians; by wealth and apathy, and so on. A useful starting point when analysing Quakerism as a social concern is then the institutions and mechanisms of Quakerism: how the Society controlled its members' beliefs and activities, and how collective stances were taken. In this respect, Quakerism may be more rightly seen as a cluster of values and practices, undertaken by its members and institutions, with each value or practice common with other people and churches, leaving the only distinctiveness of Quakerism as their particular aggregation. In this respect, the place of Quakerism in the humanitarian marketplace, through appeals for funds or public debates, can show where and how these traditions were translated into humanitarian notions.

Historians have analysed the methods by which Quakerism delineated itself from the rest of the world. As Isichei shows, Quakerism must be understood through its distinctive church organisation as much as its theology.⁵⁷ The Book of Discipline, the sect's rules and dogma,

⁵⁴Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 214.

⁵⁵David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770–1823* (London: Cornell University Press), pp. 213–254.

⁵⁶Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, xxiii.

⁵⁷On the distinctiveness of Quaker organisation, see Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, pp. 109–110.

records incremental changes over the years.⁵⁸ The way Quakers oriented themselves to the rest of the world should be understood in terms of this history as much as the contemporary religious marketplace. Like all Christians, they were universal in ambition and, over their history, attempted to spread their message to the world at large. This was seldom attempted in practice (although aspirations to this can be seen in particular schemes and writings), with British Quakers in reality being a closely intermarried 'peculiar' people. This 'perfectionism' was the result of the Quakers' rigorous discipline and religious practice and their scepticism of the possibility of spreading true religion in any but a superficial way. This meant that the Quakers saw themselves in certain ways relative to society that cannot be entirely reduced to class, religion and politics, or even Christianity, although their 'peculiarity' often took the form of social exclusivity. They had distinct modes of worship, governance and organisation.⁵⁹ In this respect, they may be described in Bourdieu's terms as a separate symbolic economy, with their own language, norms and structures. By the same token, however, it can be said that in religion for religion's sake—a description which fits Quakerism's anti-ritual and anti-theology stance—'it is in one's interest to be disinterested.'⁶⁰ The Quaker discipline and meeting was seen as a microcosm of society through which manners and morality were inculcated. Ruth Fry described Quakerism as 'a compact body regulated more severely by their self-imposed rules than by the laws of the country where they live... a sort of microcosm set within the macrocosm of the state.'⁶¹ Quaker specialisation as a spiritual elite saw them dominate many philanthropic campaigns (abolition, anti-Contagious Diseases Act, pacifism) and be exempted from conscription. A historical understanding of Quaker humanitarianism requires one to trace the intersections of autonomous Quaker traditions with outside currents, such as class, humanitarianism and secularisation, with which they interacted.

⁵⁸Now called 'Quaker faith and practice'.

⁵⁹Including a unique organisation and distinct vocabulary. Elizabeth Allo Isichei, *Victorian Quakers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 110.

⁶⁰Pierre Bourdieu, *Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1996), p. 154.

⁶¹A. Ruth Fry, *Quaker Ways: An Attempt to Explain Quaker Beliefs and Practices and to Illustrate them by the Lives and Activities of Friends of Former Days* (London: Cassell, 1933), p. 3.

Secularisation, broadly understood, was perhaps the greatest threat to Quakerism.⁶² A High Anglican, Thomas Hancock, in his entry to an essay competition on the future of Quakerism, suggested in 1859 that Quakerism could be wound up, having served its purpose of reviving spiritual aspects of Christianity and lost its distinctiveness.⁶³ The socialist Eduard Bernstein, thinking of the radicalism of the early Friends, asserted that 'Quakerism to-day vegetates simply as a survival from former days.'⁶⁴ Yet some Quakers seemed to accept the precariousness of their temporal survival. For Caroline Stephen the organisational structures of the Society of Friends were merely a vehicle for an idea, and had little value in themselves.⁶⁵ In part, this acceptance was based on exclusivity. Stephen valued the practices of Quaker worship and behaviour, which she believed needed strong institutions and discipline: 'silence is assuredly an art to be acquired, a discipline to be steadily practised, before it can become the instinctive habit and unfailing resource of the soul.'⁶⁶ She argued that Quakerism was the 'purest' form of worship and that as the responsibility for the 'lively and healthy state of each meeting' rested on members, the Society might have needed to 'sacrifice popularity' to maintain the purity of its traditions. This she opposed to the 'aggressive attitude' and 'modern activities' of Home Missions (Evangelical Quaker missions to the English working classes).⁶⁷ In line with other writers on Quakerism, she argued that it contained universal truths, and that these could be found in non-Quakers and other religions and modes of living. Quakerism, though, required a demanding form of worship and concentration. This line of thought accepted the social effects of Quakerism noted by others, but also suggested that the specifically religious practice of the sect was a necessary source of these effects.

