

The plans for European peace by Quaker authors William Penn (1693) and John Bellers (1710)

Proyectos de paz para Europa de los autores cuáqueros William Penn (1693) y John Bellers (1710)

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Abstract

What was particularly revolutionary in the original Quaker doctrine is the commitment to nonviolence. This found expression as early as 1660 in a declaration signed by Fox and eleven other Quakers which has become known as ‘The Peace Testimony’. Around 1700 two prominent Quakers, William Penn and John Bellers, put forward two designs for ridding the continent of the great scourge of war. This article gives an account, together with an analysis, of the main elements of the two peace plans. It also explores the influence of Penn’s plan in the work of Saint-Pierre and, through it, in the Age of the Enlightenment.

Palabras-clave: peace, Europa, Penn, Bellers, Quakers.

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Resumen

El compromiso de la originaria doctrina cuáquera del XVII con la no-violencia fue algo particularmente revolucionario en su tiempo. Eso ya se manifestaba en el escrito de 1660 de Fox y otros once cuáqueros, titulado El testimonio de paz. Alrededor de 1700 dos importantes cuáqueros, William Penn y John Bellers, propusieron cada uno un plan para alcanzar una paz perpetua, planes que estaban diseñados para eliminar del continente europeo el gran azote de la guerra. El presente artículo muestra una descripción de los elementos fundamentales de ambos planes de paz, junto con un análisis. También se estudia el influjo del plan de Penn en la obra de Saint-Pierre, y a través de él, en el siglo de la Ilustración.

Key-words: paz, Europa, Penn, Bellers, Cuáqueros.

The general discussion of war and peace in the English-speaking world, from about the middle of the 17th century, is characterised by a new element, unique to that world, viz. the emergence of the Religious Society of Friends. The continued existence until today of this Christian pacifist sect, popularly known as Quakers, has ever since made it possible for the anti-war stance to be heard and seen much more prominently than had been the case before. Heard – through the preaching, proselytizing, and pamphleteering of its adherents; seen – through the physical witnessing as well as protesting and demonstrating that their commitment to opposition to war entailed. Over three and a half centuries, the Quaker peace witness has developed from an initially purely negative refusal to take up arms and serve in the armed forces, to a much more active and constructive commitment to develop what today is called a ‘culture of peace’.² The contribution of Quakers, especially in their native country, to the improvement of the living conditions of many of their fellow citizens (women, children, the mentally retarded, the unemployed, destitute, blacks, slaves, prisoners, workers) together with the progressive reform of society and its institutions and practices, is nothing less than astonishing. Over the centuries, Quakers have striven to promote justice, equality, and fairness within and between societies, and their efforts and considerable achievements (especially if their relatively small number is taken into account) can be regarded as a distinct (and continuing) enlightenment project. The explanation for its success has to be found in the deep-seated Quaker belief that all human beings partake of the divine, and therefore have to be treated with dignity, respect, and love. More than a hundred years before the French Revolution declared the rights of

² Peter Brock, *The Quaker Peace Testimony 1660 to 1914*, York, Sessions Book Trust, 1990.

the citizen, and more than two hundred and fifty years before the UN issued the 'Declaration of Human Rights', Quakers had formulated a social philosophy which adumbrated the same principles, principles which they proceeded to apply in everyday life.

