

“HUMAN PROGRESS AND THE INWARD LIGHT”

The position of Thomas Hodgkin (1831-1913) in relation to his contemporaries

It was tantalising while working on *Hedge of Wild Almonds*¹ not to be able to spend more time on some of the Quaker personalities of the period, to look more closely for instance at W.H.F. Alexander as a committee man or at the diplomatic skills of Francis William Fox. I am glad, however, that I have since been able to pursue a little further my interest in the thinking of Thomas Hodgkin (1831-1913) and to share this today with members of the Friends Historical Society of which he was himself the first president 87 years ago.

My initial interest was prompted by the fact that during the Anglo-Boer War he stood apart from those Friends who, like himself, had come to espouse the theory of evolution and to accept the findings of Biblical criticism. While they were expressing sympathy for the Boer cause and criticizing British policy, *he* was seeing the war as understandable and inevitable, if not wholly justifiable. Even so, one could not readily place him with the evangelical remnant who were distrustful of evolution and higher criticism and, while not identifying with the cruder excesses of patriotism, did see the British Empire as a force for human progress in the world, and now saw it in jeopardy on the high veldt of South Africa.

Other Christian denominations were similarly divided, though in opposite ratio. The Liberal Party and the Fabian Society were split down the middle. Thomas Hodgkin was unhappily divided within himself, holding a position not wholly accounted for by the fact that his son Robin had joined a volunteer regiment. By 1906, however, four years after the war, he had come to think differently and to believe he had seriously misjudged the causes of the conflict.²

This was no capricious change of mind but the serious taking up of a new position in the light of new evidence and as the result of further experience. Nor was it an isolated instance. A similar process, what he would have called a clearing of thought, took place regarding his views on war in general, evolution, biblical criticism, Home Rule in Ireland,

higher education for women, Quakerism itself, silence in meeting, the character of Lord Roberts, the rightness of Home Mission work and the newly invented motor car. In every case whether the process was long or short, whether the matter momentous or not, the outcome was the result of the intellectual activity of a trained mind. In every case, moreover he allowed his family and friends, his readers and his listeners to see and follow the workings of it. We shall ourselves be following it in relation to evolution and Biblical criticism which were connected with human progress as he saw it, and to war which he came to see as the chief obstacle to it.

It was on the people involved in issues and situations that his mind was chiefly focused, whether they were the invaders of Italy, the builders of the Roman Wall, the family at home, Friends in the local meeting, colleagues at work, people caught in crisis or beset by problems, or contemporaries thinking about the same things as himself, whether he knew them personally or not, whether he agreed with them or not. By nature a traditionalist, never a pipe for fortune's finger to play what wind she choose, but equipped with a warm heart, an open mind, an above average intellect, he was devoid of conceit, a born communicator, a lover of learning and wisdom and truth, limited by privilege, but never prejudiced on account of it. He met the challenges of his day, sensibly and studiously, working his way through fog and muddle till the mind was clear and convinced, and he was ready for the new commitment.

His was an unusually balanced personality, a historian as well as a banker - like Grote - a letter writer as well as a man of letters, a traveller and a good host, a man of affairs and a good companion, ready with words but open to the thoughts and needs of others and, both before and after marriage, a family person, whose home was the centre of his life. And for all his involvement in the wider secular and academic world he was a Quaker of the Quakers, a pedigreed and public Friend.

He was born in the then pretty little village of Tottenham on 29 July 1831, his father John, a conveyancer; his mother Elizabeth, the daughter of Luke Howard; his father's brother Thomas, the physician, reformer and philanthropist of the blue plaque on 45 Bedford Square, and the family's beloved Uncle Doctor. Our Thomas had an elder brother Eliot and two sisters, Mariabella who married Edward Fry, later to become Lord Chief Justice, and Elizabeth who married Alfred Waterhouse, the architect. Their mother died when Thomas was four. His father's second marriage was to Ann Backhouse (Jonathon B. Backhouse was their son) and, on her death, his third wife was Elizabeth Houghton who bore him six children.

There was good company for the young Quakers of Tottenham; they even had their own essay society, a very lively intellectual and sociable affair.³ After attendance at the Grove House School locally and a continental trip with his father, brother and uncle, he went at the age of 15 to University College London, itself only three years older than he was. He lodged in the Hampstead Road with two medical students, one of whom was Joseph Lister then a Quaker. His studies, however, were seriously interrupted by ill health, depression and the strain of over work - largely self-imposed. He completed his degree however in 1851 with Honours in Classics and having formed a rare and lasting friendship with Edward Fry. Another breakdown in 1853 meant he had to abandon the training for a legal career which he had begun in Joseph Bevan Braithwaite's chambers. After rest and another continental trip, this time with Alfred Waterhouse he started a career in banking at Whitehaven where, in his spare time, he added Hebrew to his Greek and Latin and read widely in theology, including Niebuhr and Pusey. In 1859 he accepted partnership in a new bank at Newcastle upon Tyne with William Edward Barrett, Jonathan Pease and Robert Spence, who was aged 41, the eldest of the four. He was there till he retired, 44 years later at the age of 72.

In 1861 he married Lucy Anna Fox of Falmouth and five years later they went to live at Benwelldene, a house designed for them by Alfred Waterhouse where they lived for 28 years and where all their children were born, Lucy Violet was 25 when they moved to the keep at Bamburgh Castle for five years, and in 1893 they moved to their last home Barmoor, still in Northumberland. His whole life was punctuated by visits and travel, in the early days to Falmouth, Ackworth Villas, the home of the Howards, and with his father to Ireland. The frequent continental trips, the visit to the East in 1889 and to Australia and New Zealand in 1909 were also family affairs even when undertaken in the cause of history or Quakerism.