⁶²Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones, *Religion and the Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). <http://assets.cambridge.org/97805217/66548/cover/9780521766548.jpg>.

⁶³Roger C. Wilson, *Manchester, Manchester and Manchester Again: From 'Sound Doctrine' to 'A Free Ministry'*. London: Friends Historical Society, 1990, p. 19. The essay in which this was argued won second prize in a competition on the decline of Quakerism.

⁶⁴Bernstein, *Cromwell & Communism: Socialism and Democracy in the Great English Revolution*: pp. 250, 80.

⁶⁵Stephen, *Quaker Strongholds*.

⁶⁶Stephen, *Quaker Strongholds*: pp. 57.

⁶⁷Stephen, *Quaker Strongholds*: pp. 61, 99–100.

As Quaker debates from the second half of the nineteenth century demonstrate, many were unsure as to the future of the Society. The religion—technically a sect—saw declining membership to the mid-nineteenth century, and a relative decline thereafter. Higher criticism and the decline of Evangelicalism in Britain undermined old religious ideas. New social and political ideals threatened Quakerism's moorings in conservative testimonies and plainness.⁶⁸ The nebulousness of the 'inner light' doctrine perhaps led Quakers to have more difficulty than most churches in defining their mission. That key Quaker customs and principles were seen to have worked their way into liberal society threatened to undercut the purpose of Quakerism. Some observers even suggested that Quakerism as 'an idea' was more important than the temporal survival of the Society of Friends.⁶⁹ Defending against such 'secularised versions'⁷⁰ of the religion was therefore important to Quakerism's survival.

The Manchester Conference (1895) is taken as a turning point in Quaker history as liberal, inner-light-centred Quakerism triumphed over scriptural, Evangelical Quakerism.⁷¹ The new, liberal Quakerism sought to address and co-opt modern ideas, in order to strengthen Quakerism. Lectures included 'The Attitude of the Society of Friends Towards Social Questions' and 'The Attitude of the Society of Friends Towards Modern Thought' and 'Has Quakerism a Message to the World Today?' Quakerism was made to fit with new liberalism, and philanthropic work became more central to the group's message. One speaker, argued for Quakers to move 'towards a brotherhood of man' and another talked of the 'spirit lighted with the love of Christ towards our fellow man' and called George Fox 'the greatest social reformer of his time.'⁷² These were general arguments, at the level of principle, and thus only tell us of the highest level orientations of Quakerism. What did the brotherhood of man mean in terms of behaviour, programmes and institutions? Analysis of Quaker humanitarianism should therefore

⁶⁸Maurice, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p. 60.

⁶⁹For example, John William Graham, 'The Attitude of the Society of Friends Towards Modern Thought, given at the Manchester conference, 1895,' in Thomas D. Hamm, *Quaker Writings: An Anthology, 1650–1920* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), p. 298.

⁷⁰Samuel, 'The discovery of puritanism,' p. 225.

⁷¹Roger C. Wilson, 'Manchester, Manchester and "Manchester Again: From Sound Doctrine" to "A Free Ministry"' (1990).

⁷²*Ibid.*, pp. 32, 147.

pay attention to the internal dynamics of Quakerism as much as ideas. In analysing the Quakers' engagement with Russian problems, the following chapters therefore consider issues such as how 'humanitarian' problems were reported to a Quaker meeting, what the acceptable response for a Quaker was, and how action that could easily be bracketed as 'humanitarian' was fashioned as to remain Quaker?

