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“To Renew the Covenant”

Religious Themes in Eighteenth-Century Quaker Abolitionism

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Abstract

In “*To Renew the Covenant*”: *Religious Themes in Eighteenth-Century Quaker Abolitionism*, Jon R. Kershner argues that Quakers adhered to a providential view of history, which motivated their desire to take a corporate position against slavery. Antislavery Quakers believed God’s dealings with them, for good or ill, were contingent on their faithfulness. Their history of deliverance from persecution, the liberty of conscience they experienced in the British colonies, and the ethics of the Golden Rule formed a covenantal relationship with God that challenged notions of human bondage. Kershner traces the history of abolitionist theologies from George Fox and William Edmundson in the late seventeenth century to Paul Cuffe and Benjamin Banneker in the early nineteenth century. It covers the Germantown Protest, Benjamin Lay, John Woolman, Anthony Benezet, William Dillwyn, Warner Mifflin, and others who offered religious arguments against slavery. It also surveys recent developments in Quaker antislavery studies.

Keywords

Quakers – Golden Rule – covenant – antislavery – abolition – providence – Benjamin Lay – John Woolman – Anthony Benezet – Paul Cuffe

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1 Introduction: The Everlasting Covenant in Religion and Politics

therefore all you called *Christians*, that profes[s] him, who are Elders and Masters of Families, are you not to see that your Wives, your Children and Strangers that are within your Camps ... that they come all into the new Covenant, Christ Jesus, which in God is established forever, an everlasting Covenant ...

GEORGE FOX (1676, p. 7)

In the seventeenth- and eighteenth centuries, many Europeans viewed forms of involuntary bondage, such as perpetual African slavery, as a ready answer to the labor shortages in the British colonies (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, pp. 64–65). Like other European migrants, Quaker immigrants to the British colonies in the late seventeenth century, and Quaker missionary efforts in the colonies, successfully established many Quaker communities in these areas and, like their neighbors, Quaker colonists sometimes used slave labor on their plantations, in their shops, and in their homes (Cazden, 2013, pp. 347–348; James, 1963, p. 103). Jack Marietta has shown that in 1760s Philadelphia, Friends were 9.9% of the population while accounting for 10.4% of slave owners in the city (Marietta, 1984, pp. 115–116). However, there was always a persistent strain of antislavery foment, even as some leading Quakers increased their involvement in slavery for economic gain.

There was no group consensus on the morality of slavery for the first 100 years of the Quaker movement. In their first half-century, Quaker views of perpetual African slavery ranged from acceptance of slavery to ameliorationism to abstention. However, over time, the arguments levied against slavery, beginning in the late seventeenth century, were entrenched, enhanced, and elaborated within the Quaker tradition until abolitionism became the official Quaker position in Europe and America. By the end of the eighteenth century many Quaker groups had drafted antislavery statements and disowned those refusing to manumit their slaves (Drake, 1944, pp. 79–81).

The efforts of Quaker antislavery reformers to, first, discipline and, then, to completely eliminate slave holding within the Society continued well into the nineteenth century. Elizabeth Cazden contends that disowning members who owned slaves depended on the moral will and organizational capacity of the local meetings charged with overseeing the effort, and some slaveholders remained for some time after the official antislavery position was adopted. Moreover, while some disowned Quaker slave owners joined other churches, others continued to attend Quaker worship and maintained Quaker habits of dress and speech and were considered to be Quakers by the

public (Cazden, 2013, p. 352). Likewise, some Quakers may have never manumitted all their slaves when Quaker official bodies required them to do so. In other cases, slave owners may have joined the Quakers after the surge of Quaker antislavery efforts at the end of the eighteenth century and brought their slaves with them. And in still other cases, lax Quakers became slave owners after the prohibition on slave owning took effect (Mangus, 1999, p. 47). In short, despite its significant efforts against slavery, Quakers continued to struggle with the issue long after they had declared themselves free of the practice.

"To Renew the Covenant": Religious Themes in Eighteenth-Century Quaker Abolitionism examines the religious and theological themes in eighteenth-century Quaker antislavery views. Scholars have argued for economic, rhetorical, and philosophical reasons for the emergence of antislavery sentiment as a dominant view among Quakers (Carey, 2012; Jackson, 2009; James, 1963; Soderlund, 1985). This book augments the existing literature by contending that the religious reasons for Quaker antislavery views provide a consistent thread across the eighteenth century. J. William Frost has argued that religious ideas and the Quaker tradition were not necessarily determinant of Quaker antislavery thought. After all, Quakers participated in slavery. Moreover, antislavery sentiment grew in many quarters of Western society between 1700 and 1800, so the Quaker embrace of abolitionism could have been the result of external influences. However, the consistency of Quaker originated statements against slavery suggests that there were religious ideas in Quaker theology, influenced and bolstered by intellectual and religious trends in European and American society at large, such as the growth in popularity of sentimentalism and philosophical arguments for natural rights, which combined to make slavery an uneasy fit among Quakers and ultimately unsustainable (Frost, 1980c, pp. 13, 19).

Scholars of antislavery have pondered the question of "why the Quakers?" This book argues that the answer to that question must address Quaker views of God and the Quaker understanding of their place in history as a religious community. To varying degrees, theological themes of sin, spiritual revelation, biblicism, perfection, judgement, corporate witness, and church authority were essential to Quaker interpretations of faithfulness in their public and personal lives, and, so, were invoked and intensified by antislavery reformers. This theological explanation helps scholars understand how a body of religious and moral thought could develop and become dominant in a religious community that eschewed formal creeds.

Moreover, the Quaker experience of persecution and deliverance in the seventeenth century led Quakers of the eighteenth century to believe that God

demanded more from them if they were to live up to the exacting standards of divine providence. Thus, Quaker abolitionists looked backward in history to the early Church and to the suffering and persecution of the early Quakers to recount the history of God's gracious and unmerited favor in delivering them from their persecutors. Recounting the story of God's providence to previous generations of faithful Christians in the midst of sufferings and persecutions set the bar for Quaker moral purity in the eighteenth century, and reestablished a belief that suffering for a good cause could be redemptive. All of these rationales supported a strain of Quaker antislavery protest.

This exploration of religious motivations for eighteenth-century Quaker antislavery critiques is combined with another goal of this book: to provide an overview and review of the important research on Quaker antislavery topics. *To Renew the Covenant*, then, is both a study of religious themes in Quaker antislavery arguments and a study of the historiography of Quaker antislavery. It also pays attention to theological tropes and how they developed in culture and context, interacting with parallel intellectual trends in Euro-American society. While this book traces the important institutional and ecclesial developments among Quakers that contributed to the eventual corporate Quaker condemnation of slavery in all of its forms, the emphasis of this book is on the religious ideas espoused by individual antislavery advocates and how these contributions derived from the Quaker tradition.

1.1 *Quaker Beginnings*

In 1647 a spiritual seeker named George Fox (1624–1691) wandered through a field in the English mid-lands. He had sought answers to his spiritual questions in many churches, but could find no relief for his spiritual unrest. As he walked, he heard a voice offer him what he understood to be a message from God: “There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition” (Fox, 1986, p. 11). Fox interpreted this message to mean that the answers to his spiritual questions would not come from the professional clergy of his day, but from the inward Teacher, Jesus Christ, who could guide him into all truth once he gave up his search for answers outside of the spiritual Christ who dwelled inwardly. Fox’s initial insight would become the doctrine of the ‘Inward Light,’ or the ‘Light Within,’ and define the Quaker movement (Dandelion, 2007, p. 22).

There is no direct line of causation from early Quaker origins and theology to the antislavery turn among Quakers in the eighteenth century. None of the first generation of Quaker founders owned slaves at the time of the movement’s founding, but as soon as colonial Quakers of the second generation had economic means and a need for labor they participated in slavery at close to the same rates as other religious groups (Jackson, 2009, p. 13). While early

Quaker theology did not predetermine antislavery thought, elements of it did provide fertile ground for the formation of abolitionist theologies. The description of early Quaker theology below will focus on the themes that would later be employed among antislavery advocates and that helped maintain consistent antislavery dissent and unease within Quakerism.

Having experienced a direct and powerful conviction of sin followed by an establishment into a new spiritual state in Christ, Quakers believed they were in the vanguard of God's new work on earth that would inevitably lead to the conversion of the whole world. This confidence in their message was tied to their belief that suffering well in the face of persecution was a vindication of their message (Moore, 2000, p. 53; Spencer, 2007, p. 27). Quakers grew dramatically through the 1650s, which only intensified their persecution. In the 1660s, anti-Quaker laws banned them from meeting together for worship. Quakers ignored these laws and met together openly. Many key leaders were imprisoned and many died as a result of these persecutions (Gwyn, 1986, p. 53).

The belief that a new age was dawning and that their only allegiance was to Christ alone led Quakers to habits of comportment that challenged social conventions and angered many. These early Quakers used the common language for all people and refused to doff their hats in the presence of social elites because those practices suggested a stratification of spiritual and social worth that they believe purported a false hierarchy of persons. Such a hierarchy was dangerous because all people needed to be brought low before the convicting power of Christ; there were no outward distinctions one could appeal to in the face of God's judgment (Barbour, 1964, pp. 1–2; Dandelion, 2007, p. 35; Gwyn, 1986, p. 191).

Nothing angered Quakers as much as the religious hierarchy, which was maintained through forced tithes. Quakers refused to pay these tithes as they also proclaimed against the implicit teaching of the established churches in England that their priests and bishops served as mediators between humanity and God. For these early Quakers, nothing was more eternally dangerous than placing a barrier between individuals and the direct encounter with Christ that was the only true way to salvation and victory over sin (Gwyn, 1995, pp. 119–120).

While Puritans believed that sin was inevitable and life beyond the strictures of human sinfulness was impossible in this life, early Quakers believed that sin was not to be accommodated and could be overcome in the power of Christ (Gwyn, 1986, p. 76). The Quaker inward unity with Christ would overcome social and personal sin and lead to a flowering of the Spirit's presence, perfecting the Quaker community and establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth (Dandelion, 2007, p. 36).

The working of the Spirit in the individual and society would flourish where 'Gospel Liberty' was recognized. Doug Gwyn's work on early Quaker understandings of their covenantal relationship to God demonstrates the central role of 'Liberty' in their theology of God's work in the world. This concept of liberty becomes an important theological foundation for antislavery thought among eighteenth-century Quakers. Early leaders like Richard Farnworth (circa 1627–1666) asserted that true Christian faith thrived when a country's laws allowed individuals to follow their consciences obediently. Farnworth argued that God, not political rulers, had authority over spiritual powers and human affairs, and God had ordained liberty for humanity and, particularly, Christians. That is, humanity was free to pursue the ends of justice, righteousness, and peace for which they were created by God (S. Angell & Birkel, 2015, p. 93; Gwyn, 1995, pp. 258–259).

Farnworth believed God granted Christians freedom to stand before God and the world in sincerity and tenderness of conscience. In the general liberty granted by God to all humanity the covenant is "implicit" but universally present and waiting to be fulfilled in all people. The full, transforming experience of God's love, and inward authentication of it, makes the covenant "explicit" for the individual, their behaviors and, also, in the way the community of God exists in the midst of social relations in the world (Gwyn, 1995, pp. 258–259).

Because liberty is granted by God and revealed universally without regard to status or nationality, "neither humans in general nor Christians in particular should be denied liberty. It is demanded by God's ultimate jurisdiction in human affairs" (Gwyn, 1995, p. 259). As a result, all people stand in the truth of their conscience before God alone; and God alone is able to change and convict the human heart. Farnworth's view of liberty was *'theistic'* rather than secular or humanistic: "humanity cannot attain its purpose, nor can Christians properly worship God, without this universal liberty" (Gwyn, 1995, p. 259).

However, early Quaker leaders also recognized the need for order as the persecutions of the 1660s intensified. 'Gospel Liberty,' and what came to be known as 'Gospel Order,' the system of layered Quaker gatherings and channels of authority, were not seen as contradictory by Friends. They were, rather, natural implications of the 'Inward Light,' which required both freedom and careful guidance by the community.

As early as the mid-1650s this organic ordering of Quaker ecclesial structures was emerging, with separate meetings for men and women, and layers of local, regional, and national gatherings of leaders. Many early Quaker leaders believed this framework would enhance the freedom of the Spirit to lead Quakers into all truth, but as Quaker leaders sought toleration from persecution in the

1660s this system also had the effect of squashing more radical voices and set up a system whereby an approved version of Quakerism could emerge over the protests of dissenters (S. Angell & Birkel, 2015, p. 96; Gwyn, 1995, 1998, pp. 278–280). The implications of 'Gospel Liberty' and 'Gospel Order' resulted in tensions in the Quaker community that would never be fully resolved, and that played themselves out in the corporate Quaker wrestling with slavery.

1.2 *Early Quakers and Slavery*

Colonialism, and its need for labor, spurred the enslavement of Africans by Europeans in the seventeenth century (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 11). The economic demand coupled with a racialized view of human value in which black people were believed to be lacking the virtues to live as free and equal participants in society. The prospect of evangelizing Africans with the Christian faith convinced many Europeans that the enslavement of Africans somehow improved African lives and was their inevitable destiny (Bradley, 1998, p. 12; Davis, 1988, pp. 213–215).

Not until Quaker missionaries began to travel in the British Atlantic world did they observe first-hand enslavement as a part of imperial economic policy. In the 1660s and 1670s, Quaker ministers sailed to the British planters of Barbados. In 1657, George Fox wrote a letter warning Barbadian planters to remember the spiritual equality of all people before God, who sent Christ as "a covenant to the people, and a light to the Gentiles, and to enlighten them ..." (Fox, 1831, pp. 144–145). While this 1657 epistle is a strong statement of spiritual equality of all persons before God, Fox did not interpret that theology as a mandate for manumission of all slaves (Fox, 1831, pp. 144–145).

When George Fox visited the West Indies in 1671 he was shocked by the treatment of Africans and the luxurious living of the planters who regarded their slaves as objects. In response, Fox preached a sermon that in 1676 was published as *Gospel Family-Order, Being a Short Discourse Concerning the Ordering of Families, Both of Whites, Blacks and Indians* (Fox, 1676). *Gospel Family-Order* is an important document in the history of Quaker antislavery thought because, on several fronts, it establishes the important arguments that would be referred to and developed by antislavery Quakers for the next century. Moreover, because of Fox's central role in developing and defining Quakerism itself, antislavery Quakers appropriated Fox's message as grounds for questioning the compatibility of slavery with Christianity and the Quaker faith. Fox did not question the morality of the slave trade or perpetual slavery, but he did challenge the notion that the African slave was not fully human. Being fully human, Fox called on planters to educate their slaves and offer religious

instruction so that they could experience the religious conversion that they required as much as the planters had (Frost, 2012, p. 15).

For Fox, the family unit was sacrosanct and central to God's plan for human destiny and so it should be protected and facilitated. All members of the household, including the enslaved, were part of the family unit and so slave owners were responsible for nurturing their spiritual lives just as if they were biological children (Fox, 1676, pp. 4–6). Unlike other denominations, where members of the family may have different faiths and attend different churches, from 1650 until after the American Revolution, Quakers asserted a household model of religious oversight in which the head of the household was responsible for the religious well-being and instruction of all members (Frost, 1973, p. 140).

Fox argued that Africans should not be held in slavery forever but should be manumitted after thirty years' service (Fox, 1986, p. 599). Later versions of Fox's sermon were edited to refer to a vague "certain years" of service instead of thirty, demonstrating some of the divisions among Quakers about slavery (Drake, 1965, p. 6; Plank, 2015, p. 31). Eighteenth-century antislavery Quakers repurposed Fox and extrapolated his comments into areas he never envisioned, coupling his "benevolent" slaveholding arguments with moral condemnations of slavery in general. Fox brought to the surface biblical justifications for antislavery sentiments that would become standard. He also placed the Quaker community in a covenantal relationship to God, with providence hanging in the balance, which would encourage later radicalism.

Fox's key move in *Gospel Family-Order* was to place Quakers typologically within the context of biblical and salvation history, a common theme in his writings. His argument to ameliorate the oppressed condition of the enslaved was built on his view of where the Quaker community was situated in relation to biblical prophecy and its eschatological fulfilment. Where Israel had a "covenant" with God in biblical history, Quakers were part of an "everlasting covenant" that fulfilled God's historic promises (Fox, 1676, p. 7). Quakers, including Quaker slave owners, were agents of this 'everlasting covenant,' which put the whole of their lives, and that of their household, in a new social and religious relationship to Jesus Christ. This covenantal relationship should define Quaker social behavior.