On 31 July 1931 Arthur Rowntree had a leading article in *The Friend* entitled *Thomas Hodgkin, Historian* celebrating the hundredth anniversary of his birth.⁴ Oxford University Press marked the occasion by a reissue of *Italy and her Invaders* of which the first two of its original eight volumes had appeared in 1880 and the last at the close of the century. In 1901 when he was 70 *The History of England from Earliest Times to the Norman Conquest* was published. Louise Creighton lists five pages of historical, antiquarian and archaeological publications, and another three of other books, articles and addresses mostly religious and Quaker.⁵ Of his work as a historian the editor of *The Friend* wrote a few days after Thomas's

death, 'He cared more to emphasize the great historical ideas and principles which pass like a thread through the beads of facts, looking for the propelling power, the ethic, the inner meaning. He was a student of tendency'.⁶ Both Oxford and Durham awarded him the DCL and Dublin a LittD. He had also given a lifetime's loyal service to the Society of Friends, not so much as a committee man as by the quality of his ministry, his support for meetings for church affairs, participation as speaker in many a conference and summer school, the pastoral visit to Australia and New Zealand and throughout all his life the invaluable service of his writing on specifically Quaker matters. He wrote and delivered the Swarthmore Lecture in his 80th year, less than two years before his death at Falmouth on 2 March 1913.

The Swarthmore Lecture represents a lifetime's coming to terms with the new concepts of God, of God's world and God's word, which had almost simultaneously burst upon England when Thomas was in his twenties. It reflects the revolution that had taken place in public thought and it can almost be seen as a summary of the last chapter in his own spiritual progress. It was entitled 'Human Progress and the Inward Light' and was delivered on 23 May 1911 at Devonshire House with the previous year's lecturer Joan Mary Fry, the eldest daughter of his sister Mariabella and his friend Edward Fry, in the chair.

The first section begins with a resounding tribute to the theory of evolution and expresses amazement at the change in the outlook of educated people. Instead of believing that everything was the same as it had always been, organic life was now seen as one of continuous development, with mankind taken hold of by its maker, renewed generation after generation and even enabled to understand something of the process. The Galileos, Newtons and Darwins, whether aware of it or not, had been messengers of God, doing his bidding. God is Light and though in evil we see the shadow, the light is there for the intellect as well as the spirit. Though the civilized, and still more the uncivilized races of earth have still a long way to go, it is all part of the process in evolutionary time. Life is, as it were, on two planes with humankind leaving the one behind and stretching forward to what is before.

He then speaks about the Inward Light, its universality and its revelation of the purposes of God, something more than conscience, something constraining as well as restraining. He quotes the experience of Socrates, and Paul's speech on Mars Hill and points to the witness of other religions in which he sees no clash with God. Regarding the miracles and the supernatural elements in the bible which were a stumbling block to the scientific mind, he distinguishes between

supernatural happenings and descriptions of spiritual experiences. In view of the miracles of modern science he is less likely to write them off than he had been before. Miracles he said had in fact not been encouraged in the Old Testament and were actually rebuked in the New. The still small voice would bring us nearer to God than any miracle.

The third section focuses on co-operation with God. Our progress depends on this. God does not treat us as automata but as fellow workers with himself, as sons, with free will. God depends on individual faithfulness. Unless we obey his voice and follow the light nothing will be done towards the accomplishment of this purpose. Thomas Hodgkin proceeds to encourage his hearers with the lifestory of William Savery who, at the end of the eighteenth century, in Philadelphia, Virginia, Maryland, Germany, France and Britain, even in times of war, obeyed the Divine Voice. For all the noble singleness of his aim, his lifetime's work might have been judged a failure but for the fact that one of his converts in the worldly city of Norwich had been a vain little motherless miss in purple boots laced with scarlet who became a prison reformer and the founder of the first nursing sisterhood where, shortly afterwards, Florence Nightingale began her training.

The spirit's route from inward to upward and outward is the subject of the last section, with emphasis on the effect of the Gospel on the human race. He saw a new universal spirit in literature and, instead of the old introspective testing of spiritual muscles there was an opening of windows and signs of greater obedience to the upward calling. He wonders, nevertheless, whether for all the new mechanical inventions in steam and electricity there had really been progress. He quotes Elizabeth Barratt Browning "twere but power within our tether, no new spirit power". Were we really any better than our forebears and his answer is a fairly hopeful yes. We had seen the end of the blood feuds of the Celts and the Teutons, the weakened influence of old superstitions, slavery theoretically abolished, a little more religious toleration, advances in science and the art of healing, a better understanding between understanding between classes and a clearer recognition of the fact that if *one* suffers, all may be affected. But there was still a long way to go and he instances the relationship between the civilized and the uncivilized: for the few who did great things there were many who debased and defrauded; the advent of the European had not always brought benefit. Above all, war was still with us, with all its pomp and circumstance and its energy and skill employed in the destruction of other human beings. If Christianity does not destroy war, he declares,

war will destroy Christianity. In conclusion, he returns to the image of the journey between two planes, the way of holiness, the way of progress open to us all if only we will listen to his voice and obey the gentle pressure of his hand.