One revealing institution is the Quaker 'ministry', as practised by Joseph James Neave, quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Quakers did not have paid ministers like other churches, instead believing that it was better to wait on inspiration from the Lord. Those who developed a gift for speaking would be encouraged by other ministers and elders, and would eventually become 'recorded ministers'. If the divine leadings prompted, and the Meeting approved, they could also travel (for which they would have to be issued a certificate). Most of the activity of travelling ministers was pastoral work among the Quaker communities in Britain and America, but some ministers preached, undertook philanthropy and opened up new Quaker connections. Several histories have sensitively addressed this phenomenon, taking seriously the 'divine leadings' of the ministers, at the same time as their function in, say, transmitting sound doctrine or anti-slavery views. Larson, for instance, shows how the ministry had both spiritual and practical purposes at a time when ministers were the main link between Quakers across the Atlantic.⁷³

In ministry, the feeling of 'concern' driving the Quaker was as important than the nature of the problem. Ministers' callings all conformed to a similar narrative, helping to shape Quaker work. By this time, given the more scientific and rational culture and their greater integration with mainstream society, they might have found it harder to accept or practise this seemingly odd custom than their more insulated ancestors. As the example of Neave shows, the Quaker ministry was shaped by outside ideas. Neave and Bellows, for instance, were merely two among many 'pilgrims' who visited Tolstoy in the period.⁷⁴ Indeed, according to one

⁷³Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700–1775*; Penelope Edmonds, 'Travelling "Under Concern": Quakers James Backhouse and George Washington Walker Tour the Antipodean Colonies, 1832–1841,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40, no. 5 (2012).

⁷⁴R.F. Christian, 'The Road to Yasnaya Polyana: Some Pilgrims from Britain and Their Reminiscences', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 66.4 (1988), pp. 526–552.

historian, while the form of the Quaker ministry remained largely the same, its function changed from spiritual self-improvement and the fostering of links between Quakers in the eighteenth century (pilgrimage) to a more expansive mode, including more social work and testimony in the later nineteenth century (discipleship).⁷⁵ Fewer and fewer Quakers took up the travelling ministry, and the institution was eventually abandoned in 1924, but we can see echoes of its driving impulses in other Quaker work.⁷⁶

From the Franco–Prussian War onwards, more and more Quakers took up humanitarian work, meaning Joan Mary Fry is perhaps more typical than Joseph Neave. She championed liberal Quakerism, writing and speaking at conferences, and went on to carry out relief work. Her work may partly be explained by the ‘upper class privilege’, ‘Victorianism’ and ‘Quaker Puritanism’ of her upbringing, according to Oldfield. Humanitarian work for Fry can partly be seen as an ‘outlet’ that satisfied the dictates of religion and gender. In her writings, humanitarianism was not a detraction from religion, but rather a necessary expression of it. Following the outbreak of the First World War, she wrote: ‘We believe there is something Divine in all men, which will respond if we call it out by acting on our belief’ before going on to conduct relief work in post-war Germany and later among unemployed miners in Britain.⁷⁷ Fry was not the only one to make such a case. A speaker at the Quaker conference of 1920, for instance, argued that ‘the giving of a tin of condensed milk may become a sacrament because of the way it is given and received’⁷⁸ and similar sentiments can be found elsewhere.

While the appeal of social work and relief was strong, for some, worried about the survival of true Quaker belief and practices, philanthropy was a distraction. The Christian socialist F.D. Maurice, argued that energetic charity efforts were no proof of the vitality of Quakerism. He looked back to the days of George Fox and William Penn, who worked

⁷⁵Johnson, ‘From Pilgrimage to Discipleship: Quaker Women’s Ministries in Nineteenth-Century England’.

⁷⁶Walker, ‘Conception of a ministry in the Quaker Movement and a survey of its development’.

⁷⁷Sybil Oldfield, ‘Fry, Joan Mary (1862–1955)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38522>, accessed 13 October 2011).

⁷⁸*Conference of All Friends 1920*, p. 173.

like missionaries to spread the religion far and wide. The goodwill carried by charity work may have originated in Quaker adherence to the right path, but the connection was not secure.⁷⁹ An undercurrent of unease with 'worldly' activity, and its threats to displace genuine faith and practice, remained visible in Quaker humanitarian work.

