

THE GOSPEL PREACHED BY JOHN WESLEY
AND ITS ECHOS IN MODERN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

At the present time there is a movement to preach again the Everlasting Gospel preached by the apostles and by the early Quakers. Those engaged in this preaching work are mostly Quakers and their message is mostly addressed to Quakers. The greater part of this work has been on the grass-roots level and the response on this level has been encouraging. This New Foundation movement has been a growing movement.

But although this movement has not been greeted with hostility in the Quaker world, there are some things about the religious climate of modern Quakerism that could retard the growth of this movement and might become the cause of its arrested development.

In the days of the apostles and the early Quakers the everlasting gospel had an impact on the world that was like a bomb shell. However, the explosive, revolutionary character of these movements soon became neutralized by forces that were not hostile but which, nevertheless, sublimated the power of the gospel and diverted it into channels that were more culturally acceptable.

So, the question I am raising here is this: "Are there any subtle forces in today's religious environment that might effectively derail this new and growing movement that is centered on the everlasting gospel preached by the apostles and George Fox?"

In raising this question I am making the assumption that there is an everlasting gospel that was preached by Fox and that there is a growing movement which is centered on the task of preaching it. The recovery of Fox's revolutionary gospel message has involved a great deal of painstaking effort and the launching of a movement to reproclaim it has also taken much hard work. But what if this vision becomes clouded and the work comes to a halt? What if this ship, that has been launched at such great cost, should run aground before it is even out of the harbor? I was discussing this possibility with a young New Foundation worker, and when it became clear to him what I was trying to say, he stared at me in frank disbelief. "Do you mean," he said, "that the New Foundation movement could lose its way and that it is possible that the whole thing might become abortive?" Apparently, he had been assuming that the New Foundation movement was endowed with a quality of permanence like that of the Pacific Ocean or the Great Pyramid of Cheops!

That which seems least likely to devitalize the New Foundation movement is open hostility or rejection. We have encountered very little of that. But there are other ways, both subtle and effective, that could dissipate the energies generated in the New Foundation movement thus far.