It would be interesting to know whether the spoken lecture differed from the published text. The Quaker journals clearly used the latter for their reviews. *The British Friend's*, probably by its editor, Edward Grubb, had a few reservations about it.⁷ It referred to the length of the passage devoted to William Savery (it was 17 pages!), the section on the miraculous which it felt needed different treatment; and the unnecessarily strong antagonism in which secular and Christian had been placed. 'The central difficulty' it said, 'of combining evolution with the Christian view of human progress had been made more serious than it need'. Cosmic progress was not just about strength and survival of the strongest but suggestive of the greater force of co-operation. (Frances Thompson, in fact, though this was not mentioned, in her address on Social Questions to the Manchester Conference in 1895 had quoted as a scientific fact Darwin's dictum that those communities which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best).⁸ Half a century after the publication of the *Origin of the Species*, the subject of human progress was in 1911 still topical. The previous number of *The British Friend* contained a review of Bergson's *Creative Evolution* and in this same one, notes of an address given at the Annual Meeting of the Friends Social Union by Ramsay Macdonald on *The Spiritual Aspects of Progress*.

The text of the Lecture is followed by two notes, the first on *Is the Work of the Christian Church to make the world better?* added, he says, so that readers might see that his own hopeful views were not everyone's. He quoted from theologians prophesying doom - and said he had himself found the expectation of a tragic end coming from a certain type of evangelical rather than from the disciplinarian high churchmen. In answer to the second question as to whether war was the only persistent evil against which Christians must contend he lists sweated industry, gambling, speculation, alcoholism, millionarism, the vicious movie and the adulterous drama - some of which he saw as not unconnected with the war industry. But he also instances the fine qualities of those working in lifeboats, fire brigades, hospitals, missions and the shepherd on the Cheviots in a snow storm. He also notes that that section of the Christian church which insists on the necessity of listening to the Divine Voice, is also the one most committed to belief in the essential incompatibility between war and Christianity.

The style of the lecture, as one would expect, is different from that of the notes, but it is also in marked contrast to that of his writings in letters and papers even on the same or similar subjects. It is the style of a preacher and of one going out of his way to present scientific discovery in scriptural terms, orthodox rather than evangelical. It is so heavily laden with Christian imagery and biblical texts that one wonders if he had felt the need, even as late as 1911, to soften the blow of his uncompromising commitment to modern thought for those close friends and relatives to whom it was still a stumbling block. Or was he perhaps just revelling in the fact that so much biblical language was still applicable and relevant? One does however miss the deftness, wit and charm that was so characteristic of his prose style.

Nor does what he has to say seem very momentous to us today; but it has to be seen in the context of contemporary thinking and it is difficult at this distance to appreciate the force of the joint impact in 1859 of the theory of evolution and biblical criticism on traditional beliefs and assumptions or, for example, the effect of geological discoveries on the prevailing, literal interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis. The theory of evolution and biblical criticism were referred to together as 'modern thought' and positive discussion about them conducted in what was called 'the spirit of free enquiry'.

There had, of course, been evolutionists before Darwin; and the literal veracity of the Scriptures had been questioned before Higher Criticism, as such, had percolated through to England from Germany - notably in Coleridge's *Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit* (published posthumously in 1840 and questioning the absolute inerrancy of every word in the bible and denying any inherent opposition between the development of modern science and the essence of Christianity).

And in the world of Quakerism, there had been a stirring of the waters which by 1895 was to become a flashing stream - John Stephenson Rowntree's prize essay in 1858 criticising the Society's shibboleths and, from the position of a 24-year old, pointing to the causes of its feebleness. In the same year there was the founding of the Manchester Institute for young men - for self-culture, study and the pursuit of truth.⁹

But for all, the real turning point came in 1859 - when in the same year, *The Origin of the Species* was published, Tischendorf discovered the *Codex Sinaiticus*, the Greek manuscript of the Bible; and, for good measure, John Stuart Mills *On Liberty* appeared.

Stephen Jay Gould in *The Panda's Thumb* believes the genius of Darwin lay in his taking a middle path between inductivism and what he

calls *eurekaism*, from his combining the concise productive search conducted in a ramifying but ordered manner together with a broad range of insights from disciplines other than his own, philosophy, poetry and economics. He bases this belief on his study of notebooks written by Darwin during the two years immediately following the Beagle voyage (1831-5) which had given him a sense of space and time to think in independent self stimulation. While acknowledging the fact that Darwin later seemed to suggest allegiance to slavish inductivism it seems to Gould the new evidence has prior significance. There is some support for this view in a letter of Thomas Hodgkin's to Howard Lloyd in 1887.¹⁰ It refers to a review of Darwin's life and to Darwin's own admission that he had lost what he once had, all power of enjoying poetry - that this part of his mind had become atrophied by disuse and he regretted this should have been so - he had let himself dwindle into a mere scientific machine for grinding out laws from facts.

Janet Browne of the Darwin Letters project at Cambridge has recently pointed to another aspect of the Beagle voyage, namely the sympathetic attitude of Darwin and Captain Fitzroy to the work of missionaries. Fitzroy was bringing back with him three Fuegians whom he had taken previously to London for education and in 1836 he and Darwin sent a joint letter to a South African newspaper about the value of missionary work.

It was no surprise to me when I read this in a History of Science Society Newsletter.¹¹ I had known since childhood that Darwin (impressed by the results of missionary work among people he had formerly thought incapable of progress) had paid a life subscription to the work of the South American Missionary Society.¹²

In 1909, 50 years after the publication of *The Origin of the Species*, Thomas Hodgkin wrote to his son Edward 'In 1858, we the men and women in the street, all looked upon species as immutable things and the doctrines of development a foolish dream; and now I suppose we all believe in it up to a certain point and almost all are persuaded that we never thought otherwise'. At the time he had confessed to jibbing at the thought of being descended through apes from reptiles but felt nevertheless that neither Christianity nor religion was threatened and that, in fact, the sense of God's power and of ourselves as fellow workers was heightened.