The structure of Quaker institutions reflected these views of religion, and particularly the belief that activity should reflect a genuine 'concern', rooted in personal experience of God. Such practices and institutions include unanimous decision-making derived from a 'sense of the meeting' and unplanned ministry led by direct inspiration as in the example of Neave. The most significant effect of all this, was that projects without unanimous approval were not endorsed by the Society. Missionary work was popular with Evangelical Quakers but disliked by conservative and liberal Quakers, and therefore only 'reported to' Meeting.⁸⁰ All causes were subject to the same scepticism:

there is a serious danger inherent in the very nature of collective testimonies, especially those which imply the lifting up of a standard of exceptional severity and purity, lest that which is in some, perhaps even in the majority, sincere and spontaneous should be adopted at second hand, and without personal warrant by others, and should thus become a mere hollow profession.⁸¹

The lawyer and agnostic James Fitzjames Stephen similarly argued that followers of the 'religion of humanity' would once would have been Puritans but now preached 'a kind of vapid philanthropic sentiment which calls itself undenominational; a need of maudlin benevolence from which all the deeper and sterner elements of religious belief have been carefully purged away.'⁸² Indeed, several scholars of twentieth-century

⁷⁹Maurice, *The Kingdom of Christ is Within You*, p. 55.

⁸⁰They were thus absent from the missionary expansion beginning in 1790. A.N. Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); John Ormerod Greenwood, *Whispers of truth* (York: William Sessions Ltd, 1978); Catherine Phillips, 'Reasons why the people called Quakers cannot unite in Missions,' (1792): This tract was reprinted.

⁸¹Caroline Emelia Stephen, *Quaker Strongholds*, 3rd ed. (London: E. Hicks, jun., 1891), p. 110.

⁸²Quoted in Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians*, p. 4.

philanthropy have confirmed these fears: Stephen Hopgood describing a 'religionless Christianity' in human rights work, and James Kennedy arguing that 'New international organisations like Amnesty International and Greenpeace—Quakers played a chief role in founding both—could fire the moral imagination of active Protestants as much as any church-related body.'⁸³ Given the reputation of Quakers as active philanthropists, and their relative lack of rituals and sacraments, this problem was particularly worrying.

Such concerns were echoed in Quaker organisation, and especially in the way that they approached humanitarian problems. Notably, Quakers avoided 'standing committees', apart from the Meeting for Sufferings, and paid workers, until after the First World War. Some of the key instances of Quaker philanthropy include: the FWVRC's work in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-1871; the work of Quakers in campaigning against the Contagious Diseases Acts; the Quaker response to the Russian famine of 1891-1892 and the Doukhobor case of 1897-1899; their Macedonian and Armenian relief; their pacifist and relief bodies in the First World War; and the work of the FWVRC and Council for International Service (CIS) after the First World War. All but the last of these were temporary committees, raised to meet specific problems. The FWVRC is an important part of Quaker humanitarianism. It was formed on a temporary basis in 1870 for the Franco-Prussian war, and then revived again for work related to the war between Russia and Bulgaria, and other events. In 1914 it was revived for work in the First World War. Afterwards, new, permanent organisations were formed, including the CIS and the Friends' Service Union (FSU).

Was this expansion an expression of Quakerism? In 1944, John Sessions, working as a relief administrator, wrote *They Chose the Star: Quaker War Relief Work in France 1870-1875*. It was intended both as a history and to help 'those who are concerned with problems of relief in the present world crisis.'⁸⁴ Perhaps the main issue that emerges is the relationship between 'concern' and organisation. The author of

⁸³Hopgood, *Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International*, pp. 62-65. See also James C. Kennedy, 'Protestant Ecclesiastical Internationals,' in *Religious Internationals in the Modern World: Globalization and Faith Communities Since 1750*, ed. Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 306.

⁸⁴Elizabeth Fox Howard, 'Foreword,' in William K. Sessions, *They Chose the Star*, 2nd edn (York: Sessions Book Trust, 1991). xi.

the introduction notes ‘the technique and scope of the work may have differed from time to time, but the same spirit of service and human friendship given quietly, and without parade or self-seeking has been, one hopes, evident in all the work which Quakers have tried to do.’⁸⁵ In statements like this, the Quaker ideals of work stemming directly from inspiration are given a central place; debates over whether certain kinds of organisation (hiring workers or advertising) which may have been had at the time, are papered over somewhat. But, as will be shown in the Chap. 4 about the Doukhobors and Chap. 6 about relief in the Russian famine of 1921, these debates actively shaped aspects of the work carried out.