Quakers emerged at a time of great religious and political turmoil in England when the traditional authority of church and monarchy were contested, and when civil war was raging. Seekers for truth were many, as were plotters and fighters. George Fox (1624-1691), the founder of the Quakers, attracted followers when, after a profound spiritual experience, which was both liberating and uplifting, he proclaimed that everyone was able to discover the deepest truth for himself or herself because of the 'light within', or the 'spirit within', or 'God within'. The rejection of a priesthood and of many other paraphernalia of institutionalised religion, together with the adoption of social customs which reflected their view of the essential equality of all human beings and which rejected class distinctions, certainly made the Quakers appear a dangerous and revolutionary sect to both religious and secular authority. It resulted in severe persecution and emigration to the 'new world', starting in the last decades of the 17th century. What was particularly revolutionary in the original Quaker doctrine – which has persisted up to today – is the commitment to nonviolence. This found expression as early as 1660 in a declaration signed by Fox and eleven other Quakers which has become known as 'The Peace Testimony'.³ It argued that they were 'harmless and innocent people of God' who were not plotting or fighting for obtaining either religious or secular power. The early Quakers referred to themselves as 'primitive Christians' who followed Christ's injunction not to use the sword, and to suffer rather than inflict suffering. In the Testimony, Quakers declared that they would never 'fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world'. They took seriously and quoted the words of the prophet, 'Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more'. Quakers have been a rare example in history of a religious group whose principles and practice have not habitually diverged; the persecution that often resulted from their steadfast adherence to their principles had to be endured in obedience to the command not to kill or inflict injury.

In a Europe which was constantly at war, and in which England was frequently involved, it is not surprising that the question of the abolition of war retained the early attention of Quakers. In the history of plans for perpetual peace – the scope of which for a long time was mainly confined to Europe, with the notable exception of the plan for universal peace published in 1623 by Emeric Cruce⁴ – are two designs for ridding the continent of the great

³ It has been fully reprinted, with much other relevant material, in a publication issued on the testimony's 350th anniversary: Martina Weitsch, ed., *Be Patterns, Be Examples: Reflecting on 350 years of working for peace in Europe*, Brussels, The Quaker Council for European Affairs, 2010, pp. 4-6.

⁴ A recent reprint, with extensive commentary, is Alain Fenet & Astrid Guillaume, eds., *Emeric Araucaria. Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofía, Política y Humanidades*, año 16, nº 32. Segundo semestre de 2014. Pp. 53-67. ISSN 1575-6823 e-ISSN 2340-2199 doi: 10.12795/araucaria.2014.i32.03

scourge of war, put forward around 1700 by two prominent Quakers.⁵ The Nine Years War (1688-1697), caused by Louis XIV's appetite for war and territorial aggrandizement and which was resisted by a great coalition of other powers, inspired William Penn (1644-1718) to design a scheme for putting the relations between the European powers on a new foundation which henceforth would make the recourse to war both unnecessary and impossible. *An essay towards the present and future peace of Europe by the establishment of an European dyet, parliament or estates* (1693) is, as the title indicates, an early proposal for the creation of a European Parliament – perhaps the first time that the expression itself is encountered.⁶ In a small and slim book (67 pages in the original edition) the author unfolds his argument, rather elegantly, in ten sections of which the first one sets out the advantages of peace, and the last one the benefits that flow from his proposal. This last section is by far also the longest one. Three opening sections concisely deal with key concepts – peace, justice, and government, respectively. Penn states that while peace is productive, preserves people's possessions, and brings security and stability, war devours and destroys, bringing only death, poverty and misery. In the next section, 'Of the means to peace, which is justice rather than war', he argues that between individuals, as between the government and the people, it is justice that keeps the peace. He encapsulates a whole social and political philosophy in the conclusion of this section when he writes: 'Thus peace is maintained by justice, which is a fruit of government, as government is from society, and society from consent'. The third section deals with the need for government as the means of justice. Government is the prevention of cure or disorder, as can readily be observed within a country.

The fourth section contains the essence of his proposal, viz. the creation of a 'Sovereign or Imperial Diet, Parliament or State of Europe', consisting of representatives from each country. This sovereign assembly would establish rules of justice which rulers would have to observe. Failure to do so would lead to enforcement by the assembly, acting as one against the recalcitrant party. Because of the admission of the use of force, Penn did not submit his writing to the relevant Quaker body for approval, which would not have been forthcoming because the possibility of recourse to the use of force infringed the peace testimony. Subsequent sections deal with the composition and regulations of

Cruce, Le Nouveau Cynee, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004.