My father, who had spent the first 20 years of his life in the Australian backblocks, then five in a missionary training college in the East End of London and then five in the High Andes of Peru, caught up with *The Origin of Species* in the Maori King country of New Zealand when he was

30. He wrote in his diary on 20 June 1912 'I can see no objection to adopting the theory of evolution in its entirety' and he recorded his astonishment that Christians could even have thought or spoken of Darwin as the enemy of Christianity.

Cardinal Newman, in a different league but the same profession as my father, was the object of heavy criticism from Thomas Hodgkin regarding the Apostolic Succession and Sacerdotalism but, despite his tractarianism, he was also an evolutionist, not disabused, of the Christian faith by the theories of Charles Darwin.¹³ It might be added, not irrelevantly, that Newman's brother was a scientist and evolutionist. Though he never took up the position he had been appointed the first principal of University College London. Thomas Hodgkin the young student, sharing rooms with Joseph Lister, attending lectures at the 'godless institution in Gower Street'; near where Darwin himself had been living from 1838-42, and going on to visit Uncle Doctor at 45 Bedford Square must have been for years in an evolutionary atmosphere.

There were, however, many Christians whose faith was shaken, if not shattered. There are still those today who say they find Alfred Russell Wallace more acceptable than Darwin for his allowing a place for external intervention in the development of conscience and morality.¹⁴ In spite of Huxley's work in adult education and his consideration of *The Ethics of Evolution* Thomas Hodgkin seems to have been uneasy about what he saw as Huxley's materialist views and the distress they had caused. Thomas Hodgkin was a convinced Darwinian and remained so for the rest of his life, so that in 1912 he was still saying "Thank God for Charles Darwin".

His reactions to Higher Criticism were more complicated, possibly because of the solid Quaker orthodoxy of his upbringing. But he was always a learner and several letters to Richard Westlake in 1912 refer not only to his debt to Darwin but also to Coleridge whose book he described as epoch-making and how acceptance of the fact that there were things in the Bible which could in no sense be accepted as messages for their souls, had determined his attitude for the last half century of his life far more than the minute dissection of biblical manuscripts by the Higher Critics. Long before them, thanks to Coleridge, he had renounced the claim of absolute inerrancy for every word of the bible but had not felt the need to abandon its inspiration. He was sure they had been right both in renouncing and retaining.¹⁵

Much, however, had happened during those 50 years. In 1860 there was the publication of *Essays and Reviews* - a collection of essays written in

a 'spirit of free enquiry'. The subjects included *Biblical Researches*, *Evidences of Christianity*, the *Mosaic Cosmology*, and *Tendencies of Religious Thought in England*. The last essay was by Benjamin Jowett on *Interpretation of Scripture* and the first by Frederick Temple on *The Education of the World*.¹⁶ He concluded with these words, 'No service that man can render to his fellows is to be compared ... with a life of holiness. But next to that must be ranked whatever makes men think clearly and judge correctly for we are now adults governed by principles - if governed at all - and cannot rely any longer on the impulses of youth or the discipline of childhood.' That was the theme of the essay.

The book was instantly regarded as scandalous. It was popularly called, "Seven Against Christ". There was a protest of 200 clergy against Temple's appointment to the see of Exeter and an attempt by four bishops to stop his consecration at Westminster Abbey. London Yearly Meeting nearly inserted a warning against it in the General Epistle. *The Friend* reviewed the lecture on it at the Manchester Institute by David Duncan.¹⁷ It said 'Believing as we do that the obvious tendency if not the aim of that work is to weaken the faith of its readers in the authority of the Bible, to induce doubt or disbelief in some of the distinguished doctrines of Christianity we cannot but regret that the lecture before us should have emanated from a member of the Society of Friends.' As for the essays themselves the reviewer could only quote Dr Pusey who had said that except for the geological contributions they contained nothing with which those acquainted with the writings of unbelievers in Germany had not been familiar during the past 30 years.

In October 1861 *The Journal of Sacred Literature and Biblical Record* carried a 17-page article entitled "Remarks on Dr Temple's Essay 'Education of the World' "¹⁸ It was by Thomas Hodgkin. 'While dissenting', he said, 'from most of Dr Temple's scheme, we accept the general outline and welcome any attempt made in an earnest, reverent and Christian spirit to solve the main problem' but he did not feel that Temple was equipped to deal with the promise of the Spirit's coming and noted that the words of Christ, not one of which can fall to the ground, had been wholly left out of the picture. He deemed it hopeless therefore for Temple to construct a scheme for the education of the world and the progress of the species. He deplored Temple's choice of words and described his theory as unsatisfactory, indefinite and inadequate. Thus did the 30-year old banker berate the 40-year old headmaster of Rugby.

He attended the British Association meeting in Newcastle in 1863 helping with the arrangements for it, accommodating four guests and revelling in the company of the scientifically learned. He wrote to his father saying that though there were practically no direct attacks on the Bible in the frequent discussions on the antiquity of man and the common origin of the human race the Scriptures were counting for nothing compared with geology and the chasm between science and faith was being widened; geology he felt was being too hasty and would have to retract.