This notion of concern shaped Quaker work insofar as philanthropy was made part of Quakerism because Quakers, using ideas from outside of Quakerism, were willing and (increasingly) trained to undertake it. Nevertheless, the forms of organisation used shaped, and did not just relay, this concern. One historian, in explaining the genesis of the Woodbrooke Study Centre, writes: ‘The growth of humanitarian feeling, the movement for the emancipation of women, the interest in peace which promoted the first Hague Conference in 1899—all this was in line with the testimonies to which Friends had long been committed.’ Set up in 1903 to revivify Quakerism in a different way to the—for some—‘elite’ and archaic recorded ministry, the centre offered a diploma in social studies designed by academics and labour leaders, alongside courses in theology.⁸⁶ The ‘growth of humanitarian feeling’ may have been broadly in line with Quakerism, but as this emphasis on training suggests, the driving force was perhaps the desire of individuals to undertake such work, which filtered into specific ways of undertaking such work that were consistent with Quaker practices. This was reinforced by the conscription requirements in the First World War and the resulting need for Quakers to find ‘alternative service’ (although of course many served in the army or rejected any form of war work and instead were imprisoned).⁸⁷

⁸⁵Elizabeth Fox Howard, ‘Foreword,’ in *ibid.*, xii.

⁸⁶Robert Davis, *Woodbrooke, 1903–1953: A Brief History of a Quaker Experiment in Religious Education* (London: Bannisdale Press, 1953), p. 15.

⁸⁷Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914–1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 41–42. About a third of Quakers served in the armed forces; most of the rest accepted some form of alternative service and a relatively small number were imprisoned.

How exactly was relief to serve Quakerism? The All-Friends' Conference of 1920, which set many of the themes for post-war Quakerism, is instructive. The pacifist Joan Mary Fry argued that:⁸⁸

There are certain laws of the universe upon which we all count and which stand all the tests of experience and of verification. There are also certain moral and spiritual principles which belong to the eternal nature of things and which in the long-run are verified in the experience of the race...[like] heat and electricity... Our mission, as I have said, is to discover these principles and to be the fearless exponents of them.⁸⁹

In the following discussion, Henry Hodgkin, a doctor and missionary in China,⁹⁰ argued that winning others over to these principles was a primary goal:

We ought to remember that large group of people to whom religious language is unfamiliar, who are broadly humanitarian. Towards the frankly materialistic we have to address the arguments of logic, economics, and the unreasonableness of war. Above all, our best arguments should be ourselves; there is no convincement in words.⁹¹

We can see here many of the issues that would dominate Quaker humanitarian work. While Hodgkin acknowledged the currency humanitarianism had, he was clear that it was not an end in itself, and should not be mistaken for one. There was also the potential for conflict between the argument of 'ourselves'—the logical conclusion of which was Quaker individuals on the ground—and the 'arguments of logic, economics', which, as we shall see, in many cases did not necessarily require staff. Ideas of translating compassion into a social force were shared by the

⁸⁸Sybil Oldfield, 'Fry, Joan Mary (1862–1955)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38522>, accessed 17 January 2013).

⁸⁹Joan Mary Fry, 'Character and the Basis of Testimony,' *All-Friends Conference* (London: Headley, 1920).

⁹⁰'Henry Theodore Hodgkin', *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity* (<http://www.bdcconline.net/en/stories/h/hodgkin-henry-theodore.php>, accessed on 31 January 2013).

⁹¹Conference Friends World, *Conference of all Friends held in London August 12 to 20, 1920: A guide & souvenir* (London: The Friends' Bookshop, 1920), p. 15.