Fox's qualifications of slavery provided a framework for later abolitionists to assert its inconsistency with Quakerism. The 'everlasting covenant' reconfigured and enhanced the requirements of the Hebrew covenant by extending membership in Quaker households beyond biological relationships. It also introduced a notion of duty to God and divine judgment if that duty was neglected. If "strangers" were to be integrated into Hebrew households, and taught to "keep the Passover of the Lord," Quakers who experienced "circumcision

of the Spirit" are to integrate "Blacks and Indians" into the religious life of Quaker families with whom they dwell. "Outward Passover and the outward Circumcision" are "Types of Christ" and so the Hebraic covenant was believed to be a preunderstanding of Quaker faith (Fox, 1676, pp. 5–6).

Moreover, Fox argued that the 'everlasting covenant' went further than the Hebraic covenant: "Therefore I say, you spiritual *Jews*, you must exceed the outward *Jews* in this, who are now come to Christ ..." (Fox, 1676, p. 16). White Quakers must perform their "Duty" of religious instruction within their households, including among slaves, or else face judgments like what Israel received for not fulfilling their responsibilities in the Hebrew covenant. Whatever rules or laws exist in society concerning the treatment of slaves, under the "New Covenant" of Jesus Christ, Quakers would seek to model in their households the "Law of Life, and the Law of Love, and the Law of Faith, and the *Law of the Spirit of Life, that makes free from the Law of Sin and Death* ... as the *Jews* were to the old, which is a figure of the new" (Fox, 1676, p. 8).

Moreover, the Hebrew covenant provided Fox a model of spiritual equality. Fox listed off several passages in which "Ethiopians" were described as valuable to God and interchangeable with Jews in God's eternal plan: "the Lord saith concerning the Children of *Israel*, that transgress his Law, *Are ye not* (saith he) *as Children of Ethiopia unto me, O ye Children of Israel?* Amos 9.7" (Fox, 1676, p. 13). Biblical passages describing the interchangeability of Israel with other nations and races are important to Fox's understanding of Quaker responsibility to Africans and become even more crucial to later antislavery Quakers. Since Christ atoned for the sins of the African as well as the Quaker, there is a spiritual equality in God's redemptive purposes. Since God's plan to work through Israel is not a matter of racial or cultural preference but solely determined on God's sovereign decision, God can also choose to work providentially through a new people just as God had favored Quakers, the people of the "circumcision of the Spirit" (Fox, 1676, p. 5).

Quakers could be confident in the truth of their experience of God, but Fox emphasized that their standing was contingent on their obedience and faithful upholding of the 'everlasting covenant' (Fox, 1676, pp. 13–15). Their covenantal position before God was primarily one of responsibility, not one of privilege. As such, the Quaker sense of being chosen by God, of being delivered from persecutions like the Hebrew people were delivered from Egypt, and of being subsequently established as a spiritual "Holy Nation" to serve as a sign of God's redemption before the nations, imbued history with providential meaning that had as its goal the kingdom of God on earth (Crabtree, 2015, pp. 1–2).

Fox's *Gospel Family-Order* did not call for immediate and general emancipation, nor can it be considered an abolitionist tract, but his criticism of slave

owners would become part of the Quaker antislavery tradition. He does advocate for limited manumissions depending on circumstances that have nothing to do with the full social equality of Africans, and he does urge amelioration of the enslaved African's condition (Carey, 2012, p. 56). These paltry initial steps set a theological foundation that later Quaker abolitionists will turn to time and again. The historical-providential framework of the covenant becomes fundamental to Quaker religious self-understanding and socio-political activity. The ethic of the covenant is the 'Golden Rule,' doing unto others as one would be done by. Fox called on Barbadian slave keepers to "consider with your selves, if you were in the same Condition as the Blacks are ... who came as Strangers to you, and were sold to you as Slaves; now I say, if this should be the Condition of you or yours, you would think it hard Measure; yea, and very great Bondage and Cruelty" (Fox, 1676, p. 18).

The 'Golden Rule' becomes the litmus test for later antislavery Quakers. Beginning with Fox and running through nearly every Quaker antislavery tract of the eighteenth century was the argument that the way one treats the "Stranger" should be informed by how one treats their own "Children" (Fox, 1676, p. 18). For Fox, this is an argument for treating the enslaved kindly. For later abolitionists, the 'Golden Rule' is a clear description of the incompatibility of slavery and Christianity and, as Carey contends, it became a "fundamental guiding principle" for antislavery Quakers (Carey, 2012, p. 30). As discussed in chapters two and five, proslavery advocates disputed this application of the 'Golden Rule' and insisted that feeding and sheltering the enslaved was a kindness. Carey argues that there were other complicating factors that made it impossible for antislavery Quakers to depend solely on the 'Golden Rule.' For example, many believed those slaves captured through just wars or who were being punished for a crime could legitimately be enslaved as part of their punishment (Carey, 2012, pp. 30–31).

In *Gospel Family-Order*, Fox argued that all people were spiritual equals but that the earthly, moral failings of slavery could be ameliorated through the proper administration of the household model of religious instruction. Fathers were commissioned in both the Hebrew covenant and the new covenant to instruct their slaves in the Christian life (Frost, 1994, p. 72). Enslavement was common in the seventeenth century, including the enslavement of Europeans by Turks, Arabs and West African privateers (Blassingame, 1979, p. 50). On the voyage to Barbados, Fox's and his companion's ship was chased by suspected Barbary pirates who were known to capture and enslave Europeans. In Fox's account of the harrowing experience, it was only his advice and the work of God that saved the passengers and crew from capture (Fox, 1986,

pp. 592–594; Ingle, 1994, p. 233). Fox may not have been able to envision a world without slavery in some form. As a free man who felt he had narrowly escaped his own enslavement, and who would have been aware of the treatment of European slaves who, in some cases, were forced to convert to Islam by Arab masters (Blassingame, 1979, pp. 56–57), Fox had on his mind the prospect of enslavement and its conditions when he finally landed in Barbados in 1671. He may have prioritized spiritual freedom as the best possible option in a world in which physical slavery was a given, and a Christian alternative to other forms of enslavement.

Adding to the complexity of assessing Fox's position on slavery is the fact that he was not consistent and spoke differently to fellow Quakers, such as in the sermon *Gospel Family-Order*, than he did publicly. While in Barbados in 1671, Fox also wrote a letter to the Governor in an attempt to abate anti-Quaker vitriol by the island's Anglican clergy. The letter contains a long statement on the Quakers' Christian orthodoxy as well as statements regarding the benefit of teaching Christian morality to slaves. In his letter to the Governor of Barbados he does not mention manumitting slaves after a term of service, but he insists that the Quaker household model of religious instruction teaches slaves to be "Sober, and to Fear God, and to love their Masters and Mistresses, and to be Faithful and Diligent in their masters Service and Business," which, Fox goes on to assert, will merit kind treatment from their "Masters and Overseers" (S. W. Angell, 2015, p. 288; Also: Fox, 1986, p. 605). As Carey notes, it is hard to believe that this proposition was taken seriously by either the enslaved or planters, given the brutality of Barbadian slavery (Carey, 2012, p. 47).

Without an absolute condemnation of slavery, Fox's antislavery legacy is "ambiguous" and was used by both sides of the Quaker slavery debate. In Barbados, some Quaker slave owners did initially follow Fox's teaching about instructing slaves, but there is no evidence of Quakers manumitting their slaves on a large scale after a term of service (Frost, 1994, pp. 69–70). Katharine Gerbner argues that Fox and the Quakers in Barbados helped to develop an ideology of "Christian Slavery" by teaching Christian behaviors and conversion within the slave economy (Gerbner, 2018, pp. 68–69). After the settling of Pennsylvania in 1682 some Barbadian Quakers and slave owners migrated to the colonies and brought their philosophy of Christian slavery with them and actively attempted to "silence the doubts that other Quakers had about slavery" (Gerbner, 2018, p. 69).

The only example of proslavery writing among Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Quakers that has survived is the defense of the "Christian slavery" ideology

by George Gray, the Quaker minister and Barbadian immigrant who asserted that slave-owning households were legitimate if they instructed their slaves in Christian behaviors, held regular but separate meetings for worship for them, and who cited Fox and William Penn as support for his position (Frost, 1994, p. 70; Gerbner, 2018, pp. 71–72; Gray, n.d., p. 2).

Gray's short and unpublished letter was probably intended to quell the antislavery sentiments that were growing at the turn of the eighteenth century by emphasizing the spiritual destiny of the enslaved over their earthly oppression. He argued that by evangelizing slaves, slave owners "may have a Respect unto their soules, as well as to have ye Service of their bodyes all ye week" (Gray, n.d., p. 2). Gray's statement asserts that the enslavement of persons of African descent may result in their eternal spiritual freedom, but conversion to Christianity would not necessitate physical freedom in this life (Frost, 1994, p. 78).

Adding to the ambiguity of Fox's antislavery legacy, Frost asserts that Philadelphia Yearly Meeting republished Fox's *Gospel Family-Order* in Philadelphia in 1701 because it "offended no one and had something for everyone" (Fox, 1701; Frost, 1994, p. 80). Proslavery Quakers would have found their view of 'Christian slavery' reinforced in the document, as well as no specific condemnation of slavery as an institution. Antislavery Quakers would have emphasized what they saw as the antislavery religious implications of the document and supported a reading in which manumission could be understood as the goal (Frost, 1994, p. 80).

Fox's travel companion, William Edmundson (1627–1712), also advocated for the spiritual liberty of Africans and called on Quakers to treat them as members of the family. Five years after Fox preached the sermon that become the 1676 publication, *Gospel Family-Order*, Edmundson travelled in the West Indies to preach to the Quaker community. He had witnessed West Indies' slavery in 1671 when he accompanied Fox there, and by this second trip Edmundson had developed reservations about the practice of slavery. Edmundson's condemnation was more pointed than Fox and white planters opposed his preaching for fear he would encourage slave revolts (Edmundson, 1820, pp. 85–86). Like Fox, Edmundson argued against perpetual slavery suggesting that slaves should be freed after thirty years' service (Carey, 2012, p. 65; Drake, 1965, p. 10; Soderlund, 1985, p. 3). However, as Frost argues, Edmundson was frustrated by Quaker slave owners inability to fulfill Fox's modest ameliorative instructions and concluded that the problem lay in perpetual slavery itself, not simply the conduct of it (Frost, 1994, p. 74). Indeed, while a few Barbadian Quakers did take their slaves to worship, even though it was illegal to do so (H. J. Cadbury, 1936, p. 151),

Kristen Block argues that most of the planters were unenthusiastic adherents to Fox's teachings (Block, 2014, p. 89).

In the late 1670s, a Quaker minister in Barbados, Alice Curwen, wrote to a slave-owning Friend condemning the spiritual hard-heartedness associated with slave ownership. Curwen argued that a spiritual liberation, if not a physical one, would come to her correspondent's slaves for "the Lord God Almighty will set them Free in a way that thou knowest not" (Curwen, 1680, p. 18). Brycchan Carey argues that Curwen's brief letter may be the first Quaker statement arguing for immediate emancipation, and, most importantly, denies the validity of the entire category of "slave" (Carey, 2012, pp. 67–68; Curwen, 1680, p. 18). However, Curwen's statement could also be read in less far reaching ways, such as simply advocating the spiritual freedom of "their Conscience in Matters of Worship" through the household model of religious instruction as advocated by Fox and Edmundson (Curwen, 1680, p. 18). Moira Ferguson takes the latter view, arguing that while Curwen asserted the sacred worth of slaves, she overlooked the physical oppression slaves must still endure (Ferguson, 1995, p. 232). However, Curwen's letter does show that Barbadian Quakers were divided over making it a priority to include their slaves in Quaker worship (S. Angell, 2018, pp. 59–60).

Thus, by the end of the 1670s, Quakers were actively debating whether slavery could be consistent with their principles. A body of religious ideas had developed that was uneasy with the standard practice of perpetual slavery and purported, instead, a 'Christian slavery' that tentatively argued for eventual manumission, but that did not declare slavery to be immoral in all its manifestations. Ideas like 'Gospel Liberty,' the household model of religious instruction, the covenant, spiritual equality, the 'Golden Rule' and providence were all in play at the end of the seventeenth century. Fox himself did not intend for his teachings to be as conclusively antislavery as Quaker abolitionists would later claim. Rather, religious arguments from Fox and Edmundson were extrapolated and redeployed to form a coherent antislavery theology over the subsequent century. By contrast, proslavery Quakers like Gray were comforted by Fox's teaching, believing it gave them license to perpetuate physical oppression so long as spiritual liberty was in some way upheld.

Because Fox and the first generation of Quakers were primarily concerned with removing the burden of religious hierarchy that they thought hindered the human ability to exercise their conscience in direct relationship to God, they overemphasized spiritual liberty over physical liberty. In maintaining that emphasis, they did not fully see how the social and economic factors inherent

in slavery could likewise alienate people, Africans and Britons, from the faithful response of the conscience before God. Eighteenth-century antislavery Quakers would extend the implications of this early theology more broadly to the totality of human affairs, including the conditions and contradictions of slavery.

1.3 *Pennsylvania and Providential History*

In 1681, William Penn (1644–1718) received a royal charter from King Charles II for the colonizing of twenty-nine million acres that would become known as Pennsylvania. Penn and most Quakers understood the development as God's providence. A member of the English aristocracy, Penn converted to Quakerism in 1667 and became one of the key leaders of the second generation of Quakers (Dandelion, 2007, pp. 49–50). The new colony would be a physical location to establish the truth of Quaker claims — unburdened by state sponsored persecution and sinful social 'customs' — as a witness before the nations (M. Endy, 1973, p. 349). Penn wrote that God would "bless [Pennsylvania] & make it the seed of a nation" (Penn, 1982c, p. 83).

From the beginning, Penn understood his new colony to be a gracious gift from God but its maintenance and continuance was also a gracious gift that could be revoked if Quakers proved themselves unfaithful to their principles. Believing his colony was primarily due to God's "hand & powr," Penn was conscious in 1681 that he had a responsibility to establish the colony in a way not "unworthy of [God's] love, but do that wch may answer his Kind providence & serve his truth & people; that an example may be Sett up to the nations" (Penn, 1982b, p. 108). Unlike in Europe, Penn believed Pennsylvania presented a unique opportunity for a "holy experiment" that would play a decisive role in providential history (Penn, 1982a, p. 108).

Penn and the first Quaker settlers of Pennsylvania believed that God had appointed Quakers as a group, and their new home in Pennsylvania, to fulfill a special role in improving the world and advancing God's purposes. This view is called 'historical providentialism' (Guyatt, 2007, p. 6). It is not unique to Quakers, but their experience of suffering under religious persecution and the conviction that they had been blessed by God as a restoration of biblical and prophetic Christianity were interpreted as signs that God had tailored their history for a special purpose. As some Quakers of the eighteenth century became frustrated with the disparity between their stated ideals and the less-than-ideal reality of their fellowship, the 'historical providentialism' that inspired the founding of Pennsylvania transitioned into a 'judicial providentialism' that emphasized God's judgment or blessing on nations and peoples according to their moral virtue (Guyatt, 2007, p. 6).

J. William Frost contends that Penn had in mind in his phrase, the "holy experiment," a practical and lived "[attempt] to persuade others that the Lord had, by his grace, provided the land and the foundation for a new Christian existence" (Frost, 1983, p. 582). There were considerable populations of Quakers outside of Pennsylvania, including Rhode Island, New Jersey, North Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware, and the providential meaning of moving from England to America was similar. Quakers understood the colonial venture as God's gracious deliverance and the necessary prerequisite for the kingdom on earth (Gwyn, 1995, pp. 302–303).

Penn's lofty ideals of setting up God's kingdom on earth aside, within ten years of receiving his royal charter for Pennsylvania Penn was frustrated by Pennsylvanian Quakers who did not accept his claims to authority and who did not recognize his right to profit from the colony. Internal conflicts among Pennsylvanians as well as Penn's own struggle with how to maintain his wealth and aristocratic privileges mitigated his claims and expectations for Pennsylvania's role in salvation history. By tracing revisions of Penn's writings across the 1690s, Hugh Barbour has found that Penn's theology was becoming increasingly conservative and pessimistic of human nature (Penn, 1991, p. 497). As Melvin Endy has argued, Penn came to see that this world, as fallen as it was, would be his abode and as he became "resigned to this prospect, he alternately sought respect and money from his colonists and a peaceful rural solitude away from the cares of the world" (M. Endy, 1973, pp. 142–143).

Penn did not abandon his ideals completely, he continued to view Quakers and Pennsylvania as a work of divine providence and an important moment in salvation history (M. Endy, 1973, p. 143; Penn, 1991, p. 567), but his confidence in the eschatological inevitability of establishing the kingdom of God on earth was shaken by the disappointing realities of governing (M. Endy, 1973, pp. 122, 356–357). Penn was torn between his vision of a consensual society guided by benevolent and religiously discerning social hierarchies and his own aristocratic impulses, which chafed at the impertinence of his colonists. Moreover, as Endy has shown, while Penn wrote persuasively to nobles and privileged classes that personal virtues and merits, not birth, were the foundations of social distinctions, none of this prevented Penn from owning at least twelve slaves (M. Endy, 1973, p. 358).