The following year 1864 he was writing to Edward Fry to say that mystery could not easily be elbowed out of the way by reason, and to Frederick Seebohm deploring the prevalence of facile, flippant criticisms of the Bible and Christianity. In 1865 however he produced a pamphlet of his own on *Thoughts on the Inspiration of the Scripture*¹⁹ which he distributed privately. It was addressed particularly to young doubters and maintained that inspiration was independent of infallibility and authenticity. Inspiration stood for communication between God and Man. Christianity was not primarily a system of theology and even less of philosophy. It was a declaration of the fact of the presence of the Holy Spirit; truth was the first attribute of Christianity and the Holy Spirit was still guiding, teaching and leading us into truth even though we had to be prepared to change our views on certain detail in the light of new discoveries in astronomy, geology, ethnology and anthropology. The message he said was the same even if the original messenger had mispronounced some of the words. This was nearly 50 years before the Swarthmore Lecture and it had John Hodgkin worried lest it should delay the recording of his son as a minister. It may well have done just that for Thomas was not, in fact, recorded until 1869.

Modern thought was however gradually gaining greater acceptance in the churches. In 1865 Bishop Colenso in Natal had been excommunicated for his liberal theology and critical work on the Pentateuch. Seven years later the Canterbury convocation appointed an ecumenical committee to make such minor alterations to the King James text as modern scholarship required. And in 1897 Frederick Temple, an avowed evolutionist and the author of a once offending essay, was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury.

Friends too were working their way through and coming to terms with new ideas, not without casualties²⁰ but helped by their own Quaker scientists like Alfred Bennett, Silvanus P Thompson and Leonard Doncaster, by their own Biblical scholars notably Rendel

Harris and above all by their love of truth. In the first number of the *Friends Quarterly Examiner* in 1867 Thomas Hodgkin had an article, 26 pages long, in the form of a dialogue between a Hugh and an Arthur 'Concerning Grove's Inaugural address to the British Association' (*The Law of Continuity*) - a fine example of the way he had to argue a matter out with himself. Arthur had found it depressing, Hugh the best thing in the whole meeting. Apart from a quoted remark of Huxley to the effect that it was difficult these days to get an audience without either a heresy or a famous person, it is all very serious and detailed with quotations from Socrates and Bacon, the main point at issue being the existence or non-existence of a Divine Intelligence in the creation of the world. There was no real winner or loser - only Thomas seeking clearance. He once told Mariabella that he could sometimes see the other side better than his own.

1884 saw the publication of *A Reasonable Faith*, and, causing less sensation, in 1886 came Edward Worsdell's *A Gospel of Divine Help*. (By 1905 this was a text book in a Leeds Theological College). In both books there was more than help for doubters; there was the expression of a newly found confidence in Christianity. Like their seventeenth-century ancestors released from doctrines and dogmas, many Friends, including Thomas Hodgkin, were now discovering greater significance and new relevance in the life of Jesus.

In 1888 the Richmond Declaration, the statement of evangelical faith from Indiana, anticipated with alarm by some Friends including Roger, son of Edward Fry, was presented to Yearly Meeting by the patriarchal Joseph Bevan Braithwaite, discussed quietly, with several Friends including Thomas Hodgkin, exerting liberal influence, and finally simply put in the Minute Book, its danger defused. Thomas referred to this at the time in a letter to Joseph Rowntree. 'It is not this goody goody, determined to be orthodox, vapid and diffuse Confession of Faith which helps me to believe!'²¹ Jesus Christ, he said, speaks more powerfully than ever before. And in a letter to Anne Wakefield Richardson on 2 January 1912 he refers to the time when they had had to contend for breadth of freedom to argue about the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration and, he went on, 'to prevent the dear evangelicals putting a yoke on our necks which neither our fathers nor we had been able to bear'.²² He goes on, however, to agree with her about the necessity of keeping in touch with the old-fashioned evangelicals and to speak of the new duty laid upon them to see that Christianity did not become practically Christless.

At the Manchester Conference in 1895 Thomas Hodgkin was in the chair for the session on 'The Relationship of Quakerism to Modern Thought'. In his own address he spoke of aestheticism, pessimism, socialism and "scientism" arguing with himself a little, as he liked to do, but generally urging caution regarding over-indulgence in aesthetic pursuits, pleading for the early Quaker view of the universal and saving light of Christ which, he said, was more efficacious than Calvinist teaching and Roman Catholic purgatory, and, again beginning with Galileo and ending with Darwin, he declared there had been more rapid and revolutionary changes in the past half century than ever before.

The four ensuing papers of that session varied in subject and style, with the main emphasis on progress made and still to be made if, to use Roger Wilson's words,²³ 'it were to fulfil its mission in a changing world and bring to bear on its religious life the liberating resources of modern thought in theology, sciences, education, social change and corporate worship.' The vibrant spirit of the 27-year old John Wilhelm Rowntree pervaded the whole exhilarating conference. His faith was infectious but he had a warning too - of danger in new, perhaps more subtle forms of authoritarianism coming from an unfocused Inward Light.

Many of the speakers were specialist scholars, none more so than Silvanus P. Thompson physicist and biographer of Lord Kelvin. He was essentially a communicator both of his own subject and of his religious and political convictions. At the Manchester Conference he followed Rendel Harris who had pleaded for co-operation between science and religion and for a generous statement of our belief in evolutionary theory that we might take our right place amongst the intellectual forces of the world. Silvanus P. Thompson spoke of the function of scientific reasoning, its concern with things demonstrably true or false and the danger of accepting anything on authority alone. There are truths as old as the hills, he said but also errors as old as the pyramids. The illumination of the divine within the soul is a fact which scientists cannot explain or investigate but the intellect itself is God-given; we have no right to neglect it or neglect to exercise it on the accretions of human error. Quakers had developed the habit of accuracy in thought and speech. Modern thought could clear away much that had choked and hindered the clear instirring of the divine light. The heart could not say to the head: 'I have no need of thee'.