Save the Children Fund (SCF), established in 1919. A history describes Jebb's early life and conscience because 'her experiences were to bear fruit in the great international organisation of the Save the Children Fund.'⁹² Jebb asserted that the SCF was not a charity, but rather the 'expression of an international idea.'⁹³

Hodgkin maintained that Friends' concern should not be hampered by machinery and asked:

When it was recently decided in the Meeting for Sufferings to request Friends, where possible, to consult the Council for International Service as well as their own monthly meeting, before taking up service on the Continent, some fears were expressed on this point. Is there any danger of passing the would-be worker through too fine a sieve, and possibly discouraging useful service? If God is clearly leading a person out, why consider questions of suitability, language, possible openings, and so forth, too carefully?⁹⁴

He argued that the 'laws of specialists' should not be 'laid down a priori' and that the Quakers were unique in basing their corporate life on the single principle of the inner light. Edward Grubb agreed in that he believed Quakers had to show the 'moral sources' of work which may be the same as that undertaken by Utilitarians and pantheists.⁹⁵ Another speaker stressed the need also for training, particularly in modern social, economic and political history, modern thought, political theory and international organisations.⁹⁶ These concerns manifested themselves in an anxiety about the methods of Quaker work, and how it could be displayed in complex, bureaucratic effort like the ones instituted increasingly after the First World War.

Quakers therefore engaged in humanitarian work in a variety of ways. Quaker practices and concepts only partially matched the ends and means of humanitarianism. Their work was often quite distinctive,

⁹²Kathleen Freeman, *If Any Man Build: The History of the Save the Children Fund* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), p. 14.

⁹³Linda Mahood, *Feminism and Voluntary Action: Eglantyne Jebb and Save the Children, 1876–1928* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 185.

⁹⁴Friends World, *Conference of all Friends*, p. 15.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

but it was also shaped by their position in British history and society, particularly their experience of religious toleration and the respectable status of Quakers, in addition to the work of organisation like the Red Cross.⁹⁷ Few causes reflected Quakerism in a straightforward way, and even Quaker pacifism, one of their most enduring testimonies, has been characterised by historians as 'feeble' before the First World War.⁹⁸ By the end of the First World War, however, Quakerism was strongly identified with relief in the wake of wars and disaster. Ruth Fry's *A Quaker Adventure* (1926), recounting her work in France, Serbia, Russia and elsewhere, shows this well. Tracing the 'motive underlying' Quaker relief work, she highlights the 'philosophy of life responsible for it', namely the 'inner light' and 'duty to fellow men'.⁹⁹ She also suggested that the star worn on Quaker relief workers' uniforms was now 'known far and wide in Europe'.¹⁰⁰ In this sense, relief work was now clearly part of the Quaker mission. In Russia, Fry joined other 'career humanitarians' such as Eglantyne Jebb of the SCF.¹⁰¹

Humanitarianism the SCF had a number of facets. A desire to alleviate suffering was only one, and blended with professional, social and ideological imperatives. Humanitarianism grew as a vocation, with a greater number of staff and resources devoted to it, and more visibility in public discourse and political life. It was, however, nourished by other fields of activity, such as the liberal internationalist worldview. Quakerism fed many humanitarian campaigns, but Quaker 'humanitarians' remained anxious to project Quaker values. Russia, with its persistent poverty and oppression, as well as many features recognisable and admirable to British audiences, was a fertile field for humanitarian efforts. Such

⁹⁷ Best exemplified by David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (New York, Oxford: 1999), pp. 213–254.

⁹⁸ Rufus Matthew Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism, Vol. 1*, London, 1970, pp. 164–165; Thomas Kennedy, 'Why Did Friends Resist? The War, the Peace Testimony, and the All-Friends Conference of 1920,' *Peace & Change* 14: 4, 1989; Or not 'consistently vigorous'. Peter Brock, *The Quaker Peace Testimony 1660 to 1914*, York, 1990, p. 290.

⁹⁹ A Ruth Fry and Robert Gascoyne-Cecil Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, *A Quaker Adventure: The Story of Nine Years' Relief and Reconstruction* (London: Nisbet, 1926), xvii.

¹⁰⁰ Fry and Cecil of Chelwood, xv.

¹⁰¹ Linda Mahood, *Feminism and Voluntary Action: Eglantyne Jebb and Save the Children, 1876–1928* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

ideological underpinnings were central to charities' legitimacy and appeal, but the field was equally shaped by debates over the most efficient practice (particularly in the case of the COS) or the most spiritually fitting practice (in the case of Quakers and other Christians), as well as the need for individual fulfilment or corporate survival. As will be shown in the following chapters, debates over legitimacy, efficiency and propriety (with respect to the boundaries of charity and politics, and interference in foreign countries) sat alongside narratives of Russian cruelty and suffering in shaping humanitarian activity.

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