Penn is a difficult figure to understand. His various and sometimes competing political, social, and financial interests led to ambiguities between Penn's hopeful ideals for Pennsylvania in the early 1680s and the compromises he made thereafter. Moreover, Penn espoused a dualistic theology that could support spiritual equality, on one hand, and physical subjugation, on the other. This dualistic theology is a modification of the inward focus of early Quaker

theology, wherein Fox, and others, asserted that the inward experience of the Light was a confirmation of the outward and historical revelation of Jesus Christ as described in the Bible (See also: Creasey, 2011, p. 330). By contrast, Penn diminished the importance of the physical and outward to the spiritual and inward. He believed that humans were “essentially souls housed in bodies” (M. B. Endy, 2015, p. 240). The oppression one experienced in the physical realm was of little importance compared to one’s eternal, spiritual destiny (Davis, 1988, p. 492). Since Penn was unwilling to renounce the comforts and prestige of his own aristocratic status, one must assume that his belittling of the outward and physical was mostly in reference to the condition of others.

It was not only Penn who was blinded to the injustice of human slavery, many colonial Quakers purchased slaves, and traded in them, as soon as they had the resources to do so. Penn’s religious vision for Pennsylvania was in tension with his need for the colony to be economically productive. Settlers and land brokers leased and purchased the land from Penn so he could try, unsuccessfully, to pay off his immense debts. In turn, settlers needed a labor force capable of making their new lands productive and economically sustainable (Kenny, 2009, p. 2). When the first Quakers arrived in Pennsylvania they did like other colonists did and, as financially able, purchased slaves (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 10). Gary Nash and Jean Soderlund have documented how prevalent slavery was among Quakers in early Pennsylvania: At least twenty out of twenty-seven slave-owning Philadelphians who died before 1701 were Quakers; 70% of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting leaders before 1706 owned slaves (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, pp. 11–12).

The complicated and ambiguous Penn of history was not the Penn that eighteenth-century Quaker antislavery advocates looked to in justifying their reforms. For them, the American colonies were a center God’s activity on earth and they carefully cultivated a view of Quaker history that supported their vision. Eighteenth-century Quaker reformers denounced the dual spheres of authority that Penn himself had articulated. The tension within the physical/spiritual dualism advanced by Penn and others of his generation became one of the main catalysts for antislavery advocacy and the eventual reformation of American Quakerism in the middle of the eighteenth century. There, some Quaker reformers asserted the ethical implications of their spiritual convictions in shaping physical and social conditions, including the promotion of antislavery as a natural implication of their faith tradition (Marietta, 1984, p. 30).

Despite Penn’s thoughts on the matter, antislavery Quakers of the eighteenth century believed that slavery was a contradiction to the ‘holy experiment.’ As Quakers lost numerical and political power, and as American port

cities of the late eighteenth century began to resemble the social and economic environments of European cities (May, 1976, pp. 29–30), these antislavery Quakers focused less on a vision of God's special relationship with them as a model for leading the way into a new, redeemed society and, instead, emphasized the precariousness of the Quaker and British standing before God. They threatened that God's interventions in world affairs were contingent on their moral purity.

The practical and logistical ambiguity of Fox's 'everlasting covenant' and Penn's 'holy experiment' meant that the full implications of Quaker theology would be worked out among Quaker communities over time. At the turn of the eighteenth century, Quakerism was still coming to grips with the implications of their newly awarded religious toleration and prosperity. As the early missionary ventures and cross-cultural investigations of the Quaker movement indicate, Quaker faith had never been completely bounded by British culture. The recognition by Fox on his missionary journeys that many of the Native Americans he encountered *already* had sufficient faith illustrates what Doug Gwyn has called the "remarkable *decentering*" of Quaker faith beyond the confines of a particular geographic and cultural expression (Gwyn, 1995, p. 308). The colonial endeavor furthered that decentering, both geographically and spiritually, because Quakers moved into a new stage in their relationship to civil government and to other groups. In Pennsylvania, Quakers controlled economic and political operations and governed over Presbyterians, Anglicans, Moravians and others. In places like Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Maryland, Quakers sometimes worked with and sometimes opposed Baptists, Congregationalists, Anglicans, and Deists. When Barbadian Quakers were blamed for inspiring a slave revolt in 1675 and anti-Quaker legislation ensued, some of them moved with their slaves to South Carolina, including the prominent early Quaker missionary, Mary Fisher Cross, whose will reveals that at the time of her death she owned a Native American slave named Rayner (S. Angell, 2018, p. 60).

This new situation required a new translation of Quaker theology into the public sphere and carried with it new responsibilities for the faithful exercise of conscience before God. While Quakers of the eighteenth century appealed to their understanding of Quaker tradition in making these new translations, their view was often biased by their personal circumstances, needs and convictions. Thus, it is significant to observe how from ambiguous theological roots Quaker abolitionists fashioned an understanding of antislavery principles that became widely, if not completely, accepted by the end of the eighteenth century. The Quaker consolidation of religiously motivated antislavery themes

in the second half of the eighteenth century provides an interesting window into the ways theological ideas could spread and their limitations for influencing behavior beyond the shared values of a particular group. As Frost argues, Quakers only maintained a corporate “sense of the meeting” on slavery from the 1760s to the 1820s (Frost, 2014, p. 29), which makes discussions of theological themes in a historical and cultural context significant for understanding early antislavery thought and the headwinds it faced.

1.4 *The Quaker Covenant in the Eighteenth Century*

The consistency of Quaker antislavery arguments from the late seventeenth century through the eighteenth century bespeaks a body of thought and religious values that corresponded to a specific, but adaptable, Quaker thought world. George Fox laid out elements of this theology in his epistle to “Friends Beyond the Sea,” his letter to the Governor of Barbados, and *Gospel Family-Order*. These arguments were then redeployed throughout the eighteenth century. The themes of this abolitionist theology are central to the way Quakers related to God and understood their place in relation to the world, and what God’s history with them required of the community. Among Quaker abolitionists, antislavery concern was not tangential to this self-understanding, it became a core tenet because they increasingly understood slavery to be hypocrisy in its most blatant form, a contradiction to the liberty of conscience Quakers had argued to be universal.

Quakers of the eighteenth century were shaped by their interpretation of the meaning of history and their place in it, but they did not all agree on what that meant. They also believed themselves to be the bearers of particular religious truths, which bound them to a way of living that corresponded to the message they had been given. Their history and their theology, then, were not for the purpose of privilege but a duty and responsibility to God and a light for the nations. In this public, historical, and theological role, some Quakers of the eighteenth century lived in tension between a sovereign God who had graciously delivered them from the persecutions of a generation before, but in exchange expected corporate holiness. God’s providence was contingent on human faithfulness. Human behavior shaped God’s response. Quakers and their message would only be vindicated in the eyes of the world if they remained pure and true to their principles, but there was no consensus as to what it meant to be pure.

Reform-minded, antislavery Quakers worried that if they fell away from their message, they would be crushed and scattered into irrelevance like the people of Judah “before the Babylonish captivity” (Woolman, 1971c, pp. 65, 160), and,

importantly, they would become a curse to the nations (Sandiford, 1730, p. 23). Abolitionists like John Hepburn and John Woolman viewed Babylon as a typology for the sinfulness of slavery and the economics that supported it. Slavery in the colonies and in England would come to be seen as rebellion to God's purposes. The human attempt to usurp the sovereignty that only belongs to God (See also: Frost, 2014, pp. 32–33).

There was, then, an informal and understood covenant between antislavery Quakers and God. "Renewing the covenant" and "counting the covenant Holy" were reforming strains within eighteenth-century Quakerism that asserted Quaker responsibility in light of God's justice, and kept the meaning of Quaker history with God in front of them as they responded to new economic and political situations (Crabtree, 2015, p. 38; Woolman, 1922a, pp. 482–483, 2010b, p. 267).

For these Quakers, history was of a piece. It was directed by God and it had a *telos* in God. The eighteenth-century Quaker experience of God, which included the framework for antislavery arguments, was an act of remembering and an act of hoping. It remembered the persecutions and sufferings of the earliest Quakers. It also remembered the hard-fought liberties God had granted them through the faithful suffering of the first generation of Quakers. This history carried with it a responsibility "to inspect their ways and consider the purpose" of God's providence, and, so, to fulfill God's purposes within history (Woolman, 1971d, p. 200).

Reminiscent of Fox's *Gospel Family-Order*, later antislavery Quakers understood their communal life and relationship to God to be modeled on Israel's covenant. The story of God's deliverance of Israel from persecution in Egypt to a Promised Land, the emergence of prophetic figures to keep her faithful, and the ever-present reality of judgment for infidelity, was their story, too. It was both reassuring and a potent symbol of their contingent status before God, causing them to undertake religiously fueled reforms so as to live fully into the implications of their theology (Crabtree, 2015, pp. 3–4).

Antislavery Quaker interpretations of biblical and Quaker history aligned the cause of Quakers and African slaves. Quakers identified as the spiritual Israel, quoting from the laws of the Hebrew covenant: "Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23:9). Africans were "strangers in the land" of colonial America, just as Quakers had been "strangers" wandering through the apostasy of England in the seventeenth century (Myles, 2003, pp. 51–52; Woolman, 1971a, p. 243). God had delivered Quakers from their suffering, but would not sit idly by as they oppressed others. Sin left unchallenged would

bring judgment on the community. Identification of sin and its purging was a central activity among eighteenth-century Quakers.

Theologies of divine providence contend that historical events conform to God's purposes and therefore human endeavors in history have meaning. The covenant between God and Quakers held that religious liberty and freedom of conscience would be maintained so that Quakers could follow the leadings of divine truth made known through divine revelation and the Bible (Frost, 2014, p. 32). The covenant was universal and sustained by following God's laws. Later in the century, many colonists would obsess about the concept of liberty as a secular right for each person to choose their own destiny. The Quaker concept of liberty precedes this philosophical one. For Quakers, 'Liberty' was a religious concept that promised spiritual and physical redemption (Calvert, 2018, pp. 35–36).

Moreover, this book elucidates how two separate but related ethical laws emerge as the standards of the covenant: one law was that God is not a respecter of persons and the other was the 'Golden Rule.' These two laws were non-negotiables. No Quaker would have quibbled with either of them, only their application. However, as the eighteenth century progressed, the consistent redeployment of them in combination with reformist theologies among Quakers and broader philosophies of liberty and sentimentalism these laws were successfully coopted for the antislavery cause. These laws were more persuasive inside the Quaker community than outside it because they drew explicitly on first generation Quaker theology and derived from their strong leveling instinct in which all people were seen as having varying degrees of access to the spiritual Christ and were somehow included in his atoning work (S. Angell, 2013, p. 158). All people needed to be convicted by the searching 'Light of Christ' that alone had the power to lift people out of bondage to sin and that came to all people universally. The 'Golden Rule,' doing unto others as one would be done by (Matthew 7:12), regardless of social or racial distinctions, became a test of one's lowliness before God.

Related to these two laws was the Quaker antipathy to violence, which combined with them to mitigate their potential proslavery interpretation. Active participation in, and support of, war was anathema to eighteenth-century antislavery Quakers because it came to symbolize a trust in human and carnal weapons over the providential workings of God in salvation history. Moreover, it appeared to justify the methods of the anti-Quaker persecutors of the mid-seventeenth century. In the mind of antislavery Quakers, to adopt violence was to forcibly assert one's superiority over other human beings, denying their liberty, and to demonstrate that Quakers had not learned the lessons of history (James, 1963, p. 108; Woolman, 1971c, p. 188).

Quakers who transgressed the covenantal relationship as espoused by anti-slavery Quakers threatened the community's eternal welfare and opposed the work of Christ in the world. In eschatological and apocalyptic terms, Quaker reformers likened trespassers to the Babylonian "merchants of the earth" from the biblical book of Revelation 18:11 (Kershner, 2015b, pp. 91–93). These merchants were actors in the growing trans-Atlantic imperial economy, deeply entrenched in the slave trade and material greed. More to the point, the merchants traded in human souls and so usurped the role of God by becoming masters of human destiny and wielding ultimate control over other human beings. Antislavery Quakers saw this as a fundamental confusion of one's standing before God, depriving others of the freedom of conscience that Quakers ostensibly believed to be inherent.

By contrast, antislavery Quakers believed that faithfulness to their vision of God's will would ensure their vindication, arguing as Samuel Fothergill did that "the Lamb and his followers will be finally victorious" (Bauman, 1971, p. 54). Adopting the role of Hebrew prophets, they viewed themselves as intercessors on behalf of their fellow Quakers, working to hold the line against the deceptiveness of Satan, and thus to shape positively God's response to Quakers in history (Bauman, 1971, pp. 54–55). For some of these prophets, the physical conditions of African slaves was a secondary concern to the eternal spiritual welfare of the Quaker community. Once free from slave ownership they felt they were clear in God's eyes and nothing more was required of them. Other Quaker antislavery advocates not only worked for the social and religious equality of African Americans, they wanted to make reparations for past involvement in slavery and to invite African Americans into membership.

1.5 *Outline of To Renew the Covenant*

Chapter two of *To Renew the Covenant* contains an overview of the important secondary sources that have shaped scholarly interpretations of Quaker antislavery. These insights are helpful for contextualizing the discussion of individual antislavery dissent in following chapters.

Chapter three discusses Quaker antislavery protests from 1688 to the late 1740s. These early antislavery advocates are understudied, but it was their protests that successfully convinced Quakers that slavery was inconsistent with their faith.

Chapter four analyzes the antislavery theologies of John Woolman (1720–1772) and Anthony Benezet (1713–1784). These two figures have traditionally been regarded as the most important antislavery advocates of the century. Their contributions and respective roles in Quaker antislavery merit a chapter to themselves.

Chapter five considers the antislavery reforms of the second half of the long eighteenth century. This chapter describes the Quaker move to discipline slave owners, and the broadening of Quaker antislavery beyond Quakerism. It also describes how Quakers tried to co-opt the discussion of liberty being conducted during the Revolutionary era for antislavery purposes.

Chapter six, the conclusion, discusses how Quakers viewed antislavery concern in different ways. Abolition was not generally considered a reason for racial equality. This chapter assesses the limitations of Quaker antislavery and the diversity of antislavery advocates.

2 Literature Review: Developments in the Field

This chapter reviews the important secondary literature for interpretations of eighteenth-century Quaker antislavery history and thought. In the past decade there has been considerable developments in scholarly understandings of Quaker antislavery advocacy and its limitations. The interpretations of mid-twentieth-century scholars like Thomas Drake and Sydney James have been challenged and reconceived. Scholars of eighteenth-century Quakerism, once primarily historians, have adopted interdisciplinary approaches, including rhetorical analysis, economics, and intellectual history. Recent scholarship has also become more critical, as rigorous academic standards and methodologies have been applied to Quakerism. Moreover, biographical approaches to antislavery reform have enhanced scholarly assessments of the way a subjects' specific contexts have impacted their abolitionism. This approach has led to a reevaluation of antislavery advocates such as Anthony Benezet, John Woolman, Benjamin Lay and Warner Mifflin.

This overview of secondary scholarship divides the material into three categories: 1) historical and cultural arguments for understanding Quaker antislavery development; 2) biographical approaches to Quaker antislavery advocates; and, 3) contributed interdisciplinary volumes. These three categories are taken up in turn below.

2.1 *Historical and Cultural Arguments for Understanding Quaker Antislavery*

Several important interpretations of Quaker antislavery reform in the middle and second half of the twentieth century have traced historical and cultural themes across the development of American Quaker antislavery advocacy. Two of the early academic treatments of the subject are Thomas Drake's *Quakers*

and *Slavery in America* (1950) and Sydney Vincent James' *A People Among People: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America* (1963).

Drake's exploration of the movement toward the abolition of slavery in American Quakerism described its tentative beginnings, propelled by mid-eighteenth-century catalysts to finally overcome Quaker resistance to antislavery. Drake notes that, at least theoretically, African slaves in colonial America were granted the same rights as white indentured servants from as early as 1652. However, this legal protection was not enforced and in the late seventeenth century, in Rhode Island, the legislature officially changed its mind. Merchants in Newport were competitors for the lucrative trade in molasses, sugar, rum, and slaves with the West Indies and planters in Rhode Island constructed large farms that benefitted from slave labor (Drake, 1965, pp. 1–2). From these gradual beginnings, the American colonies, and the Quaker population, became increasingly reliant on slave labor. James contends that in the early eighteenth century, "Friends accepted slaveholding as did their neighbors, whether in Virginia, Barbadoes, Rhode Island, or Pennsylvania. Their beliefs did not lead them to attack the institution" (James, 1963, p. 103).