⁵ Derek Heater, *The Idea of European Unity*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1992, esp. ch. 2, 'Two Friends', pp. 39-60; Peter Brock, op. cit., ch. 7, 'Early Quaker Plans for World Peace', pp. 75-86.

⁶ A facsimile was published in 1983: Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag; see also the tercentenary edition published in 1993: London: BOA Analysis (Europe) Ltd. in association with the Quaker Council for European Affairs. The *Essay* is also reprinted in Weitsch, op. cit., pp. 16-26 and is included in a volume that was published in the same year, together with nine more of Penn's publications by a leading expert on him: Edwin B. Bronner, ed., *William Penn. The Peace of Europe, The Fruits of Solitude and Other Writings*, London, Everyman, 1993.

the proposed assembly. Regarding membership, Penn writes that at first glance, it seems to involve ‘no small difficulty: what votes to allow for the inequality of the princes and states’. His preferred measure, something akin to GNP, leads him to suggest (by way of example only, as he makes clear) the number of delegates each country would be entitled to, ranging from twelve for the ‘Empire of Germany’ and ten each for France and Spain, to one each for the dukedoms of Holstein and Courland (today, western Latvia). This is of course an issue that all international institutions are faced with and that continues, for instance, to bedevil plans for reforming the United Nations, particularly the Security Council with its two-tier membership of five permanent members with veto power, and ten rotating members without veto power. Also the simple voting system in the General Assembly – ‘one country, one vote’ – which fully ignores such factors as territory, population, and economic strength of individual members, has been criticised for lacking equity and democracy. Penn addresses also another issue which, more than 300 years later, is equally topical and controversial: who belongs to Europe? A strong advocate of religious toleration, he states that it ‘seems but fit and just’ that the ‘Turks and Moscovites’ are permitted to join the new international organisation that he proposes. In his preliminary sketch, there would altogether be ninety delegates. Penn writes that it is not absolutely necessary that the larger countries sent all their delegates since the votes of any country can be cast by one delegate on behalf of the national delegation. But he adds, ‘though the fuller the assembly of states is, the more solemn, effectual, and free the debates will be; and the resolutions must needs come with greater authority’. The venue for the first assembly should as much as possible be a central one with the place of subsequent meetings being decided by agreement.

Penn also makes various practical suggestions for the way in which the assembly should conduct its business and make decisions. He suggests a modern-sounding rotating presidency, secret voting (to prevent or reduce corruption), the keeping of records (with safeguards to prevent their falsification), and Latin or French as the official language. At this time, English was of course not the world language it would become in the 20th century. Even so, the fact that Penn did not mention his native tongue, and that he gave England six votes in the assembly (half that of Germany’s, and fewer than France’s ten, or Italy’s eight), indicates his fairness and objectivity. An honest Quaker, he could not be accused of having designed a scheme that was really meant to advance the cause of his own country (a suspicion or accusation that has rightly been made of several other schemes for perpetual peace). Decisions would require three quarters of the total vote, with ‘at least seven above the balance’ in order to reduce the likelihood of corruption.

In the penultimate section of his Essay, Penn identifies and refutes several objections that could be advanced against his plan. To the first, ‘that the

strongest and richest sovereignty will never agree to it', he answers that 'he is not stronger than all the rest, and for that reason you should promote this and compel him into it; especially before he be so, for then it will be too late to deal with such a one'. The objection that sovereign princes and states will lose their sovereignty he counters by stating that they will remain as sovereign at home as before. It is true, he admits, that 'none of them have now any sovereignty over one another: And if this be called a lessening of their power, it must be only because the great fish can no longer eat up the little ones, and that each sovereignty is equally defended from injuries, and disabled from committing them'. He admits that following the creation of the international assembly, the war establishment in all member countries is likely to be reduced. However, this can only benefit society, since young men who previously would have joined the (unproductive) army will now join the productive labour force, provided the government takes care of their education. For Penn, education is a cardinal factor for securing the happiness and wellbeing of society: 'For such as the youth of any country is bred, such is the next generation, and the government in good or bad hands'. We will see that also for Penn's friend and fellow Quaker, John Bellers, the government had a duty to provide education and practical training for its young people who would then be able to lead a productive and peaceful life, contributing at the same time to the greater good.