John William Graham, speaking next said that belief in the mechanical infallibility of the Scriptures rested on the uninformed views of the bishops of early centuries against whose dictates Friends were in revolt. There was some protest at the end of the session that

there had not been enough time to question the views put forward. 'If all these things go forth to the public as the views of the Society of Friends the position will be exceedingly serious' cried Jonathon B Hodgkin, the Chairman's half-brother.

The FFMA conference at Darlington in October 1896 on 'The Work of the Society of Friends in the Foreign Mission Field' highlighted, in the clash of ideas there between Charles Terrell and Thomas Hodgkin, the continuing differences in Quaker concepts. In reply to Charles Terrell's comments on the blackness of the heathen heart Thomas Hodgkin spoke of the special responsibility laid upon Friends 'to read the palimpsest of the human heart and the characters written and traced by the hand of God on every human soul'. This is itself evidence of how far he had himself come since 1865. His own mind in fact was like a palimpsest for all to read - each layer having to be seen in the context of its own time, and the earlier one comprehended before the significance of the later appreciated.

In 1897 he wrote to Richard Westlake, who shared so much of his thinking over the years, saying that we had to adapt ourselves to the idea of creation by evolution even as Christians in the seventeenth century had had to adapt to the Copernican theory - a point he had made in his 1865 pamphlet on *The Inspiration of the Scriptures*.

The Anglo-Boer War began on 12 October 1899 and ended on 31 May 1902. The debate between Friends all through the war regarding the major issues underlying British policy down to detailed matters like milk for Boer babies; and particularly the one in 1900 on "The Fatherhood of God" have to be seen in relation to the theological and scientific crises of the years preceding it.²⁴ Friends had taken one further step in freeing the truth from all the Church had done to embellish and condition it. Religion and politics were intertwined: the peace testimony was challenged: concepts of the fatherhood of God were connected with attitudes towards Lord Roberts. Those who had led the way forward at the Manchester Conference were the outspoken critics of British policy. John Willhelm Rowntree called the war a carnival of hell and Silvanus P. Thompson in the Westminster Meeting House on 25 November 1900 spoke of what he saw as the wrongness of a war, then turned against non-combatants. He said that responsibility would continue to rest on Britain unless some protest was heard from those who claimed that the Sermon on the Mount had never been repealed. His speech, reported in *The Times*, is said to have lost him his place on the shortlist for an academic post in Cambridge.

Thomas Hodgkin was thinking differently, and differently from his own later conclusions about both the Anglo-Boer War and war in general. In November 1899, a few weeks after the outbreak of war he wrote to *The Friend* quoting from the writings of his late brother-in-law Sir Robert Fowler, ²⁵ Lord Mayor of London in 1883, to show that the seeds of the dispute were in the Boer treatment of the natives. This he said had been behind Sir Robert's refusal to receive Boer envoys at the Mansion House. Ellen Robinson replied on the instant to say that despite her esteem for Thomas Hodgkin she deplored his attempt to influence Friends by evoking opprobrium rather than sympathy for the Boers and she produced up-to-date facts to prove that the British were just as bad in their treatment of the natives. Jane Smeal Thompson, a professional journalist and the wife of Silvanus, had also been surprised and pained; and she also referred to our bloodstained record. Eliza Sturge thought our own present record more important than Sir Robert's past; and she quoted from the Aborigines Protection Society (of which, incidentally, Uncle Doctor had been a founder member).²⁶

In February 1900 Robin Hodgkin wrote to *The Friend* saying that though the worst features of war should be attacked each man should rely on his own conscience and that those not convinced of the unlawfulness of all war should not shelter behind the conscience of their forefathers. His father also believed in individual freedom from external authority. But the war was grief to him and he felt, to use his own words, 'embittered, blasted by this dreadful, humiliating, spine-chilling war'.²⁷ Still thinking his own way through he wrote an 'Essay on War with special reference to the war in South Africa', distributed privately to family and friends. He again used dialogue form this time between A and B who agreed at the outset to drop the odious terms 'pro-Boer' and 'Jingo'. There is much about capitalism and the quest for gold, whether it was Chamberlain's war or Kruger's and the possibility of the Society of Friends petitioning the Government. Part II is an imaginary extract from *The Friend* written by A, in anticipation of this; and then, under the title *The Great Disarmament* there is (also imaginatively) a chapter from a Short History of the English People by J. R. Green Jr! The dialogue resumes with B saying that forecast is not prophecy and prophecy not argument. A concludes with the belief that by the year 2000 war between nations will be as impossible as it was already between Britain and America; and abolished even as slavery had been.

Writing to Mariabella with a copy of this essay he said there was a sense in which he longed to maintain his testimony against war but he felt it would not be right to press for immediate, instant disarmament.²⁸

He wrote again in reply to her comments on the essay. He said that the question was too large, and too depressing for any little personal feelings of offence if they failed to convince each other of their views. 'Thou talkest', he wrote 'of my having changed my views. I would rather say "cleared them"' and goes on to elaborate the argument, feeling he has failed to make her understand that though he does not believe that those who suffer for peace principles are wrong, he cannot believe that in *all* circumstances war is wrong for Christians. 'I am amused' he continues 'to see how purely warlike you find its tone. To those not brought up in a Quaker atmosphere it is absurdly anti-war'.