At the midpoint of the eighteenth century "antislavery feeling" was "in the air" and Quakers "needed only an inspired leader to bring about a complete prohibition of slave buying" (Drake, 1965, p. 51). Drake contends that the antislavery advocates of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century America were "impatient" and unsuccessful in their advocacy of abolition. For Drake, these earlier antislavery advocates had "sown," where "someone with the voice of a prophet but the persuasive compassion of a saint might ... reap" (Drake, 1965, p. 51).

Sydney James largely follows Drake's interpretation, but contends that slavery in Pennsylvania posed a problem for Quakers who had settled the colony with the hope of creating an ideal religious society (James, 1963, p. 109). James also advanced a declension thesis for American Quakers, which he suggested contributed to the rise of Quaker involvement in slavery before the middle of the eighteenth century. A "decline of zeal" overshadowed Quaker religious idealism, which fostered the growth of slavery among Friends along with an "insidious attachment to personal gain" (James, 1963, p. 116). While James contended that the rise of a religious renewal among Friends made antislavery sentiment possible among Friends (James, 1963, p. 137), it may be more accurate to say that the religious reforms among American Quakers were important for increasing Quaker willingness to make slavery a matter of church discipline and not just a matter of disagreement within the religious community.

Until recently, Drake's and James's interpretation of the development of Quaker antislavery was common: before mid-eighteenth century, antislavery Quaker voices were ineffectual because abolition was not immediately achieved. James goes so far as to call the antislavery agitation of Benjamin Lay (1682–1759), an influential antislavery advocate in the 1730s, the “high-water mark of eccentricity and futility” (James, 1963, p. 126). Then, at mid-century, a Prophet-Saint arises as the catalyst that leads Quakers to a corporate antislavery stance. Both Drake and James contend that John Woolman (1720–1772) is the Prophet-Saint that finally reaped an antislavery harvest among Quakers (Drake, 1965, p. 47; James, 1963, p. 137). As described below, recent scholarship has challenged Drake's and James's claim that earlier antislavery advocates were isolated and ineffectual voices, and, instead, have shown how these earlier voices made significant contributions to the public debate about slavery. Where Drake argued that antislavery petitions before the mid-century point were “sledgehammer blows [that] merely stiffened the resistance of the majority,” more recent scholarship has shown that there was already a significant antislavery opposition, with deep roots in the Quaker tradition, from Fox onward and so the earlier advocates were not lone voices. In fact, by the time of the publication of Woolman's 1754 antislavery tract, the first such essay officially published by a Quaker body, Quakers in the mid-Atlantic were already overwhelmingly antislavery in their views.

Moreover, James's contention that colonial Quakers accepted slavery the same as their non-Quaker neighbors did overlooks the consistent underlying antislavery sentiment in American Quakerism, which was not present in other religious groups. While Quaker theology did not lead to an official antislavery stance until the end of the eighteenth century, Quaker religious ideas were persistently deployed against slavery across the eighteenth century, validating antislavery sentiment and putting proslavery Quakers on the defensive.

Both James and Drake tended to look at antislavery sentiment among Quakers as predominately existing in the published protests themselves. More recent interpretations of Quaker antislavery have adjusted this thesis to argue that the published and public protests are representative of an antislavery body of thought that was always present, growing, and consolidating with each successive printed protest. Antislavery resistance within the Quaker community, then, was always present in some form and became increasingly representative of the whole body so as to dominate Quaker thought by the time of Woolman.

In 1966, scholarship on Quaker antislavery took a step forward with the publication of David Brion Davis's *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*

followed up by his 1975 sequel, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823*. As the titles suggest, Davis's work is broader than Quaker antislavery alone, which helps contextualize and compare Quaker views intellectually and religiously. Davis noted that American colonists had complex attitudes toward slavery, both profiting from the institution economically while fearing that African slaves were a threat to their safety (Davis, 1988, pp. 127–128). The fear of slave revolt was intrinsic to American slavery. Tales of slave insurrections were publicized throughout the colonies. In many cases, the responses of slave owners to revolts were brutal and oppressive (Davis, 1988, pp. 137–139).

While antislavery advocates, including Quakers, observed with dismay the irony of American ideals as a land of liberty while human bondage became more entrenched, concepts of liberty were applied selectively by most Americans (Davis, 1988, pp. 3–4). Davis argued that enlightenment rationales for human liberty and rights that were becoming influential during the eighteenth century were not seen as applying to African slaves (Davis, 1988, pp. 307–308). In fact, the slave trade in colonial America hit its peak during the Seven Years' War, 1756–1763, just as enlightenment philosophy was rapidly being popularized in the colonies (Davis, 1988, p. 136).

Quakers intensified antislavery protests in the American colonies. Davis argued that for the Quaker abolitionist, Benjamin Lay, antislavery was the "crucial test of religious purity" (Davis, 1988, p. 291). Davis delineated several arguments that came to define Quaker antislavery advocacy. One of those arguments was the 'Golden Rule.' However, the 'Golden Rule' was also used by proslavery advocates, including the Puritan minister, Cotton Mather (1663–1728). Mather argued that some people were incapable of ruling themselves and so "doing unto others" would entail benevolently ruling over those of limited capacity. In this proslavery argument, there was a distinction between physical liberty and spiritual liberty and a person could be enslaved physically but experience spiritual liberty because of coming to a knowledge of Christian principles and, in the afterlife, being finally liberated in Heaven (Davis, 1988, pp. 202, 308–309). However, Davis argued that Quakers worked tirelessly to show the inconsistency of the 'Golden Rule' with slavery (Davis, 1988, pp. 308–309).

Davis also contended that Quaker religious views were essential to the development of antislavery thought. For Davis, the most important theological concept to Quaker antislavery was the idea of sin. Quaker antislavery advocates believed all people were spiritually equal before God in their common depravity. As fallen beings, all humanity must exist in a state of subordination before God. "The essence of both sin and slavery was a denial of self-sovereignty, the negation of the natural ability to will that which was just

and lawful" (Davis, 1988, p. 292). Davis contended that the desire to be freed from implication in sin sometimes took priority over the compassion to free Africans from bondage (Davis, 1988, p. 294).

Antislavery advocates were also marked by a millennialist strain, which gave the impetus for social change (Davis, 1988, pp. 295–296). The age to come would be marked by the development of a perfectionist society, where Quakers could live according to the law of God's love, denouncing both slavery and war (Davis, 1988, pp. 299, 308). Davis argued that the two strands of purity and otherworldliness were effective for Quakers who advocated fleeing worldly structures, like slavery, to the perfected world they thought they were intended to populate (Davis, 1988, pp. 329–330).

In light of these theological concerns, and the spread of antislavery dissent among Friends, by the mid-eighteenth century "Quakerism provided a cultural setting in which hostility to slavery could become something more than individual dissent" (Davis, 1988, p. 330). In arriving at this point, antislavery Quaker had to navigate their polity with its "subtle mechanisms for creating and assessing group consensus," whereby dissenting voice could be marginalized and dismissed (Davis, 1988, pp. 315–316). Davis argued that before the mid-century, antislavery Quakers had, by and large, been ignored through these mechanisms, though more recent scholarship has shown a considerable impact nonetheless. Moreover, Davis argued that one of the primary catalysts for the corporate adoption of antislavery positions among mid-Atlantic Quakers was disappointment over Pennsylvania's involvement in the Seven Years' War and the resulting religious soul-searching (Davis, 1975, pp. 44–45, 1988, p. 330). However, J. William Frost has demonstrated that official Quaker antislavery positions were adopted before the beginning of Pennsylvania's involvement in the war, not during it, and so could not have been solely motivated as a response to the war (Frost, 1980b, pp. 21–22).

Historians have also attempted to contextualize the pivotal developments in Pennsylvania Quakerism in terms of political power, wealth, and religious discipline. For these analyses, slavery is one aspect of broader issues. Fredrick Tolles' *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Philadelphia, 1682–1763* described the way Quaker merchants accumulated wealth. Tolles argued that "the instruments of political power" so readily available to Quakers at the settling of Pennsylvania were conditioned by three important factors: the Quaker faith, a Whig political philosophy, and the geographic situation of Pennsylvania in imperial conflicts (F. Tolles, 1948, p. 11). The early Quaker leaders of Pennsylvania were at the same time the wealthiest inhabitants of the colony and formed a Quaker aristocracy that Tolles suggested compromised

their faith to power and material success, ultimately leading many Quakers to the view that political power and Quaker faith were mutually exclusive (F. Tolles, 1948, pp. 82, 117).

Tolles argues that as the early eighteenth century progressed to the middle point of the century, Quakers in Pennsylvania became more habituated to a politically and socioeconomically privileged position, which diminished their religious fervor. Tolles interpreted this development as a move toward "worldliness" and a departure from the principles of "primitive Friends" (F. Tolles, 1948, p. 123). Like James, Tolles posits a declension thesis: between the settling of Pennsylvania in 1681 and the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in 1756, Friends grew their worldly success and compromised their faith (F. Tolles, 1948, pp. 3–4).

This trajectory culminated in the "Crisis of 1756," which revealed to many Quakers that their "holy experiment" had become attenuated until it was in truth little more than a shadow" (F. Tolles, 1948, p. 241). The "Crisis of 1756" refers to the withdrawal of some Quaker politicians from the Pennsylvania Assembly as a result of the Assembly's decision to issue a bounty on Delaware Indians (F. Tolles, 1948, pp. 27–28, 235). Thus, Tolles marks the "Crisis of 1756" as the end of Penn's 'holy experiment' because Quaker merchants and politicians had steered Friends away from "William Penn's vision of a holy community on the banks of the Delaware [River]" (F. Tolles, 1948, p. 243).

Since Tolles' book was published in 1948, this decline thesis has been challenged by scholars who note that there was never a single way to be a Quaker in good standing and so the merchant-Quakers Tolles blames for the decline of Penn's 'holy experiment' were accepted Quakers in their day and continued to be so through the end of eighteenth century. As Jane Calvert has shown, that a group of reform-minded Friends gained control of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting leadership at mid-century and proceeded to advocate for a more ascetic form of Quakerism, which included antislavery reform, only speaks to the variety of acceptable Quaker expressions in eighteenth-century Quakerism (Calvert, 2009, pp. 178, 184).

Moreover, while the "Crisis of 1756" did lead to a withdrawal of some Quakers from positions on the Pennsylvania Assembly, Quakers and their political allies continued to dominate the Assembly almost until the American Revolution (Marietta, 1984, p. 135). Even after the strict Quakers withdrew from positions of political power, they did not withdraw from society. They continued to wield social influence and humanitarian zeal where they could and articulated public stances on the most pressing issues of their day, including antislavery

concern, Native American support, anti-war campaigning, and other important social positions (Bauman, 1971, p. 55).

While Tolles focused on the influence of a Quaker aristocracy in Pennsylvania, Jack Marietta's *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783* concentrates on the group of reformers who supplanted less-rigorous Quaker leaders and used disciplinary procedures to advance their views of a pure Quaker religion. These reformers used swift and public discipline to “cull from [Quaker] ranks the dishonest and untrustworthy” (Marietta, 1984, pp. 3–4). By examining disciplinary procedures, Marietta shows that a clear change occurred in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting after 1750, wherein disciplinary action increased (Marietta, 1984, pp. 31, 64). Marrying non-Quakers, called exogamy, and unattendance at worship were leading sources of Quaker discipline (Marietta, 1984, p. 21). These indiscretions were seen as polluting the religious community and diminishing its testimony. Slavery became a part of this “Reformation” as slavery was identified as a communal sin and collusion with the world (Marietta, 1984, pp. 115–116).

While the reformers who took control of Quaker committees were influential and active, they were a minority group (Marietta, 1984, p. 76). These reformers were united by similar theological concerns, such as the view that God meted out judgment justly, and therefore the causes of colonial sufferings could be discerned. The reformers framed the Seven Years' War, the small pox epidemic and other misfortunes as God's direct response to Quaker participation in slavery and worldliness (Marietta, 1984, pp. 90, 120). Additionally, as Richard Bauman has noted, the reformers were bolstered by the confidence that God would eventually vindicate their cause in eternity and in history. The exercise of divine power in the world was contingent on human faithfulness. The reformers were, then, intercessors before God on behalf of their coreligionists (Bauman, 1971, pp. 54–55).

Jean Soderlund's *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (1985) undertakes an economic examination of slavery among Friends. While there were religious reasons influencing Quaker colonists' consideration of slavery, Soderlund argues that decisions about slavery were primarily economic (Soderlund, 1985, p. 3). Likewise, the growth of antislavery views among Quakers was a combination of economic considerations and religious ideals (Soderlund, 1985, p. 5). This proved to be a dilemma for Quakers in Pennsylvania, who walked a “tight-rope of compromise” with their need to maintain property, make fortunes, and remain in political control of Pennsylvania, while also being faithful to the Quaker vision (Soderlund, 1985, p. 7). With the advent of the Seven Years' War, this tenuous compromise became unsustainable. The Quaker grip on

Pennsylvania weakened and a more zealous religious vision arose (Soderlund, 1985, pp. 7–8).

Soderlund argues that the difference in reception between antislavery advocates before and after the midpoint of the eighteenth century corresponds with the sharp decline of Quaker leaders who owned slaves (Soderlund, 1985, pp. 32, 34). The leadership of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting across the eighteenth century usually ranked among the Pennsylvanian socioeconomic elite (Soderlund, 1985, pp. 35–36, 43). The turn to antislavery after the middle of the century, according to Soderlund, interacted with the labor needs of Quakers, the availability of indentured servants, and the types of economic activity common in urban centers, like Philadelphia, and rural and frontier locations. Thus, far from being a simple matter of intellectual or religious persuasion, Soderlund contends that socioeconomic needs were also considered by Quakers (Soderlund, 1985, pp. 75–76). Soderlund's analysis may downplay the role of religious conviction in the rise of antislavery sentiment among Quakers, but the economic argument is a helpful context for the complex matrix of influences involved in slavery and antislavery.

In 1991, Jean Soderlund and Gary Nash teamed up to write an important historical analysis of slavery in Pennsylvania: *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and its Aftermath*. Pennsylvania serves as a special case-study of abolitionism, because, of the "original thirteen states, only Rhode Island and Connecticut approximated Pennsylvania's decline in slavery in the post-Revolutionary era" (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 5). Despite geographic proximity to Pennsylvania, New York and Delaware, by contrast, maintained strong slave populations into the nineteenth century (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 5). In the South, the number of slaves grew rapidly, comprising 30% of the total population from 1790 to 1820 (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 7).

Nash and Soderlund argue that the "flexibility of Pennsylvania's labor system facilitated abolition of slavery in the state in the last two decades of the eighteenth century" (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 8). Economically, slave owners discovered that their labor needs were best served by free-labor, black and white, and so emancipation of slaves would not be a financial detriment (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, pp. 8–9, 193). For some Pennsylvanian merchants, farmers, and entrepreneurs, Pennsylvania's gradual emancipation law meant they were no longer responsible for sick slaves or slaves who were too old to be of service. "The prospect of a more efficient work force, exploiting black men and women during their most productive years, or obtaining labor only for the hours or days needed, loomed much larger than altruism in the emancipators' minds" (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 193).

These economic concerns were in tension with powerful ideological commitments (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. xii). Early in the eighteenth century many Quakers would have agreed that the slave trade was a sin, because of the violence inherent in capturing slaves. However, these same Quakers were not convinced that slave owning was itself a sin (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 43). The idea of sin was a powerful behavioral shaper, but it required nearly a century of refinement and expansion before it could be seen as extending to include the entire slave system. However, there is a strong indication that Quaker faith influenced manumission numbers: When Pennsylvania Quakers and non-Quakers faced similar economic conditions in the second half of the eighteenth century, Quakers chose to abolish slavery and manumit their slaves while non-Quakers deepened their involvement in slavery (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 92).

A more recent addition to these cultural and historical discussions of Quaker antislavery in America is Brycchan Carey's *From Peace to Freedom: Quaker Rhetoric and the Birth of American Antislavery, 1657–1761*. As the title indicates, Carey includes a rhetorical analysis of Quaker debates about slavery beginning with George Fox through John Woolman and Anthony Benezet. Carey's primary aim is to "present a history of the rise, progress, and consolidation of the Quaker discourse of antislavery," contending that the 100 years of development were essential and "underpinned and informed all later antislavery discourse" (Carey, 2012, p. 3). Once Quakers identified that slavery was irreconcilable with their beliefs, they moved to "question and finally prevent Friends from buying and selling slaves" (Carey, 2012, p. 6).