In the final section, which takes up a third of the Essay, Penn discusses the 'real benefits' that would result from the adoption of his scheme. They concern ethical-religious, economic-financial, and social & personal benefits. First and foremost, it will prevent 'the spilling of so much human and Christian blood'. Even though the leaders of government themselves are rarely exposed to warfare, it is their duty 'to be tender of the lives of their people'. The scheme, by avoiding war, will prevent the loss of many lives, which is detrimental to society, and will at the same time also prevent 'the cries of so many widows, parents and fatherless ... that cannot be very pleasant in the ears of any government'. Another benefit is that to some extent the reputation of Christianity in the eyes of 'infidels' – now impaired 'by the many bloody and unjust wars of Christians, not only with them, but one with another' – will be recovered. Penn stresses the unchristian nature of warfare, and that the Saviour is known as the Prince of Peace who came to save and not destroy lives. Economically, the great expenses associated with warfare will be saved – including such indirect costs as 'pensions to the widows and orphans of such as die in wars; and of those that have been disabled in them [and] which rise high in the revenue of some countries'. These observations have a very modern ring in countries like the US and UK which have been fighting ill-conceived and disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with long-lasting and expensive consequences for all parties involved. Another advantage is that towns, cities

and the countryside will no longer be laid to waste. Also the enormous expenses devoured by spies and intelligence gathering – a business, moreover, he writes that is ‘not without some immoral practices’ – will no longer be necessary. Again, today the world is waking up to the great costs associated with the relentless expansion of ‘national security’ demands, not merely in financial terms but, equally significant, in terms of the hollowing out of the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. Not the least of the benefits is that it will enable sovereigns and princes to marry for love, rather than dynastic interest, and happy rulers are likely to be better rulers of their peoples.

In his conclusion, Penn argues that a convincing rebuttal of the critics of his proposal, on grounds of practicability, is provided by the example of the United Provinces as well as by the design of King Henry IV of France. Certainly, it cannot be said that the author of this plan for a European Parliament – which, after all, has been realised, albeit 300 years after he first suggested it – was a dreamer with no political experience. More than ten years before he wrote his *Essay*, William Penn founded the colony of Pennsylvania (named after his father, on the insistence of King Charles II) so that his fellow co-religionists, as well as other persecuted sects, could emigrate and practice their faith without fear of persecution, living in a tolerant and liberal society of which the laws and institutions were far in advance of those in the mother country. In 1682 he drafted his Frame of Government for the colony; it limited the power of government and guaranteed many fundamental liberties. Penn’s ‘Holy Experiment’ survived for the next 70 years or so (1680s-1750s). One of its main features which made it famous at the time, and later, was the harmonious relations that prevailed between the immigrants and the native Indians. Fully in accordance with the Quaker view of the equality of all human beings, they were treated with dignity and honesty – something which they were not used to, and for which they praised Penn and his fellow Quakers. As governor of the colony, Penn not only designed its constitution but also the city of Philadelphia – city of brotherly love – taking care that houses had gardens, and the city green areas, and that the natural environment was not ruthlessly exploited. Penn also sketched a constitution for the union of the thirteen colonies which was to inspire the American constitution. He was a man of vision but also of practical acumen.⁷

In a note to the reader at the beginning of the *Essay*, Penn modestly writes that he might not be up to the task but that his effort ‘may provoke abler pens to improve and perform the design with better judgement and success’. That his essay *did* indeed provoke another writer to address the same subject has

⁷ David Galloway, *The practical visionary and his essay which served as a landmark for the post-war European order* [in Jorge Tavares da Silva, ed., *Europe – giving shape to an idea*, Brussels, Council of the European Union, 2009], pp. 76-79.