When he wrote to her husband, Edward Fry in 1906 from Holland he said 'You know that I was rather disposed to think the Boer War an inevitable one but I am rather sliding away from that opinion and am more and more feeling what a terribly expensive luxury Joseph has been to England. To think of such a friendship as this (with Holland) lost and our good name among the nations stained for the sake of those dirty speculators on the Rand in indeed exasperating.²⁹ He was also beginning to feel that the possibility of a mutual pact between Christian states in favour of disarmament should not be dismissed.

It is clear that he was coming to see war as the major obstacle to human progress. In 1907, writing to A. Marriage Wallis he dreams of the day when the use of physical force to settle the quarrels of nations may be as rare as it had become to settle the disputes of individuals and he adds simply 'I want to be on the side of those working towards that end'.³⁰ In 1906 he was feeling that it should be the aim of every true Christian patriot to make his State a Christ-State among the nations strong, brave and courteous without the expression of rancour or rudeness in what had become an increasingly efficient world of communication. In 1912 to Richard Westlake he wished that the Bible Society, in the dissemination of its literature, would put more emphasis on the quality of the material rather than the quantity. He said there was an excellent precedent for this in the case of Ulfilas, the scholarly fourth-century Gothic bishop who, in translating the Bible, left out the Books of Samuel and Kings, believing that his people's warlike ways needed the curb rather than the spur.³¹ He adds that he thinks he has a little of Uncle Doctor's spirit in being made miserable on hearing of injustice. More and more he began to associate himself publicly with such causes as those of the Africans in the Congo, the Bulgarians, and the victims of the Boer War.

Lucy Violet Hodgkin's notebooks sum up the change that took place in their whole attitude to war. She writes of the significance of her father's presence in the chair at the York Peace Conference in 1913 shortly before he died, though not well and not up to his usual form. She wrote 'We have both become so much more Quakers in our outlook than we were in the days of the South African war when we should, he and I, have volunteered with Robin had we been eligible. He has made me feel much more clear as to the paths he means George and me to tread at a difficult time'.

The 'difficult time' was due to the deteriorating relations between England and Germany. He had been distressed about these for a long time and had been corresponding with Francis William Fox about them. In the context of this address it raises the question of the effect of disasters - acts of God, like the Lisbon earthquake or home-made ones like the Anglo-Boer war - on human progress; and of both crises and disaster on belief in it. By the time of the Swarthmore Lecture, as we have seen, Thomas Hodgkin was convinced that in what Quakers called the Inward Light, the power of God within the human heart, rather than external omnipotence lay the possibility of progress even against fearful odds.

Poets, psychologists and philosophers as well as theologians and scientists had been caught up by the intellectual revolution of their time. Poetry meant much to Thomas Hodgkin; he wrote it and lectured on it. I have quoted one line of the long passage of Elizabeth Barratt Browning which he used in the Swarthmore Lecture. In Browning himself, whom he had met at least once there was a man who had also had to come to terms with Higher Criticism and the God of evolution. In *Death in the Desert* he had written 'Yet now I wake in such decrepitude, feeling for footholds in a deep profound'. From that, however, emerged faith and a new strength. *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, with all its complicated concentration on the question of doubt, comes out on the side of pure faith. 'The sum of all is Yes. My faith is greater, my faith remains'.

William James was another contemporary of Thomas Hodgkin. He also found the answer within the human being. In *The variety of religious experience* (1902) he points to the existence of 'specific and various reservoirs of consciousness, like energies with which we can make specific contact in time of trouble, a store of saving power - "the more" with which saving contacts can be made; and, in communion with it, a new force comes into the world, new departures are made which produce regenerative effects unobtainable otherwise'.³²

It is particularly appropriate here to mention Claude Montefiore (1858-1938)³³ the Jewish scholar and philanthropist associated with the Froebel Institute, Hartley College Southampton and the Liberal Jewish Movement. His father's uncle was Moses Montefiore whose personal physician and friend was our Thomas's Uncle Doctor. The two of them, baronet and Quaker, Jew and Christian, banker and doctor, travelled the Middle East together administering relief and ensuring the continuity of aid in areas of distress. In 1911, the year of the Swarthmore Lecture, Claude Montefiore was involved in the establishment of a Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London. Jews as well as Christians in Germany and in England had been following textual discoveries affecting the understanding of their scriptures and they too had been influenced by the new spirit of free enquiry accompanying the publication of evolutionary theory. Some of them were beginning to see that there were things in *their* Bible which were questionable, even morally questionable, that human error could have occurred, and that every word was not necessarily true nor every law necessarily obligatory. Liberal Judaism developed within orthodox Jewry and is recognised as legitimate if not acceptable to all. Both the Swarthmore Lecture and the liberal Jewish Synagogue expressed, in different ways, a faith renewed by modern thought and applicable to modern circumstances. As a member of the Council responsible for the establishment of the State of Israel it was Claude Montefiore who successfully insisted on having it designated not *the* but *a* home for the Jewish people.

Every period of time, as the Chinese like to remind us, is a bridge between the past and the future. We have been concentrating on the years spanned by the life of Thomas Hodgkin DCL. We conclude with a look at Aristotle's definition of progress and a few references to human progress from our own contemporaries. 'The idea of progress' said Aristotle 'implies that a particular course of change leads towards that which is beneficial or desirable for humanity as a whole'.³⁴ It is those last three words which furnish the safeguard against self interest and subjectivity. Are we getting any further than Thomas Hodgkin and his contemporaries did? Is there any way of knowing? Is progress possible to assess? Is development necessarily progress? Can we really think of the whole as global in every circumstance? Can we improve on Aristotle's definition? How can human progress, locally or globally, be measured? How important to progress is belief in progress? How far does language reflect human progress and how far influence it? How far do we have to recognise and allow for changing values and moral standards?