Carey argues that there were several aspects of Quaker culture that facilitated discourse on slavery. For example, Quaker ecclesial hierarchy, their tightly-knit community and discipline, and a culture of debate and communication, which included the sending of Epistles from one yearly meeting to all other yearly meetings, and importantly, the travelling ministers who visited local meetings and yearly meetings with the ideas that were part of the religious debate in other places. These characteristics fostered a public and corporate debate about slavery in England and colonial America that would have been difficult to sustain among other groups (Carey, 2012, pp. 28–29). In addition to these structural features, Carey notes that the 'Golden Rule' and the Quaker disavowal of war and violence, taken together, helped Quakers fashion a potent religious justification for antislavery advocacy (Carey, 2012, pp. 30–31).

One of Carey's most important contributions is to show how successful Quaker antislavery discourse was in the early eighteenth century. While it is impossible to assert causation on any single one of the antislavery petitions

in the early years of Quaker antislavery discourse, 1688–1740, Carey notes that the decline of slavery among Quakers in the 1740s indicates that the rhetorical case for a corporate antislavery stance had already been won. In an environment where antislavery discourse flourished, Friends began to assert their antislavery values before it became an official stance by simply not replacing the slaves they had inherited when their slave-owning parents died, or that had been emancipated for various reason. The overall decline of slaveholding among a new generation of Quakers coming of age in the 1740s shows that the antislavery arguments in the 1730s and before had been persuasive and constituted a "substantial cultural investment in antislavery." This investment would later be reflected in an official antislavery stance and disciplinary proceedings to make that stance consistent across Quakerism (Carey, 2012, pp. 179–181).

2.2 *Biographical Approaches to Quaker Antislavery Stances*

Biography has become an increasingly important way for historians to explore the development of antislavery reform in American Quakerism. This approach has several compelling features. First, it allows space for a thorough examination of an antislavery advocates writing and personal influence. Second, it encourages a longitudinal study of the subject's development in conversation with social and cultural trends in their environment. And third, biography allows for the tracing of religious and intellectual influences that may be well below the surface of the subject's consciousness, but nonetheless illuminating for understanding their reforms and self-understanding. The antislavery advocates identified in this survey of recent biographies are explored further in the chronological chapters that follow, but addressing the contributions made by these biographies here provides a helpful overview of trends in the field of Quaker antislavery scholarship.

The antislavery radical, Benjamin Lay (1682–1759), is one of the least understood figures of eighteenth-century Quakerism. Markus Rediker's (2017) biography, *The Fearless Benjamin Lay: The Quaker Dwarf who Became the First Revolutionary Abolitionist*, takes a serious look at Lay and argues for his prominence in the under-current of antislavery sentiment that was welling up in Pennsylvania during Lay's years as an active abolitionist agitator. Historians such as James and Drake have treated Lay with disdain for his controversial and high profile antics and their seeming inconsequence for the antislavery cause (Rediker, 2017, p. 134). In contrast to that previously accepted interpretation, Rediker argues that Lay's antislavery activity was successful because it bolstered and increased latent antislavery sentiment. Thus, Rediker agrees with Carey by noting that "the movement from below broke through to enable Quaker abolition from above" (Rediker, 2017, p. 134).

In order to contextualize Lay's confrontational style of antislavery agitation, Rediker notes the radical ideas that shaped him, including seventeenth-century Quaker radicalism, the biblical book of Revelation, and an antinomian tradition that mandated obedience to God's will over human laws (Rediker, 2017, pp. 5–7). These radical traditions motivated Lay's "guerilla theater" performances wherein he embodied forms of antislavery resistance. For example, at one point Lay did not immediately return home the wandering child of a slave owner to illustrate what enslaved Africans feel when their children are sold away (Rediker, 2017, p. 6). As a result of Lay's personal and public influence, Rediker contends that he successfully provided a younger generation of Quakers with the historical and theoretical foundation for antislavery protest and coached them on their way (Rediker, 2017, p. 81). Rather than a failed antislavery advocate, Rediker is compelling when he argues that Lay "deserves to be remembered as a leader, even if a lonely one, in the struggle. He was a prophet whose torch of pure fire showed the way out of darkness" (Rediker, 2017, p. 139).

Leading eighteenth-century antislavery Quaker, Anthony Benezet (1713–1784), has been made more accessible, and his influence more clearly seen, since the turn of the twenty-first century. For most of the twentieth century the best treatment of Benezet was George S. Brookes' voluminous and important biography and collection of Benezet's writing, *Friend Anthony Benezet* (Brookes, 1937). In 2012, David Crosby published a critical edition of Benezet's collected works with annotations and brief introductions (Crosby, 2013). In 2007, Irv Brendlinger published a biography of Benezet that describes Benezet's importance in developing a trans-Atlantic antislavery correspondence and that includes a collection of his antislavery writings (Brendlinger, 2007, pp. 19–20, 22, 27, 48). Maurice Jackson's monumental intellectual history of Benezet, *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (2009), shows the philosophical and religious themes that Benezet wove together to form his critique of slavery.

The importance and timeliness of Benezet's antislavery advocacy corresponded with demographic changes and a rise in the number of African Americans in Pennsylvania in the second half of the eighteenth century (Jackson, 2009, p. 9). In this context of increasing colonial dependence on slave labor Benezet made several innovations to the Quaker tradition of antislavery advocacy. First, he incorporated the humanism of the Enlightenment into antislavery alongside the traditional religious arguments (Jackson, 2009, pp. 32, xi). Jackson argues that Benezet was "one of the first white intellectuals to forcefully make the argument that Africans were indeed human beings, worthy of

God's and man's grace. He was not merely against slavery and the slave trade; he was for the freedom and equality of the blacks" (Jackson, 2009, p. xii).

In addition to incorporating Enlightenment thought into his antislavery views, Benezet used travelers' accounts as evidence that Africa contained healthy civilizations, countering the proslavery view that the condition of Africans improved by enslavement in England and colonial America. By arguing for a different view of Africa, Jackson argues, Benezet made space for a more egalitarian view of people of African descent (Jackson, 2009, pp. 79–80). "That concept was indeed radical if not revolutionary and one that he obtained by combining the philosophical insights of the European humanist tradition, the tenets of the Quaker faith, and his knowledge of Africa and its peoples" (Jackson, 2009, p. 100).

Anthony Benezet's peer, John Woolman (1720–1772), has also received serious attention from historians since the turn of the twenty-first century. Woolman has been lionized among Quakers as the "Quaker Saint" since his writings were edited after his death and republished in a form that was celebrated as the ideal expression of Quaker spirituality (Plank, 2009b, pp. 81–82). Woolman's importance in the Quaker movement toward abolition is in his writings, his urging Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to discipline Quaker slave holders, and in his successful linking of antislavery advocacy to the broader reformation of American Quakerism in the mid-eighteenth century.

Recent scholarship revisits Woolman's place in antislavery and the theological convictions that animated him. I have argued that Woolman should be considered a theological innovator whose vision was for a total reform of the British Atlantic world. Woolman's vision was sustained by an apocalyptic theology in which God actively revealed and transformed world events into consistency with the kingdom of God (Kershner, 2015b, pp. 96–97, 2018, p. 171). Historian Thomas Slaughter's *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition* contextualizes Woolman in his era in order to assess his complex personality. Slaughter views Woolman as an ascetic with a mystical spirituality, at times bordering on moral obsessiveness (Slaughter, 2008, p. 10). Rather than being influenced primarily by Enlightenment philosophy, Slaughter places Woolman in the tradition of devotional writers like Thomas à Kempis (Slaughter, 2008, p. 389).

Geoffrey Plank's 2012 *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire*, organizes Woolman's biography into thematic chapters, which examine him within the Quaker community and its leadership structure (Plank, 2012, p. 4). Plank shows how broader reforms and events influenced Woolman and how involved he was in forming corporate responses

to those issues (Plank, 2012, p. 5). Plank's analysis is the first to fully examine the role of British imperialism and economics in shaping both the problems Woolman addressed, such as slavery, and Woolman's responses to them, such as boycotts (Plank, 2012, pp. 165–166, 169). While Woolman's ideas carried radical implications for the British imperial slave-economy, Plank notes that Woolman's fundamental disposition was that of a conservative who longed for Quakers to embody the moral strength of the early Quakers and for colonial society to reflect its agrarian origins (Plank, 2012, pp. 3, 32).

Unlike Benezet and Woolman, who have been studied at length, Gary Nash's biography, *Warner Mifflin: Unflinching Quaker Abolitionist*, is a long awaited contribution to histories of Quaker antislavery at the end of the eighteenth century (Nash, 2017). Nash describes Mifflin (1745–1798) as a bridge between the first wave of abolitionists before the American Revolution and the wave of emancipators in the 1830s. "Operating between these two cohorts was a small but determined band of abolitionists whom historians only recently have begun to disinter from history's graveyard" (Nash, 2017, p. 1). Mifflin self-consciously sought to fill the void left after Benezet's death in 1784, which is surprising because earlier in life he had owned a large number of slaves. What changed Mifflin was a vision he received in 1775 (Nash, 2017, p. 3). As Carla Gerona has argued and as will be seen later in this book, dreams and visions were important revelatory experiences to Quakers in moments of social change (Gerona, 2004, p. 4). In Mifflin's case, an illness in 1774 caused him to envision a "hellish afterlife" if he did not satisfy the wrath of God by emancipating his slaves (Nash, 2017, p. 43).

From that point, Mifflin became a vocal critic of slavery and, within a decade, a leader among colonial Quaker abolitionists. He travelled among Quakers extensively, urging them to adopt abolitionist stances. Additionally, during and after the American Revolution, Mifflin became more and more involved lobbying congress, George Washington, and whichever political figures he could gain access to (Nash, 2017, pp. 1, 3). He paid reparations to his freed slaves and urged Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to adopt a policy of paying emancipated slaves for the work they had performed while enslaved. Though this latter position was rejected as official policy, on an individual basis many Quakers did follow Mifflin's lead and made restitution to their former slaves (Nash, 2017, pp. 99–100, 102–104).

While Mifflin's public antislavery efforts can be seen from historical records, Nash notes that his spiritual life is a mystery. Unlike Woolman, he did not leave a journal of his thoughts on spiritual matters. Because of his political petitioning, which was seen by the Quaker majority as unseemly for a minister of

the Gospel, he was never included among the ranks of Quaker ministers. Yet, Mifflin was devout. He read his Bible and knew it well. But, he did not claim to be a prophet and did not identify with Hebrew prophets like other anti-slavery advocates did. "Rather, he abased himself before the omnipresent God and hoped he was worthy of a place in Celestial Heaven" (Nash, 2017, p. 6). Mifflin's devotion to what he thought God asked of him and his fear of the eternal consequences if he became apathetic, drove him to undertake a punishing schedule of traveling. Several times he left the family plantation in Delaware for meetings in Philadelphia when his children were dangerously ill and his wife in serious condition. For Mifflin, "God, not family, was the pivot of his existence" (Nash, 2017, pp. 92, 138).

2.3 *Interdisciplinary Volumes on Quaker Antislavery Topics*

Another trend in Quaker antislavery studies is to publish collections of essays on antislavery topics. The benefit of this approach is that targeted research can probe specific issues within Quaker antislavery in a single, multidisciplinary volume.

In 2014, Geoffrey Plank and Brycchan Carey edited the volume, *Quakers & Abolition*. A collection of fifteen essays that re-evaluates some familiar aspects of Quaker antislavery reform while addressing some new subjects. The essays address Quaker antislavery efforts from the end of the seventeenth century through the American Civil War, arranged around three organizing themes: 1) Freedom within Quaker Discipline: Arguments among Friends, 2) The Scarcity of African Americans in the Meetinghouse: Racial Issues among the Quakers, 3) Did the Rest of the World Notice? The Quakers' Reputation.

It is beyond the scope of this book to summarize all of the important contributions made by each of the authors of the essays in this volume or the next volume to be discussed, however there are some important features that will be helpful for augmenting the content of this book. First, Ellen M. Ross's chapter in *Quakers & Abolition* on Joshua Evans (1731–1798) describes his religious radicalism and perfectionism, two themes that connect Quaker antislavery advocates. Evans' vision, like Woolman's, was of a different type of American society founded on the ideals of Quaker dissent and the unfolding kingdom of God on earth (Ross, 2014, pp. 18–19).

J. William Frost argues in his chapter that neither slavery as an institution nor Quaker responses to it stayed the same from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Quaker theology, and especially views on the 'Inward Light,' the Bible, and their anti-war stance contributed to the development of a corporate antislavery position from the 1760s to the 1820s, but schisms

among Quakers in the 1820s and their competing theological emphases then hampered a public and corporate antislavery position (Frost, 2014, pp. 29–30, 39–40). James Walvin's chapter focuses on the growth of British abolitionism in response to Thomas Clarkson's (1760–1846) data-based descriptions of the slave trade. Clarkson was not a Quaker, but he was persuaded to the antislavery cause by Benezet and worked closely with Quakers in forming an antislavery network in England. As Walvin argues, Clarkson's work helped to secularize antislavery rationale beyond the rhetoric of Quaker spirituality (Walvin, 2014, pp. 166–167).

Carey and Plank note in the introduction that scholarship on Quakers and abolition is far from finished because many antislavery Quakers deliberately avoided attention and many of those who were most active left little trace of their activity. As a result, the historical records are incomplete and still being pieced together. The advent of critical and interdisciplinary approaches to antislavery attempts to reconstruct the story of how Quakers and slavery interacted in their complicated history together (Carey & Plank, 2014, p. 1).

Quakers and Their Allies in the Abolitionist Cause, 1754–1808, edited by Maurice Jackson and Susan Kozel, describes the various methods and approaches to abolition by Quakers and their sympathizers. The editors describe the importance of discipline in enforcing Quaker antislavery, and once Quaker discipline for slaveholders was in place internally, the turn to the development of manumission societies to seek acceptance of antislavery in society at large (Kozel & Jackson, 2015, p. 1).

Julie Holcomb's chapter traces the intellectual history and impacts of moral commerce, specifically, the abstention from the products of slave labor. Holcomb argues that Evans and Woolman, who both began wearing undyed clothing instead of the traditional darkly dyed garb, intended their decision to be political, economic, and religious statements against a society that had lost its moorings (Holcomb, 2015, p. 99). In the 1780s, abstention from slave labor goods was enmeshed in the larger antislavery cause. In 1789, antislavery Quaker Henry Drinker (1734–1809) partnered with Benjamin Rush (1746–1813) to promote the production of sugar from the maple tree. Drinker was disturbed by slavery in the West Indies that produced the sugar imported to America. Drinker envisioned local production of homegrown maple sugar instead, unpolluted by the stain of slavery (Holcomb, 2015, p. 109).

James Gigantino II argues that Revolutionary politics in New Jersey hurt the Quaker quest for abolition. The British offered to free any enslaved Africans who joined their ranks against the colonists. The close proximity of British encampments to the local population made this prospect easier there than in

some other places. White Jerseyans sought to tighten their control over their slaves for fear they would join the British and then return to their former owners armed and with the protection of the British army. In this context, the work of Quaker abolitionists was especially resented by the non-Quaker citizens of New Jersey (Gigantino III, 2015, pp. 113–114, 117–118).

Louisiane Ferlier notes that the well-known colonial celebrity, Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790), was a latecomer to abolitionism. Quaker reformers lobbied Franklin to make a public declaration against slavery, but Franklin was involved in many commercial and political circles that complicated his decision. Nonetheless, Ferlier argues that Franklin helped diffuse abolitionist ideas in Philadelphia (Ferlier, 2015, pp. 142–143). Franklin's multiple circles of influence allowed him to argue for antislavery through his political connections, turning personal letters and private media into public tools of conviction (Ferlier, 2015, p. 152).

In conclusion, a survey of literature on Quaker antislavery demonstrates the active and dynamic nature of the current field. New books and volumes are being added to the discussion every year. Previously accepted interpretations are being reconsidered. New methodologies are being tested to the end that a more well-rounded understanding of antislavery and its contexts are integrated into more complex portrayals of the conditions of abolitionism. This survey has identified the most influential interpretations of Quaker antislavery, and has also presented important background that augments the examination of primary texts in the following chapters.

3 "Strangers in the Land": the Rise of Quaker Abolitionism (1688–1741)

I know no worse or greater stumbling Blocks the Devil has to lay in the way of honest Inquirers, than our Ministers and Elders keeping slaves; and by straining and perverting Holy Scriptures, Preach more to Hell, than ever they will bring to Heaven, by their feigned Humility and Hypocrisy

BENJAMIN LAY (1738, p. 85)

In April of 1688 a group of Dutch and German Quakers in Germantown, outside of Philadelphia, issued the first antislavery statement by a religious body of European settlers in colonial America. The statement is short and simple, signed by four Friends. Following proper Quaker order, the petition

was submitted to the Quaker body with direct oversight over the Friends in Germantown, the Monthly Meeting in Dublin, Pennsylvania, who deemed the document “so weighty” that they should not “meddle” with the issue. The petition was, again, forwarded to the next body up the Quaker decision-making structure, the gathered Quarterly Meeting at Philadelphia, where it was again deferred, “it being a thing of too great a weight for this meeting to determine” (Germantown Friends, 1688, p. 2). The petition was then forwarded to the next level, the Yearly Meeting convening in Burlington, West Jersey, that September. Quaker leaders again demurred, asserting that no definitive judgment on slavery could be made “[the protest] having so General a Relation to many other Parts” (Germantown Friends, 1688, p. 3). The entire process took less than five months.