only been discovered in recent times. Since this writer was nobody less than the abbe de Saint-Pierre, author of the three-volume *Projet pour rendre la paix perpetuelle en Europe* (1713-1716), the ramifications of Penn's modest effort can be said to have been far-reaching since it is likely to have stimulated the Frenchman to produce his plan – which, unlike Penn's, became well known and was widely discussed. This, in turn, inspired Jean-Jacques Rousseau to produce not only a summary of Saint-Pierre's wordy and too detailed scheme, the *Extrait du projet de paix perpetuelle de Monsieur l'abbe de Saint-Pierre* (1761),⁸ but also to address the subject himself in his famous *Judgement* (which appeared posthumously, in the collected edition of his works published in 1782).⁹ Also Kant, in *Towards Perpetual Peace (Zum ewigen Frieden, 1795)* mentions Saint-Pierre whose name by this time had become synonymous with the 'utopian' project of perpetual peace.

We owe this important discovery to the meticulous and brilliant research of Daniel Sabbagh, a young French scholar, who has revealed that Saint-Pierre was indebted to Penn for many of his ideas, thereby disproving the opinion, widely shared among students of the matter, that Penn's essay had no influence on Saint-Pierre.¹⁰ Moreover, Sabbagh has established that, far from Saint-Pierre having no knowledge of Penn's essay, he was in some ways involved in the contemporary translation of it into French. The *Essai d'un projet pour rendre la paix de l'Europe solide et durable; par l'etablissement d'une diete generale compose des deputez de tous les princes & etats souverains* was, like the original, published without name of author. In addition, the translation is without name of publisher, and also without place and date of publication, and no mention is made of the fact that it concerns a translation. Copies of this French translation, which Sabbagh argues was issued at the latest in 1697, are extremely rare.¹¹ To the two copies which, only in recent times, were known to exist – in the library of the Norwegian Nobel Institute in Oslo, and the library of

⁸ On this issue, see 'Ecrits sur l'Abbe de Saint-Pierre', pp. 100-101 in N.J.H.Dent, *A Rousseau Dictionary*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992 and especially Grace G. Roosevelt, *Reading Rousseau in the Nuclear Age*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1990, esp. chapter 4, 'Political Man and Perpetual Peace', pp. 90-119.

⁹ 'In his *Judgement* Rousseau declares the Abbe's project a noble and laudable one, but criticizes him for neglecting to consider sufficiently the ambition of princes and their desire to increase their power. The Abbe is too optimistic and too simplistic in supposing that states, any more than individuals, will be effectively directed, where their long-term interests are concerned, by rational foresight'. Dent, op. cit., p. 100. Dent adds, 'Although it may seem that Europe is now moving towards a realization of the Abbe's vision, Rousseau was surely right to suppose that his ideas were not applicable at the time', pp. 100-101.

¹⁰ Daniel Sabbagh, *William Penn et l'Abbe de Saint-Pierre: Le Chainon Manquant*, "Revue de synthese", janvier-mars 1997, pp. 83-105. See also Daniel Sabbagh, *Penn and Europe*, "The Friend", 22 April 1994, p. 496.

¹¹ A facsimile, with a bibliographical note by the present writer, was published in 1986: York, William Sessions/The Ebor Press. Several speculations made there have been shown to be wrong by Sabbagh's subsequent research.

the UN in Geneva – a third copy, discovered by Sabbagh, can now be added. It is in a private collection, and not long ago was part of the famous library of the Austrian Harrach family, one of the oldest and most prominent noble families of the Habsburg empire. Saint-Pierre knew Ferdinand Bonaventura I Count Harrach (1637-1706) who was ambassador in Spain; it seems that he received the little volume from Saint-Pierre.