David Brion Davis in his book *Slavery and Human Progress*³⁵ reminds us that slavery was once regarded as a progressive force and crucial to the expansion of the western world. (Was it not in fact originally an advance on extermination of the enemy?) It was not till the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that it began to be seen as a retrograde institution. He comments on the infinite human capacity for dignifying and even ennobling acts of repression and the problem of conceptualising and implementing human change. He analyses in detail the role of Quakers in the anti-slavery movement and how they were the first Christians to regard the renouncing of slave trading and slave holding as a test of faith. The excesses of industrialisation, imperialism and nationalism, he says, led to a waning commitment to the idea of progress.

Two chapters of David Babbington's book *Patterns of Progress in History*³⁶ deal with the way the values of eighteenth-century enlightenment spread downwards to the lower social groups with the development of the printing press, and what he sees as the association of current thought about progress with evolution, the remodelling of history in the scientific manner and the blows inflicted on progress by disaster. He asks whether liberty is the supreme value, whether morality is absolute, where do evil and suffering come in and was H.A.L. Fisher right in believing there is no sense of purpose in history?

The rhyming couplets of Tony Harrison enshrine wry comments on progress. *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus* is based on a fragment of a Satyr play by Sophocles about the satyr Marsyas being flayed alive for rivalling the God, Apollo, in playing the lute.

When it suddenly dawns on him the swine
the pearl is cast before by one divine
knows it's a pearl and not some novel food
and aspires beyond dumb servitude
When he enters the enclave it represents
they reach for their skin removing instruments

and, from a chorus of Satyrs

We have to keep a proper distance though
We're meant as Calibans to serve a Prospero
Deferential, rustic, suitably in awe
of new inventions is what your satyr's for.
It confounded the categories of high and low
when Caliban could outplay Prospero.

and a comment from a satyr on progress at the expenses of nature referring to the tortoise shell used in the making of Apollo's lyre

When nature gets made use of for man's needs
My heart, at least the horse part of me bleeds
But when I see the outcome, all the rest
of me, the two thirds human is impressed.³⁷

That second line, "My heart, at least the horse part of me bleeds" would seem to indicate that we have at least come some way from the use of such words as 'brutish' and 'bestial' which occurred naturally, and presumably acceptably in Thomas Hodgkin's Swarthmore Lecture in 1911. The message of the play, moreover, regarding the potential of the not-so-dumb but also regarded as inferior beings would seem to suggest that we have come a long way from the attitude behind the utterances 80 years ago even by people like Thomas Hodgkin. These, in their assumptions of the God-given inferiority of so-called 'lower races' now make uncomfortable, embarrassing reading. But it also makes me wonder whether any of the things we are saying today - also in good faith - will seem just as appalling to our children's children's children in the coming century.

Of our own potential, as Quakers, Kenneth Boulding spoke in the Backhouse Lecture in 1964 when he declared his faith in and stated his case for the *Evolutionary Potential of Quakerism*. He believes it is far from exhausted and because of Quaker emphasis on perfectionism and experimentalism it has a loyalty to the future rather than the past (as President of the Friends Historical Society may I say I wish he had said "as well as" instead of "rather than"?). The religious experience, the ethical conclusions, the type of culture derived from it which is peculiarly Quaker have special relevance to the world of the future. The growing point of the Society of Friends is in an evolutionary potential which is both spiritual and intellectual, in knowledge sanctified by love. Thomas Hodgkin would have agreed with this though he, like ourselves, would not, I think, have been so dismissive of the past.

It is now 17 years since Bronowski's televised and published lectures under the title *The Ascent of Man*.³⁸ His last sentence was as follows:

'Every man, every civilisation, has gone forward because of its engagement with what it set itself to do. The personal commitment of a man to his skill, the intellectual commitment and the emotional commitment working together as one has made the ascent of Man.'

Thomas Hodgkin would have liked that too - the rhythm and precision of the prose and the underlying emphasis on the continuity of human endeavour. His own life had been well governed by those three commitments. His particular contribution to the life of the Society of Friends however went further than that and included spiritual commitment. For almost the whole of his life he and the Society of Friends had lived in a period of confusion and crisis. Throughout it all, in his life, even more than by his words, he showed that a caring person could be a thinking person; that the mind, a gift from God, could be dedicated to the service of God, that after 150 years of the disownment of the intellect, firstly by Quietism and then, in a different way by evangelicalism, it was right and needful for the Society to think - and above all, that for personal and corporate progress, heart, mind and spirit had to work together as one in the commitment of obedience to the Inward Light.

Hope Hewison

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⁴*The Friend*, 31, vii 1931, 701-3.

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¹⁰Creighton, *op. cit.*, 149.

¹¹History of Science Society Newsletter, Autumn 1990.

¹²The pioneer of the S.A.M.S.'s work was Capt. Allen F. Gardiner R.N. whose son the Revd. Allen W. Gardiner married my great aunt Ann Watts.

¹³Clifford Longley in *The Times* 3 Feb. 1990.

¹⁴See Alfred Russell Wallace 'Theistic Darwinism' in *Theological Review* (King's College, London), XII, 2, Autumn 1989.

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¹⁶John W. Parker, London, 1860.

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¹⁸At pp. 13-30.

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²²*Ibid.*, 349.

²³*Friends Quarterly*, 1984, p.363.

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³⁸J. Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man*, BBC, London, 1973, 438.