This series of deferments on reconsidering what had become an uneasy acceptance of slavery in the Quaker ranks reflects both the involvement of many Quaker leaders in slavery and the development of an antislavery ethos in many quarters of Quaker religious thought. But the Quaker wrestling with slavery was far from settled. Ultimately, late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century antislavery Quakers would decide that economics was not a sufficient justification for slavery. Much more significant than worldly prosperity, they would conclude, was maintaining the faith and vindicating Quaker truth before God and the world. Their new status as powerful, rather than persecuted, members of a colonialist and imperialistic society meant that the meaning of their faith must expand into new areas of commerce, morality, and discipline. It was not an easy task. The accepted diversity of religious and social Quaker expressions, along with the painfully slow Quaker decision-making process, meant that change was difficult to enact. Once a practice became accepted, it was difficult to be overturned. Colonial port cities, sometimes with substantial Quaker populations, like Newport, Rhode Island, became centers of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, with many Quakers participating (Drake, 1965, p. 1).

These early protesters were only the tip of the iceberg of antislavery sentiment, but we cannot fully know the depth of antislavery sentiment that remained below the surface of historical records. The Germantown Protest, and many of those that came after it, alluded to the support of many anonymous Quakers who, like them, viewed slavery as incompatible with Quakerism. While these voices did not leave a written protest, they, too, are a part of the transmission of religious ideas through time and across geography.

Three groups kept antislavery thought current all the while slavery was allowed. First, there was a consistent discontent with slavery by outspoken Quaker authors like the ones featured in this chapter. Second, an anonymous group of antislavery Quakers worked “from below” to make Quaker structures

open to antislavery thought and transmit antislavery arguments to subsequent generations (Rediker, 2017, pp. 5–6). Finally, there was a growing group of antislavery Quakers who would take leadership positions among Quakers beginning in the 1740s, eventually making a corporate antislavery stance official and enforceable. For much of the next half-century, these protests would come from dissatisfied average Quakers, often spiritually distraught at the disparity between Quaker ideals and realities. Many of these dissenters had nothing to gain financially or socially from antislavery protest, and much to lose economically. For some of the earlier dissenters, they also risked ostracism and disownment from their religious community. Their public protests were moral and religious and confronted a powerful merchant class trading in slaves and social elites accommodated to cheap labor (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, pp. 47–48).

Quaker ecclesial polity held that a public face of unity was essential to the group's corporate witness. As in the case of the Germantown Protest, leaders could use a lack of unity on slavery to suppress antislavery dissent. Because many Quaker leaders owned slaves in the first half of the eighteenth century, those leaders wielded outsized influence over the whole group. Antislavery authors were not allowed to publish their tracts through official Quaker channels because a majority of the members of the Overseers of the Press owned slaves, and one, Isaac Norris, Sr., was heavily involved in the slave trade. When Friends published outside of the Yearly Meeting's sanctions, their publications were seen as attacks on the Quaker faith itself, "rather than as arguments against the institution of slavery. Thus, Quakers expelled the offending members for 'disunity,' a disciplinary violation of much greater concern at that time than buying imported blacks" (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 46).

As shown in chapter two, over the last ten years, biographical analyses of Quaker antislavery advocates like Lay, Woolman, Benezet, and Mifflin, and compiled volumes of essays, have dominated the study of Quaker antislavery. This chapter on early eighteenth-century Quaker antislavery advocates is both broader and narrower in its assessment than recent scholarship. It is broader in that it takes a high level overview of antislavery Quaker arguments of the eighteenth century, from the Germantown Protest (1688) to John Bell (1741), including Quaker protests not covered in Carey's *From Peace to Freedom*. However, it is also a narrower treatment in that the primary and organizing argument is that Quaker antislavery protests related to a covenantal understanding of Quakers as a corporate body before a judging God. For antislavery reformers, the Quaker standing in history was contingent on their faithful and obedient response to God's providence. The purging of sin from their midst was not only for the sake of self-purity, though that was a piece, it was to make good on a promise to God and to validate their theology before the watching world.

3.1 *The Germantown Protest*

The Germantown Protest of 1688 follows Fox in using the 'Golden Rule' as a key marker of the religious and ethical standard of Quaker practice. It goes further, though, by specifically contending that the principal is universal, and relates to matters spiritual and racial. To "doe to all men like as we will be done ourselves" is to be applied "making no difference of what generation, descent or colour" a person may be (Germantown Friends, 1688, p. 1).

The authors of the Germantown Protest expanded the application of the 'Golden Rule' beyond what Fox imagined. Fox defined what it meant to apply the 'Golden Rule' to persons of African descent within the limited context of their "slavish Condition" (Fox, 1676, pp. 18–19). This greatly reduced the potential impact of the 'Golden Rule' to the amelioration of brutal treatment within a tacitly accepted condition of slavery. By contrast, the Germantown use of the 'Golden Rule' expanded the principle beyond the conditions of blacks within enslavement to the totality of their relationship to God and all people (Germantown Friends, 1688, p. 1). In other words, the Germantown Protest contends that the 'Golden Rule' challenges slavery itself, not simply reforming the poor treatment of one's slaves. The Germantown interpretation of the 'Golden Rule' goes further in advancing a theology of abolition than Fox did and even asserts that the fear of enslavement felt by Europeans crossing the Atlantic, such as Fox and the Quaker missionaries to Barbados experienced, demonstrates that European Americans would not like to be enslaved and so should not enslave Africans: "when they see a strange vassel, being afraid it should be a Turck, and they should be tacken, and sold for slaves into Turkey." This is an indictment against Christians who ostensibly preach a gospel of liberty for themselves but sell souls for profit (Germantown Friends, 1688, p. 1).

Added to the 'Golden Rule' by the Germantown protesters was the biblical prohibition against "man-stealing" from Exodus 21:16: "And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." From Fox onward, the laws of the Hebrew covenant were accepted by antislavery Quakers as ethical commands for human relationships. Obedience to these commands shaped God's providential response to Quakers in this world and the next. The Germantown protesters argued that nothing "in the world can be done worse toward us, than if men should rob or steal us away, and sell us for slaves to strange countries" (Germantown Friends, 1688, p. 1). Man-stealing, then, violated the 'Golden Rule' and the Hebrew law, and breaks up families by "separating housbands from their wives and children" (Germantown Friends, 1688, p. 1). The Quaker exaltation of households as the locus of spiritual growth and moral formation was argued by these protesters to extend to households in Africa as well as in Philadelphia.

This is not only a condemnation of the "traffic of men-body," but by extension, a condemnation of participating in the robbing of persons in Africa by the purchasing of slaves in the colonies: "we who profess that it is not lawful to steal, must, likewise, avoid to purchase such things as are stolen, but rather help to stop this robbing and stealing if possible" (Germantown Friends, 1688, p. 1). According to Holcomb, condemnations of slavery on the basis of non-participation in man-stealing laid the intellectual foundation for late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century boycotts of the products of slave labor and the abstention of not only the bodies of Africans but the produce of their forced labor (Holcomb, 2016, p. 15).

In the early stages of this development, as seen in the Germantown Protest and, soon after, with the protests of George Keith and Robert Pile, the condemnation was not explicitly linked to all consumer products of slavery. That development came in the early eighteenth century "with the expansion of the trade in global consumer goods such as coffee, tea, chocolate, sugar, silk, cotton, and china" (Holcomb, 2016, p. 19). In response to the expansion of commercial markets, "Quaker antislavery writers began to explicitly link the consumption of slaves to the consumption of material goods" (Holcomb, 2016, p. 19).

The Germantown protesters also made the connection between the man-stealing argument and a violation of one's God given liberty, what Fox referred to as 'Gospel liberty.' Since "liberty of conscience" — the God given duty of all people to follow the inward presence of Christ and to seek justification through God alone — would have been accepted as an implication of God's sovereignty the Germantown protesters link man-stealing to the robbing of this liberty. Even more, they argue that physical liberty, the "liberty of ye body," is a direct implication of spiritual liberty (Germantown Friends, 1688, p. 1). A slave could not obey God's commands in the physical realm while held in physical bondage.

Additionally, Germantown Friends argued that the practice of slavery encouraged violence, which was against Quaker principles, and could lead Quakers to participate in violence indirectly, or to directly fight to defend themselves in a slave uprising (Germantown Friends, 1688, p. 2). If Quakers believed that God had called them to be a peaceable people, slavery put their testimony at risk (James, 1963, p. 108).

As the dismissal of the Germantown Protest in the Quaker ecclesial hierarchy demonstrates, slavery remained a contentious issue among Friends. However, as Carey has argued, the protest "was ultimately neither a failure nor a missed opportunity but, instead, a key moment in the development of the rhetoric of antislavery" (Carey, 2012, p. 86). The protest consolidated religious arguments against slavery and identified the inconsistency of men-stealing with the types

of relationships with God and humanity Quakers thought Pennsylvania would foster. The Quaker mission in Pennsylvania was at stake. Would they live up to their hopes as a corporate testimony of God's providence, or would they take their deliverance from persecution for granted? As the authors of the Germantown Protest forewarned, only when involvement in slavery is ended "is Pennsylvania to have a good report, instead it hath now a bad one for [slavery's] sake in other countries" (Germantown Friends, 1688, p. 1). The world, and God, were watching to see if Pennsylvania would live up to its standards.

Sometime after submission of the Protest to the Yearly Meeting the document was mislaid and it was not rediscovered until 1844. While some scholars have argued that the document's disappearance means it was inconsequential to the growth of antislavery ideas in the eighteenth century, Carey is compelling that it was "an influential document in its own time, with a discursive afterlife in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, since much of its rhetoric resurfaces in later Quaker writing on slavery" (Carey, 2012, p. 84). In fact, "discursive traces" can be found in the Keithian tract and the letters from Cadwalader Morgan and Robert Pile, examined below (Carey, 2012, p. 71).

3.2 *George Keith's Exhortation*

Five years after the Germantown Protest, in 1693, a committee authored and printed an antislavery statement in Pennsylvania in the name of the influential Quaker, and leader of a Quaker splinter group, George Keith (1638–1716). Outside of the *Exhortation* there is little evidence that Keith was much concerned with antislavery thought and when he finally left the Quakers and joined the Anglicans he became a missionary for the slave-holding Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. The *Exhortation* bears significant philosophical similarity to the Germantown Protest. Keith did not live far from Germantown, and one of the signers of the Germantown Protest, Abraham op den Graeff, was also, as Katherine Gerbner has shown, a leader in Keith's "Christian Quakers" movement and probably influenced Keith's tract along with others in the movement. In fact, Gerbner argues that while Keith wanted to attack Quaker leadership in Philadelphia, and used the printing of this tract to do so, the "antislavery ideology should be attributed to non-elite German, Dutch, Welsh, Irish, Scottish, and English Quakers who had been heavily influenced by the ideas introduced by the German-Dutch settlers in Germantown, Pennsylvania (Gerbner, 2011, pp. 554–555, 568).

Under Keith's leadership, the "Christian Quakers" regarded themselves as the true Quakers, upholding the original Quaker theological perspective on the relevance of the scriptures and believed Philadelphia Quaker leaders had assumed too much authority (Gerbner, 2011, p. 567). Moreover, Keith feared

that Quakers were focused too much on the Inward Light and were not paying enough attention to the historical person of Christ (Calvert, 2009, p. 123). Keith himself was not generally as concerned with social affairs as his followers were, many of whom were "thoroughly concerned about the institution of slavery, and they wanted it outlawed in their new home" of Pennsylvania (Gerbner, 2011, p. 567).

When Keith was disowned by Philadelphia Quakers in 1692 the most influential members of his movement left him and less well-known individuals filled the void. The movement became a home for dissenting Quakers who chafed at the official Philadelphia Yearly Meeting leadership. When Keith departed for England, the movement died out. The legacy of the "Christian Quakers" remained important after they dissipated at the turn of the eighteenth century because of the dissatisfaction and protest it had fostered in the 1690s. The movement left spotty and sometimes unconscious residual effects of a tradition of protesting practices they deemed sinful within the Quaker community and its leadership (Gerbner, 2011, pp. 567–568).

The authors of the *Exhortation* argued that slavery implicates Quakers in "War," "Man-stealing, and transgresseth that Golden Rule and Law, To do to others what we would have others do to us" (Keith, 1693, p. 2). For those Quakers who envisioned Pennsylvania being a light to the world and an exoneration of their principles and God's providence, the disparity between Quaker practice and ideals would have been a stinging rebuke. The shortcoming of the spiritual and social reality in Pennsylvania was all the more glaring because Keithians could point to countries in Europe, like the Germantown protesters had, that were excelling Quakers in abstaining from slavery (Germantown Friends, 1688, p. 2; Keith, 1693, p. 2). Thus they could argue that "to buy Souls and Bodies of men for Money, to enslave them and their Posterity ... we judge is a great hinderance to the spreading of the Gospel" (Keith, 1693, p. 2).

Keithians also added to the religious body of thought by describing the sin of slavery in a "Babylon" typology. They described the biblical "Babylon" as manifest in the utter human greed and depravity of "Man-stealing." The *Exhortation* and the Germantown protesters agreed that "Man-stealing" was a serious crime as upheld in the Mosaic law, but the *Exhortation* also considered "Man-stealing" an eschatological sin by connecting it to Revelation 18. In Revelation, the authors argued, "Slaves and Souls of Men are some of the Merchandize of Babylon by which the Merchants of the Earth are made Rich" (Keith, 1693, p. 6). No doubt with Quaker merchants in mind, some of whom were active in the slave trade, Keithians connected the sweep of biblical history and its prohibitions against treating human souls as commodities. Keith then reminded the reader that the 'Golden Rule' was not only a law for the ethical treatment of

others, it was a warning of God's judgment for those who disregarded it: "for he that leads into Captivity shall go into Captivity ..." (Keith, 1693, p. 6).

The *Exhortation* introduced the link between colonial slavery, trans-Atlantic slave trading, and eschatological judgment. Far from being a place of purity and truth, Pennsylvania was in danger of becoming a type of Babylon, estranged from God and heading toward destruction. The Babylon typology became a powerful weapon in antislavery religious reasoning because it situated British imperial economics within the eschatological prophecies of the Book of Revelation (Keith, 1693, p. 6; Kershner, 2015b, p. 87).

The tone of the *Exhortation's* challenge to slavery is more pointed than the Germantown Protest. Instead of raising issues or simply bearing witness to why the practice is dangerous, the authors go on the offensive and attack the Quaker slaveholders who perpetuate the practice. The 'Golden Rule,' then, becomes a particularly damning argument for the spiritual corruption of those involved in the practice. "Because Christ commanded" that "whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them," and yet, Quakers would not wish themselves or their children to be "kept in perpetual Bondage and Slavery against our Consent" (Keith, 1693, p. 3). The rationalization that the enslaved Africans were criminals or prisoners, and, so deserving of their enslavement was rejected. The damage to "Bodies and Minds" that resulted from slavery was such that only the most "notorious Criminal Offenders" would deserve such a punishment (Keith, 1693, pp. 3–4).

In fact, Africans were innocent, having "done us no harme" and so to give them the punishment of criminals, which Quakers would not like to suffer unjustly themselves, shows "how inhumane" slaveholders were (Keith, 1693, p. 4). In other words, far from honoring the 'Golden Rule,' in the practice of slavery Quakers had introduced a structural violation of God's law into the society they had formed in Pennsylvania. The point was clear, slavery violated the religious laws that Quakers had purposed to establish in Pennsylvania as a public testimony of God's providence. Just over a decade after the royal charter had been issued to Penn in 1681, Quakers were already failing in important ways compared to some of the "Old World" societies they had fled to Pennsylvania to improve upon. In light of such degeneracy, the faithful should practice civil disobedience to the unjust laws and not return escaped slaves to their former masters (Carey, 2012, pp. 92–93; Keith, 1693, p. 4). Nonparticipation in slavery here included a justification for upholding a divine command over and against a sinful human custom.