The English translation of Saint-Pierre's own *Projet* was published in London in 1714. It seems that *A Project for Settling an Everlasting Peace in Europe* was barely noticed. A rare, and perhaps only comment published at the time, appeared in an essay by Penn's friend and fellow Quaker, John Bellers (1654-1725). In *An Essay towards the improvement of Physick* (1714), Bellers wrote: 'The many advantages of an European state and senate, are excellently well discoursed of, by the Abbot St. Pierre, of the French Academy, lately published in English'.¹² Bellers greatly welcomed this new peace plan since he had concluded his own, published four years earlier, with the observation that he had 'seen nothing upon this subject' but what had been written upon it by the Bishop of Rodez and William Penn. Since Bellers and Penn were close friends, and the former was familiar with the latter's *Essay*, it is possible that he was inspired by it to write his own (just as Saint-Pierre had been, as Daniel Sabbagh has shown). On the other hand, it should be noted that Bellers' own imaginative mind and reforming zeal were (as in the case of Saint-Pierre), sufficient to bring him of his own accord to consider the question of the abolition of war. Like Penn and Saint-Pierre, Bellers was living through the long war of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) and this provided ample opportunity to observe the disasters and miseries caused by war, and to reflect on the possibility of its elimination. The impetus and urgency for designing a solution for Bellers, as for Penn, was the Quaker Peace Testimony with its condemnation of war on religious grounds. But, for both, to this should be added also the dictates of common sense and economic calculation, as well as general humanitarian sentiment. Certainly for Bellers, who was as keen a social reformer as Saint-Pierre, among the many deficiencies of social organisation nothing was more deplorable than the practice of war. He called it 'the greatest misery which attends mortals' and stated that 'Nothing makes nations and people more barbarous than war'.¹³

Before briefly considering his peace plan, it is useful to say something more about Bellers, who in his own way is as fascinating and outstanding a personality as Penn, and who should be remembered first and foremost as a pioneer of social reform. In fact, Bellers' plan for European peace was quickly

¹² Roderick Pace & Peter van den Dungen, *John Bellers, Some Reasons for an European State*. Facsimile of the original essay of 1710. Tercentenary edition, Valletta, Midsea Books, 2010, p. 34.

¹³ In the original text, these quotations appear on pp. 8 & 20, respectively.

forgotten and would remain so for the next almost two hundred years, being rediscovered only at the start of the 20th century. If it is the case that the author has not totally fallen into oblivion, despite his many publications proposing reforms, this is largely due to Karl Marx who referred to him on several occasions in *Das Kapital* (1867) and famously called him ‘a veritable phenomenon’ in the history of political economy. This helps to explain why, during most of the 20th century, as long as the Soviet Union and communist system were in existence, Bellers was better known there than he was in his own country or in the West generally. The degree of this neglect is suggested by the fact that during all this time he was without an entry in leading Anglo-American reference works such as the *Encyclopedia Britannica* or the *Encyclopedia Americana*. The *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, on the other hand, did have a short article on him which, interestingly, makes no mention of his peace plan. The ignorance about Bellers in his own country is also suggested by the comment of Frederick Clifford-Vaughan who, in an essay published in 1958 on Bellers’ peace plan, noted that he is ‘otherwise unknown’.¹⁴

Bellers deplored not only the waste of war, but also that of unemployment, of ill health, and of ignorance, and in some twenty pamphlets he proposed detailed and practical remedies which together make him a veritable pioneer of social reform. He is today regarded as the founder of the National Health Service in England and is believed to have been the first person in Europe to propose the abolition of the death penalty (1699), predating Cesare Beccaria by some sixty years.¹⁵ He also proposed reform of the electoral system in order to promote the appointment of effective political leaders. In one of the first books devoted to him and which made his writings easily available, A. Ruth Fry notes that they ‘contain a great deal of practical thought, lit by imagination, and inspired ... by a truly spiritual outlook ... He thought a Utopia could ... be made a reality’.¹⁶ One finds in Bellers the same concern as in Saint-Pierre for promoting the happiness and well-being of all people, and he refers to the ‘general good of mankind’. He was also, as was said of Saint-Pierre, ‘a good man’, known for his kindness and tender heart. From an early age Bellers (from a well-to-do family) was involved in various philanthropic works such as assisting his co-religionists who were being persecuted until Parliament passed the Toleration Act in 1689. He also came to the rescue of French Huguenots,

¹⁴ For details see Peter van den Dungen, *Some Reasons for Remembering John Bellers (1710-2010)* [in Pace & van den Dungen, op. cit.], pp. 25-26.