Keithians expanded on the Germantown Protest's understanding of liberty. For Keithians and later antislavery Quakers, "Liberty [was] both inward and outward" (Keith, 1693, p. 1). The enslaved could not follow the inward

teachings of the 'Light' spiritually in an oppressed condition, nor could they respond in obedience with the fullness of their bodies while being physically controlled by others. And most significantly to Quaker antislavery advocates, the view that Pennsylvania would be a place where people could live in direct relationship with God in the freedom of their consciences, without the interference of King or Bishop, was called into question when Quakers themselves claimed to own other human beings and usurped the social and religious sovereignty that only belonged to God.

Marietta contends that the *Exhortation* was not taken seriously in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting due to Keith's already controversial standing as a heretic among many Quakers, and it caused antislavery to be unpopular for years to come (Marietta, 1984, p. 112). However, subsequent antislavery protests show that the *Exhortation's* arguments were certainly not forgotten. They became the standards for social relationships and witness in the world that reform-minded Quakers thought were to typify Quaker corporate existence.

3.3 Robert Pile's Paper

In 1698, Robert Pile (or Pyle or Piles), a Pennsylvania Quaker active in politics and civil affairs, took the anti-war position of Germantown and the Keithians further by arguing that those who prospered indirectly from slavery were implicated in the guilt of war (H. Cadbury, 1937, pp. 488–489; James, 1963, p. 109). Pile, who died in 1730, wrote a brief statement questioning slavery and circulated it to other Quakers, who took no action on it (H. Cadbury, 1937, pp. 489, 491). Like the Germantown Protest, Pile invokes the 'Golden Rule,' he makes colonial enslavers culpable in man-stealing and the violence by which the Africans were enslaved. He adds to those arguments what will become standard Quaker antislavery fare: that at the heart of slavery lies the sin of greed. He also introduces a new source of authority in the antislavery conversation: dreams as purveyors of divine truth.

At this point in the trajectory of colonial Quaker antislavery thought there is little support for immediate emancipation. Rather, Piles contends that through Christian education and the oversight of Quaker quarterly meetings (a regional decision making body in Quaker ecclesial structures) slaves could be freed. The timeline of emancipation would be dependent on the slave owner being compensated in labor for the expenses incurred on behalf of the enslaved, "that no los [*sic*] might be on neyther hand," a particularly dubious proposition since the enslaved had already suffered dearly (H. Cadbury, 1937, pp. 490, 492).

Pile notes that he had been interested in buying slaves because he needed labor but "theyr arose a question in mee" because of Jesus' teaching regarding the 'Golden Rule' "and wee would not willingly to be slaves tearm [*sic*] of life"

(H. Cadbury, 1937, p. 492). Moreover, the Quaker belief in a universal redemption established a spiritual equality of persons. Since Christ died for all people, it was a contradiction to practice absolute power over some (H. Cadbury, 1937, p. 492).

The most enigmatic and difficult to interpret part of Pile's antislavery letter is his retelling of a dream he experienced while considering whether or not slavery was allowable. In the dream, Pile and a friend were "going on a road, and by ye roadside I saw a black pott" (H. Cadbury, 1937, p. 491). Pile picks up the pot and carries it farther up the road until "I saw a great ladder standing exact upright, reaching up to heaven up which I must go to heaven with ye pott in my hand intending to carry ye black pott with me, but ye ladder standing so upright, and seeing no man holding of it up, it seemed yt it would fall upon mee" (H. Cadbury, 1937, p. 492). Carey argues that this ladder is likely a reference to Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28:12–17 (Carey, 2012, p. 101). Perplexed at how he was to climb the ladder with the pot in his hands, he noticed a man at the foot of the ladder offering refreshments to others who were climbing. Pile asked the man what the purpose of the ladder was and he said it was the "light of Christ Jesus, and whoever it bee that his faith bee strong in ye lord, God will uphold that [the ladder] shall not fall" (H. Cadbury, 1937, p. 493). At this Pile woke from his dream with the conviction that if he purchased slaves he would be estranged from Christ and miss out on eternity in Heaven. He reflected that he must "let black negroes or pots alone" (H. Cadbury, 1937, p. 493).

Dreams played an important role in colonial America, but Pile was the first to apply his dream to antislavery sentiment (Gerona, 2004, p. 25). The importance and revelatory weight of dream portents cut across the diversity of the British Atlantic world (Pestana, 2009, p. 112). With the socially and religiously charged implications of slavery, it is no surprise that dreams played a role in the rise of antislavery convictions. Dreams were culturally and individually important as people became aware that they had an inner self that controlled their behaviors and emotions, and that could reveal truths they were unable to access through external senses. Mechal Sobel argues that American culture was "dream-infused" and that "dreams provided an important bridge into the modern period, helping people change their self-view and their selves" (Sobel, 2000, p. 4). Thus, Carla Gerona likens dreams to maps that individuals and their communities would retell and fashion as an external authority structure capable of getting them to new places socially and religiously (Gerona, 2004, p. 4).

Dreams utilized a rich, multi-layered symbolic language that was shared with other Britons, but not fixed in their meaning. Gerona argues that Pile's

dream narrative shares several characteristics of Quaker dream work: First, it addressed a problem that needed resolution. In this case, Pile was torn between a desire for economic advancement through slave labor and a suspicion that slave labor disqualified one for heaven. Second, it provided a narrative for resolving the problem. In Pile's case, the narrative of the ladder and black pot convicted him that he must choose between his eternal welfare and his temporal economic welfare. Third, dreams and dreamers laid out a plan of action for the community.

Decades later, Woolman and Mifflin would also record dreams at crucial moments in their personal antislavery development and in their understanding of their responsibility to the community (Kershner, 2018, pp. 48–51; Nash, 2017, pp. 42–43). In this case, Pile wrote his antislavery letter and related the dream so that the community could learn to "let black negroes or pots alone" if they were to reach Heaven. His dream shows that Quakers were concerned about sin, which led people like Pile to make a proposal, albeit inadequate in its white patriarchy, for how Quakers may eventually eliminate involvement in slavery (H. Cadbury, 1937, p. 493; Soderlund, 1985, pp. 19–20).

3.4 1696–1715: *Quiet Development From Below*

After Pile, the next significant Quaker antislavery tract was John Hepburn's 1715 appeal. That is not to say that nothing important was done in the interceding years between Pile and Hepburn. The issue of Quaker involvement in slavery was a live one. Just before Pile's letter, Cadwalader Morgan noted that slavery could cause immorality as slave families were sold away and forced into new households. Slavery could also lead Quakers to violence. Morgan wrote that there were "many others" that carried his same concern against slavery (Morgan, 1980, p. 70).

Indeed, there were "many others;" most of whom are anonymous in the historical records and unknown to scholars. In 1711, Chester Monthly Meeting petitioned Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to stop Quakers from buying imported slaves. This was the first petition from an entire meeting designed to stop the expansion of slavery in the Delaware Valley. The petition suggested that religious disciplinary actions would be needed to stop Quakers from purchasing slaves and contributing to slavery's expansion (Soderlund, 1985, p. 20). Chester Monthly Meeting quickly took a place in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting as a seedbed of organized resistance to the slave trade, making petitions to the Yearly Meeting in 1711, 1715, and 1716. These petitions were mostly disregarded except for the Yearly Meeting's decision to "caution" Friends from buying imported slaves. At the time, 60% of Yearly Meeting leadership owned slaves (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 45).

In 1712, William Southeby (d. 1720), a well-respected Philadelphia Quaker, asked the Quaker-dominated Pennsylvania Assembly to use their authority to emancipate all the slaves in the province (Carroll, 1965, pp. 424, 427). He continued to protest slavery and, in 1716, published antislavery tracts without permission from the Quaker Overseers of the Press. For his actions he was censured and threatened with disownment, but the threat was never carried through (Soderlund, 1985, p. 22).

In 1713, London Yearly Meeting wrote to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in response to the latter's request for advice on slavery and, especially, whether or not slaves could be held "without limitation of time." London Yearly Meeting responded with a warning against participating in the slave trade, "Remembring the Command of our Blessed Lord whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye Even to them" (London Yearly Meeting, 1980, p. 76). They also warned that increasing the African population in the colonies posed a physical danger because of the "Barbarity" of some slaves during a revolt, and, consequently, could lead Quakers to violence (London Yearly Meeting, 1980, p. 76). Slavery could also, they wrote, teach the children of slave owners a "Domineering Spirit," a message contrary to the humility that was supposed to characterize religious instruction in Quaker households (London Yearly Meeting, 1980, p. 76).

3.5 *John Hepburn's American Defense of the Christian Golden Rule*

While previous antislavery advocates pleaded with Quaker leadership to limit Quaker involvement in slavery, some, like Keith, made serious criticisms of Pennsylvanian Quaker leadership. John Hepburn, whose dates are unknown, openly derided Quaker leaders for their failure to God and the community in his 1715 tract, *The American Defence of the Christian Golden Rule* (H. Cadbury, 1949, p. 95). Not much is known about Hepburn's background. He emigrated to America in 1684 and was probably an indentured servant (H. Cadbury, 1949, pp. 90–92). According to Hepburn, he had been silent on the subject of slavery for some time, waiting for his betters to do something to stop it. When the Quaker leadership failed to enforce the testimony, Hepburn felt compelled to publish his tract out of a sense of "duty" (H. Cadbury, 1949, pp. 105–106).

For Hepburn, human beings were given free will by God and could use that will to follow God obediently, or to disregard God's teaching at their peril (Hepburn, 1715, p. 1). Hepburn rejected the idea of original sin, or any deterministic controlling influence. Rather, each person stood directly before God and to God they were responsible, for God "is no respecter of persons, [and] hath given to all men a Freedom of their Wills" (Hepburn, 1715, p. 3). Instead of facilitating this direct relationship with God, which was granted by God and the

essence of liberty, as Quakers had hoped would be the case in Pennsylvania, slave owners stood between the enslaved and God. In this way, Quaker slave owners were akin to the Egyptian pharaohs who claimed mastery over the Hebrew people (Davis, 1988, p. 316; Frost, 2012, p. 18).

Hepburn juxtaposed the innocence of enslaved Africans with the greedy decadence of the Quakers who extorted their labor (Carey, 2012, pp. 125–126; Hepburn, 1715, p. 4). Carey argues that "Hepburn established an image of the slaveholding household as one that is both corrupt and corrupting" (Carey, 2012, p. 126). This characterization of the laziness and arrogance of the slaveholder and his family is also a long way from the quiet humility Fox envisioned in *Gospel Family-Order*, where the whole household, including any slaves, was to "stand before the Lord, to enter in to Covenant with the Lord ..." in spiritual equality as a worshiping unit (Fox, 1676, pp. 6–7). In his caricature of the slaveholding Quaker family, Hepburn described a very different reality from the one Fox envisioned, including the religiously degenerate reality of the slaveholding household. He not only condemned their sins but made them public and announced God's displeasure.

In making this statement, Hepburn stepped into the role of a prophetic figure, commissioned by God to call the community back to their divinely ordained purpose (See: Brueggemann, 2001, pp. 2, 47–46; Couser, 1979, p. 3). The role of the Quaker prophet was to stand with God and God's covenant, rather than tribal articulations of the faith that support its accommodation to sin. The purpose of the prophet's message was to deny economic and social power as ultimate and, instead, purported a higher reality to which all people must bow and that is defined in terms of love of neighbor and humility in social relations. This strand of religiously motivated action in relation to the community and its ideals is a crucial aspect of Quaker antislavery and can be seen in subsequent antislavery advocacy (Kershner, 2016, pp. 20–21, 2018, pp. 60–61).

Soderlund suggests there is some evidence that Hepburn may have been one of Keith's "Christian Quakers," and Hepburn made a theological move similar to the Keithians that gives credence to that view (Soderlund, 1985, p. 22). First, as the title of Hepburn's tract indicates and as explicated therein, he asserted the 'Golden Rule' as a binding law established to govern Quaker behavior. Then, Hepburn imitates the *Exhortation* in linking the 'Golden Rule' to "buying and selling of the Bodies and Souls of Men, [which] was and is the Merchandize of the Babylonish Merchants spoken in the Revelations" (Hepburn, 1715, p. 2). Quaker slave masters were like the Babylonian merchants, and they should consider the "Welfare of your immortal Souls ... For how will ye answer when ye are brought before *Gods Tribunal*, and there appear naked and bear before the Son of Man, if ye have lived and dyed

in Opposition to his everlasting Gospel" (Hepburn, 1715, p. 2). The fear of judgment before God was a powerful motivator for reflecting on one's life and reconsidering the choices one was making.

Hepburn not only applied the threat of judgment to individuals but to Quakers as a body. Hepburn showed that while Quakers claimed to be the "only true and real Christians" and to be "infallibly guided" by the 'Light,' their actions encouraged non-Quakers in their participation in slavery. Hepburn noted that there was a remnant of "*honest hearted*" Christians among the Quakers, even if the Quaker's corporate "*Innocence*" had been tainted (Hepburn, 1715, p. 15). The public witness of Quakers was important to the self-understanding of Quaker antislavery advocates. If the purpose of God's providence in leading Quakers to Pennsylvania and the American colonies was to establish a place where the principles of the kingdom of God could be practiced, and then Quakers became implicated in a practice that violated so many of the foundational convictions Quakers were called to stand for, then they had become a burden, rather than a blessing, to the nations (Hepburn, 1715, p. 15).

3.6 *Ralph Sandiford's A Brief Examination of the Practice of the Times and The Mystery of Iniquity*

Ralph Sandiford's (1693–1733) *A Brief Examination of the Practice of the Times*, first printed in 1729, follows in line with many of the theological arguments of the earlier antislavery writers. He elaborates on others, such as the danger of a leadership that misleads Quakers from their founding vision and obscures Pennsylvania's special role in God's plan for humanity. Forsaking their calling, Sandiford predicted that God's judgment would be meted out against the Quakers. Slavery was especially pernicious because it sapped God's power from Friend's public testimony and even from the land itself (Frost, 2012, pp. 19–21). Sandiford's tract is the most confrontational of any of the early antislavery advocates, except perhaps Benjamin Lay. David Brion Davis considers Sandiford an apocalypticist who understood the eternal evil of slavery to be so contrary to God's will that he protested it to the point of ensuring his ostracism from the Quaker community (Davis, 1988, p. 320).

After the hostile reception of his tract among Philadelphia Quakers, Sandiford's second edition of his tract was expanded and renamed *The Mystery of Iniquity: in a Brief Examination of the Practice of the Times* (1730) and was addressed directly to London Yearly Meeting, the Quaker body of last resort in cases of theology and practice. He argued that "the ruling part amongst us at this time, is so far gone from their first love;" in other words, the Philadelphia Quaker leadership was so degenerate that Sandiford questioned their faith

and certainly questioned their ability to follow God's Spirit on the matter of slavery (Sandiford, 1730, p. 3).

Sandiford described his antislavery advocacy among proslavery Quakers as an "exile into spiritual *Egypt* and *Babylon*" where he was persecuted and "often engaged in battel against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Sandiford, 1730, p. 6). In Sandiford's mind, the corruption of the Quaker leadership was complete. Instead of describing the narrative of God's providence through the Quaker community as escaping from spiritual Egypt and Babylon in the Quaker persecutions of mid-seventeenth-century England, Sandiford declared that spiritual Egypt and Babylon had followed Quakers into their Holy Experiment. Sandiford described this utter corruption in apocalyptic terms from 2 Thessalonians 2:7 and Revelation 17:16: Quakers have succumbed to the "*mystery of iniquity*, that the beast and the whore should introduce their merchandize amongst all our churches" (Sandiford, 1730, p. 6). Those who would set bounds to God's liberty, Sandiford argued, were not God's chosen leaders, they were, in fact, "antichrists" (Sandiford, 1730, p. 6).

The apocalyptic theology in Sandiford's antislavery tract, and the dire situation he argued Quakers found themselves in, was driven by a dispensational and teleological view of time. These dispensations were not only epochs of time, they were spiritual typologies. In the dispensation of the law, the fulfillment of the law advanced God's people to the next dispensation. Moses testified to the law and he was faithful to the people during their captivity in Egypt (Sandiford, 1730, p. 26). However, in the present "Gospel Dispensation" there was no excuse for slavery. Slavery was a perversion of the Gospel and the utmost hypocrisy. Though Quaker slave owners "may take his Covenant into their Mouths" their "Testimony" is "blocked up" (Sandiford, 1730, pp. 40–41). Sandiford said that he prayed and worked for the redemption of his fellow Quakers, but the deeper their sin the more they worked to obscure it. But it was futile to rationalize one's sin, because the present "Gospel Dispensation" intensified the treachery before God (Sandiford, 1730, pp. 41–42).