¹⁵ Tim Hitchcock, *Bellers, John* [in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, vol. 5], p. 14.

¹⁶ A. Ruth Fry, *John Bellers 1654-1725. Quaker Economist and Social Reformer. His Writings Reprinted with a Memoir*, London, Cassell, 1935, pp. 21-22. Today, the standard work on Bellers, which includes reprints of all of his writings, is by George Clarke, ed., *John Bellers: His Life, Times and Writings*, London, Routledge, 1987 (paperback ed. York, Sessions Book Trust, 1993). *Some Reasons* is at pp. 134-153.

some of whom were fleeing to the New World from the violent persecutions at home which followed the revocation in 1685 of the Edict of Nantes. In a letter which Penn sent that year to the governing council of Pennsylvania, asking them to be kind to these people and readily accept them, he mentioned that these Frenchmen ‘come on John Bellers’ account’. As mentioned above, it was the absence of religious toleration which had inspired Penn to start his ‘Holy Experiment’ in the new world. The same concern was uppermost in Bellers’ mind: his plan for European peace prominently contains a proposal for keeping peace among the various Christian denominations. The essence of this proposal is summed up in the latter part of the title, in one long sentence: *A proposal for a general council or convocation of all the different religious persuasions in Christendom (not to dispute what they differ about, but) to settle the general principles they agree in: By which it will appear, that they may be good subjects and neighbours, though of different apprehensions of the way to heaven.*

It is fair to assume that Bellers did not mean to confine this general council to Christian religions only, just as he and Penn did not want to exclude the Turks from the European assembly that they proposed to keep the peace politically. Regarding this last issue, Bellers wrote in his conclusion, ‘The Muscovites are Christians, and the Mahometans men, and have the same faculties, and reason as other men ... to put their brains out, to put sense into them, is a great mistake and would leave Europe too much in a state of war, whereas the farther this civil Union is possible to be extended, the greater will be the peace on earth, and good will among men’.¹⁷ Also, as Quakers and passionate advocates of religious toleration, Penn and Bellers would readily have accepted the validity of other religions, and not just those of the Abrahamic-monotheistic faith (as is suggested by Penn’s appreciation of the spiritual beliefs of the native Indians with whom he established cordial relations). Such an interpretation makes Bellers’ subsidiary plan for a general council of Christian religions an early precursor not only of the World Council of Churches, but even of the Parliament of the World’s Religions. The latter was first convened in 1893 in Chicago, and revived a century later in the same city when it adopted a ‘Declaration Toward a Global Ethic’. Largely formulated by Swiss theologian Hans Küng, it is informed by the following compelling logic: ‘No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions. No dialogue between the religions without global ethical standards. No survival of our globe without a global ethic’.¹⁸ The need to stress constantly the peace-fostering ethics of all faiths – so as to prevent religions from sanctioning wars, as happened all too often in the past and is happening again today – which is very much associated with the

¹⁷ *Some Reasons*, p. 20.

¹⁸ Cf. van den Dungen [in Pace & van den Dungen, op. cit.], p. 53.

work of Küng is clearly foreshadowed in Bellers' proposal on the matter.

It can be seen as the most original and meritorious aspect of his peace plan, next to the detailed account he provides for estimating the costs of war. Using facts and figures, his statistical computations (which also comprised what economists today refer to as 'opportunity costs') were an unusual and highly innovative way of demonstrating that from an economic point of view, wars were most undesirable. Such a conclusion, based on empirical evidence, was meant to increase support for his plan for a 'European State'. Its essence is contained in a four-page section entitled 'The Proposal' which is part of an address 'To the Powers of Europe'. At the heart of the proposal is 'one thought', viz. 'That Europe should be divided into 100 equal cantons or provinces, or so many, that every sovereign prince and state may send one member to the Senate at least; and that each Canton should ... raise a thousand men, or money, or ships of equal value ... And for every thousand men, etc., that each kingdom or state is to raise, such kingdom or state shall have a right to send so many members to this European Senate, whose powers and rules should be first formed by an original contract among their principals'.¹⁹ Students of Bellers' peace plan differ greatly in the way they have interpreted his recommendation. Does the proposed division involve a major change in the territorial status quo? On what basis can the cantons be made equal?²⁰

One can readily agree with the views of two leading Quaker peace historians on the matter, viz. that Bellers 'wished to make a rather curious alteration in the territorial configuration of existing European states',²¹ and that his plan 'takes less account of international relations than Penn's'.²² When comparing the schemes of Penn and Bellers, it is clear that *Some Reasons* lacks precision and pragmatism about its central feature, the 'one thought' of the proposal.²³ Considering the two plans in their entirety, it is also obvious as a recent student has noted, that Penn's *Essay* is 'more logically argued and presented ... and penetrates rather more shrewdly to the heart of the political problems'.²⁴ Also Simone Goyard-Fabre, the leading French scholar of the classical peace plans and an authority on that of Saint-Pierre, finds that the plan of Bellers, compared with that of Penn, lacks systematic treatment and

¹⁹ Bellers, pp. 4-5.

²⁰ The contradictory views of several authors are discussed in the facsimile ed., pp. 40-49.

²¹ Peter Brock, op. cit., p.83.

²² Sydney D. Bailey, *Peace is a Process*. Swarthmore Lecture 1993, London, Quaker Home Service, 1993, p. 74.

²³ A leading French historian of Quakerism disagrees, finding that *Some Reasons* 'was both a more precise and pragmatic scheme than Penn's, though perhaps a less convincing one juridically speaking'. Jacques Tual, *Peace in Europe in the 17th Century: Quaker Projects for a European Parliament* [in Christiane d'Haussy, ed., *Les Artisans de la Paix*, Reims, Presses Universitaires de Reims, 1996], p. 88.

²⁴ Derek Heater, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

that it stresses ethical-religious rather than juridical points.²⁵ Earlier scholars have correctly pointed out that the plan by Bellers is far less elaborated than the one by Penn, and is rather in the nature of ‘a political advice than a plan of international organization’.²⁶ This apt characterization is already evident in the overall compilation (rather than construction) of the scheme which consists of a series of addresses variously destined for Queen Anne, members of the British parliament, neutral powers, and various clergy. Indeed, the first five of the seven sections which comprise *Some Reasons* are headed – ‘to’ – followed by the names of the respective addressees.²⁷ To sum up, as regards both structure and content, and as regards the overall development of the argument and its detailed elaboration, the *Essay* is altogether a much more elegant and satisfying achievement than *Some Reasons*. This is not to diminish the contribution made by Bellers. As he himself observed, very few authors at the time were addressing the question of the abolition of warfare, and the mere fact that his is one of the exceptions makes it remarkable. As indicated above, it contains several features which were highly original and greatly ahead of its time.²⁸ The same deep inspiration which, three hundred years ago, led these two Friends (the name Quakers often use for themselves) to design plans for the abolition of war, continues to motivate the Society of Friends today to work, in myriad ways, for the promotion of peace and justice, both at home and in the world at large.

²⁵ Simone Goyard-Fabre, *La Construction de la Paix ou le Travail de Sisyphe*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1994, pp. 103-104.

²⁶ Christian L. Lange & August Schou, *Histoire de l'Internationalisme*, Oslo, H. Aschehoug, vol. 2, 1954, p. 107.

²⁷ This point is made by another authority on the subject, Theodore Ruysen, *Les Sources Doctrinales de l'Internationalisme*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, vol. 2, 1958, p. 95.

²⁸ On this issue, see in particular Jacob ter Meulen, *Der Gedanke der Internationalen Organisation in seiner Entwicklung 1300-1800*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1917, pp. 343-355.

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