Sandiford argued that the impact of sin is cumulative. Corrupt households breed children who are even more corrupt. Slave owners may think their children would be wise masters when, in fact, they were "trained up" in "Sin" and "become more hard & dark than the rest of [the] humane Race" (Sandiford, 1730, p. 42). The acceptance of sin formed a stark contrast with the propitiousness of the present "Gospel Dispensation," in which God had "singularly manifested his Love unto all Men" in the immediacy of Christ (Sandiford, 1730, p. 52). Even more so, contrition and repentance would be necessary before the next era of human history came to pass, the "Dispensation of the Kingdom,"

that is, the fullness of life in the power of Christ and “fulfils and swallows up all the foregoing Dispensations” (Sandiford, 1730, p. 61). Sinful Quaker leaders, though, will not be ready to discern this dispensation since they have not even discerned their own Spirit and condition before God (Sandiford, 1730, p. 82).

In his description of salvation history and the Quaker place in it, Sandiford emphasized the contrasting sin of the slave owner with the immediacy and goodness of God. The result is to show that while the thrust of history has been moving toward the *telos* of the Kingdom, this current generation of leaders have failed even to live up to the law of Moses. This typological reading of the Bible and history position slave-owning Quaker leaders as antichrists, who must be resisted and overthrown. In the current state of sin, “Babylon” is made real in the lives of those who “Merchandize” in the “Souls of Men” (Sandiford, 1730, p. 27). Quakers could be the “shining Light” and “Precedent to the Nations” they had believed they would be, but their involvement in slavery nullifies their calling (Sandiford, 1730, p. 23).

Sandiford does not believe slavery is a side issue to Quaker theology. Slavery rejected the concept of “liberty,” and, so, threatened the free flowing of God’s Spirit into the lives of all people. Moreover, the purpose of the existence of Quakers was to embody this truth. In their failing, not only the message of Quakers but their very reason for existence is called into question. A changing of the guard would take place in the Quaker leadership, but not for more than a decade after Sandiford had died.

3.7 *Elihu Coleman’s Testimony against that Antichristian Practice of Making Slaves of Men*

Nantucket Quaker, Elihu Coleman (1699–1789), wrote his *A Testimony Against that Antichristian Practice of Making Slaves of Men* in 1729–1730, when he was thirty years old, but published it in 1733. Coleman’s delay in publishing his tract could have been related to the disownments of Sandiford in 1731 and the anti-slavery English Quaker who visited Newport, John Farmer, in 1718 (Soderlund, 1985, p. 22). James and Drake contend that Farmer’s disownment shows that antislavery agitation resulted in futility during these early decades of the eighteenth century, because Quaker leaders were too entrenched in their participation in slavery (Drake, 1965, pp. 32–33; James, 1963, p. 123). Certainly Farmer’s discipline was a powerful message by the New England Quaker leadership that they would not tolerate vocal antislavery agitation. However, the record of seemingly unsuccessful agitation demonstrates that there was a continuous undercurrent of antislavery thought, which was becoming increasingly difficult to ignore for the majority of Quakers.

Into this environment Coleman published his attack on slavery. His tract was the first antislavery publication by a New England Quaker and the second of any New Englander of any affiliation. As Drake has noted, Coleman's antislavery action is somewhat surprising. There were very few slaves on Nantucket, so he would not have run into constant contact with the institution. However, Coleman would have seen the operations of the slave trade when he went to Newport for Yearly Meeting sessions. There were relatively few slaves in New England, but the port cities were active in the slave trade and Newport Quakers and other merchants were profitably engaged in it. Additionally, after Coleman published his tract he hardly registered in historical records for the next 50 years of his life (Drake, 1944, pp. 113–114, 118–119).

Like other Quaker antislavery advocates, Coleman upheld the 'Golden Rule' as the defining law by which Quaker social relations were to be judged, quoting Matthew 7:12 on his title page. In 1783, more than five decades after publishing his attack on slavery, Coleman wrote "A Father's Advice to his Children and Grand Children." Comparing both his antislavery tract and his advice to his children and grandchildren reveal a conscientious Quaker who cared about fostering a spirit of devotion, one who wanted to uphold the household model of religious instruction to the very end, and who believed the Christian life was characterized by humble obedience before God and remembering "that Excelent [*sic*] advice of our Saviour [*sic*] to do unto all men as you would they should do to you" (Drake, 1944, pp. 132–133). Humility before God and the 'Golden Rule' could guide one in a way that would faithfully navigate the complexities of colonial life in the British Empire.

Like Hepburn, Coleman argued that God created humanity with a "free Will." Since God did not compel humanity to good or evil, neither should humans "compel our Fellow Creatures" in any way (Coleman, 1733, p. 6). Drawing a distinction between servants, who are temporary, and slaves, who are in perpetual bondage, Coleman argued that "Babilon's Merchants" from Revelation 18 "merchandiz'd in Slaves" (Coleman, 1733, p. 7). The compulsion of conscience was a violation of the liberty God gave to all people so that they could choose freely to follow God's will. For Coleman, the sin of the "Merchants of Babilon" was seen in this act of compulsion, trading human beings in a way that prevented the universal 'Light' from being followed in them.

Where the early Quakers viewed the ecclesial hierarchy of England with its system of priests and tithes as compelling people to particular forms of worship, and, so, alienating people from following the 'Light' in their conscience, Coleman sees the merchandizing of people as performing a similar alienating function. John Woolman will make this line of argumentation even more

explicit in the 1760s and 1770s, directly linking greedy economic practices with eschatological judgment and apostasy (Kershner, 2015b). Coleman's application of Liberty and the typology of Babylon demonstrates how evil antislavery Quakers thought it was to deprive another of their capacity to receive and obey God's grace: it led to eschatological judgment. For this reason, slavery was increasingly seen among antislavery advocates as a dire threat to the faithfulness of the Quaker community.

Another contribution made by Coleman was to contrast the comfortable situation of colonial Friends with the suffering of early Friends. Where early Friends underwent persecutions in order to preserve their "Testimony," Coleman criticized the spiritual laxity of his peers who had become the "oppressors" themselves. A primary example of this was the early Quaker refusal to use "outward and carnal Weapons" (Coleman, 1733, pp. 2–3). Coleman notes that it was the "innocent Lives and Conversations" that convinced important leaders, like the theologian Robert Barclay (1648–1690), to join the Quakers. Coleman then implied that Barclay would not have been converted to Quakerism had Quakers in that day allowed slave keeping, "which Practice is upheld by the carnal Sword" (Coleman, 1733, pp. 2–3). Thus, a people providentially "called out of the Worship, Ways and Customs of the World" became a people who exacted on others persecutions worse than those from which they had already been delivered (Coleman, 1733, p. 2). For Coleman, the Quaker movement from being oppressed in innocence to oppressing the innocent was a betrayal of the theological convictions of early Quakers and of the values that bound the community together.

Appealing to the history of Israel like Fox did, Coleman argues that the example of the Hebrews in Egypt should guide Quaker self-understanding. However, where Fox limited the typology of the Hebrew people to religious instruction, Coleman advanced the typology to argue for abolition of slavery. Since, Quakers are "redeemed out of the spiritual *Egypt*" and are "spiritual *Jews*" and so not only does the law of the Hebrew covenant still apply to the Quakers, "you must exceed the outward *Jews*" and "have the lost Image of God restored and renewed in us" (Coleman, 1733, p. 5). In fact, compassion on "Infidels and Strangers," such as African Americans, upheld the command of Exodus 22:21: "*Ye shall neither vex a Stranger, nor oppress him, for ye were Strangers in the Land of Egypt*" (Coleman, 1733, p. 7). Moreover, Coleman amplified the Quaker antislavery argument of "Man-stealing" by arguing that it was linked in Exodus 12:12–16 with "Man-slaying" and the two crimes were to receive the same punishment (Coleman, 1733, p. 12). Coleman claimed that Quakers had failed in living up to these covenantal commands, and so

are failing in their responsibility to God and others. Having secured "Liberty" for themselves in the colonies, Quakers neglected the providential purpose of their existence and were blinded by greed (Coleman, 1733, p. 16). In the end, slavery was murder and implicated all participants in murder regardless of how far removed a colonial slave owner may be from the actual capture of an African in Africa (Coleman, 1733, p. 12).

In upholding the suffering example of early Quakers, and by describing the covenant of God's history with the Hebrews as a typology for God's dealing with Quakers, Coleman made way for the more virulent figure of Benjamin Lay, who eschewed Quaker hypocrisy without equivocation. Taken together, a theological self-understanding of Quakers as a dissenting people bound by divine laws of the 'Golden Rule' and universal 'Gospel Liberty,' whose corporate testimony validated God's providential dealings with Quakers enfolded the community within a contingent relationship to God and a corporate testimony to the world. In the first half of the eighteenth century, these themes emerged as the religious center of Quaker antislavery protest.

3.8 *Benjamin Lay's All Slave-Keepers That Keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates Pretending to Lay Claim to the Pure & Holy Christian Religion*

Abolitionist Benjamin Lay (1681–1759) shared several theological similarities to Sandiford. Both argued out of an apocalyptic framework that was heavily influenced by their disdain for Quaker sin and both anticipated divine judgment. Both wanted to end slavery immediately and both argued that slave owners should be kicked out of Quaker meetings (Davis, 1988, pp. 325–326; Rediker, 2017, pp. 3, 19–20). Like Sandiford, Lay was disowned for his protests against slavery, though he had been disowned by other Meetings for other reasons before the final 1738 disownment by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, making him the last Quaker to be disowned for protests against slavery (Rediker, 2017, pp. 8, 57).

Lay's antislavery arguments in his tract, *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates* are aggressive and shocking. Rediker describes Lay as a "holy terror to those who did not agree with him" (Rediker, 2017, p. 9). Like the other antislavery advocates, Lay believed that humans could be perfected in God's will if they cleansed themselves from sin. He thought the main point of Quaker existence was to model pure living, which included an absolute reliance on the immediate revelations of God made manifest in the conscience, what Quakers of the era so often described as 'Liberty' or 'Gospel Liberty.' Lay appealed to the Bible, and especially the prophetic figures of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the book of

Revelation. Lay believed he was in the mold of the Hebrew prophets, appointed by God to critique the forces of imperial greed and sin (Rediker, 2017, p. 86).

Lay interpreted the book of Revelation into his own day and even into his Quaker community. He likened false Quaker ministers and colonial leaders to the evil “red dragon” from Revelation 12. He believed these false ministers were Satan’s progeny, sent to devour the true church. Lay framed contemporary situations in these apocalyptic terms and declared them to his peers, which “affirmed his own importance as a prophet trying to save his people” (Rediker, 2017, p. 91). For Lay, slave-holding Quaker leaders bore the “Mark of the Beast ... *Mystery Babylon Mother of Harlots*” (Lay, 1738, p. 136). The spiritual declension of the Quaker community was not simply the result of a few inexplicable sins, there was a corrupt cosmic collusion between the existing Quaker leadership and the eschatological forces of evil. Lay understood his task not only as preaching against slavery, but engaging in spiritual warfare against an enemy he could literally name and point at in meeting houses and in the streets of Philadelphia. Moreover, slavery was not only a spiritual sin, it was a crime. Slave traders were murderers and Quakers who owned slaves were guilty of a “double Crime” against the enslaved and against the Quaker community (Lay, 1738, p. 136; Rediker, 2017, p. 84).

Lay believed that Quakers were not living up to their ideals, which included an eschatological vision of the community’s role in salvation history. For Lay, Quaker Pennsylvania should uphold the inward liberty of the soul, advancing a unified positive vision of what a true Christian community should be like (Lay, 1738, pp. 192–193). Pennsylvania and the Quaker community would form a “New-Jerusalem” on earth (Lay, 1738, p. 72). But this positive vision was not what Lay witnessed around him.

Instead of creating the eschatological heavenly city in this world through complete reliance on God, Quakers and other colonists lived in Babylon and worshipped Mammon (Lay, 1738, pp. 225, 229–230). Instead of upholding the covenant, slave-owning Philadelphia Quakers had perverted Quaker testimonies into a “*covenant with Death*” and God’s judgement would “trod” them down (Lay, 1738, pp. 52–53). Invoking the language of the Hebrew prophets, Lay called to the Quaker community to see the danger they were in because of the poor example of their leaders: “Oh Israel! Thy Leaders cause thee to err, by their Lyes and their Lightness!” (Lay, 1738, p. 136).

Lay believed that participation in slavery, to any degree, was corruption. So he took action to divest himself through ethical consumer decisions. In order to reject Mammon’s demonic influence, Lay became the first person to advocate a boycott of the produce of slavery in order to alter the means of

production (Holcomb, 2016, p. 4). If Quakers were to live faithfully, they must commit themselves to loving God above all and to "do to all as we would be done by" (Lay, 1738, p. 10). Obeying God's laws would keep the community pure and eliminate the stain of "hypocrisy" that endangered its existence (Lay, 1738, p. 10). Far from being the Quaker antislavery "high-water mark of eccentricity and futility," as James concluded, Lay intensified the existing body of religious antislavery ideas and deserves some credit for the antislavery groundswell of the 1740s and following decades (James, 1963, p. 126; Soderlund, 1985, p. 15).

3.9 *John Bell's An Epistle to Friends in Maryland, Virginia, Barbadoes, and the other Colonies, and Islands in the West-Indies, where any Friends are*

It was not only Pennsylvania and New England antislavery Quakers who recognized the danger posed by slavery to the whole Quaker body. In 1741, just before reforms in American Quakerism sparked the disciplinary zeal of colonial Friends at the end of the decade, London Yearly Meeting Friend, John Bell (1681–1761), sought to appeal to slave holders in the colonies. This appeal from England is different from the vehemence of colonial Quaker antislavery tracts, perhaps because slavery had not caused the existential crisis in London Yearly Meeting that it had in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and perhaps because the institution was not as prevalent in England.

Bell argued that slave owners had a responsibility to educate slaves in the Christian religion and to care for their physical needs. Bell asserted that the "*Workman is worthy of his meat*, in a Natural as well as a spiritual Sense, and where this Rule is strictly observed, it will answer the Witness of God in your servants" (Bell, 1980, p. 135). Bell is here seeking to overcome the dualism in the secular view of liberty, wherein a person could be spiritually free but in physical bondage. By overcoming this dualism in one's regard for other humans, God's spirit in the person would be "answered," a formulation derived from George Fox's statement that Quakers should: answer "that of God in every one" (Fox, 1986, p. 263). Bell's challenge is well short of Sandiford's and Lay's call for immediate emancipation, but he implied that slavery will end as the inward presence of Christ would "enable his people ... to relinquish every Practice which was inconsistent with his peaceable Gospel and holy Government" (Bell, 1980, p. 135). Ultimately, Bell was content to wait for a purely spiritual solution to slavery.

Like the antislavery advocates before him, Bell called on Quakers to adhere to the 'Golden Rule' as the core "Doctrine" of their faith. He argued that the

practice of the 'Golden Rule' would be an outward sign and witness of the "merciful and peaceable Government of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Bell, 1980, p. 136). Bell asked colonial Quakers, who he had read about, to remember the Quaker place in history. Because God had providentially ended a "long Night of Apostasy" in the world through the Quaker movement so Quakers must live a consistent testimony, raise up faithful children, and treat with empathy those "in a Station of Life beneath them" (Bell, 1980, pp. 135–136). God's mercy will not be held out forever and those who do not reform will have no place to hide when the "Vials of [God's] Wrath shall be poured upon the unmerciful" (Bell, 1980, p. 137). The Quaker community must right the ship or else be left nowhere to hide when the due consequences of their socially unmerciful behavior was answered by God. Bell's epistle indicates that the moral effects of slave-holding colonial Quakers worried London Quakers. Moreover, it emphasizes the common witness Quakers on both sides of the Atlantic were to maintain as central to their faith and place in salvation history.

3.10 *Conclusion*

From 1688 to 1741, Quaker antislavery advocates varied in their understanding of how Quakers might clear themselves of the sin of slavery. As the mid-eighteenth century approached, antislavery advocates became more certain that slaves could not be maintained for a "considerable term of years" without endangering the life and well-being of the community and provoking God's wrath. Only a generation before, God had mercifully lifted the Quakers out of spiritual Egypt. They could be returned to spiritual Egypt if they did not fulfill God's purpose for them.

The Bible, and especially a typological interpretation of it, led antislavery advocates to see conflict with slavery and imperial economy as part and parcel with the eschatological battle of good over evil, and the triumph of God's purposes over all. The Quaker tradition of God-given liberty, the rejection of violence, and the universal atonement were important religious themes in the crafting of a public testimony. The 'Golden Rule' served not simply as a guide, but as a law within the Quaker covenant with God. The example of the sufferings of the early Friends in their persecution led these advocates to understand the danger facing them in terms of their growing affluence juxtaposed to a loss of corporate Testimony. The material comfort and political power of their Quaker peers, reformers feared, had seduced many into a greedy disposition that hindered the direct intimacy with God that was to be evident in the colonial venture.

As the middle of the eighteenth century approached, a new generation of leaders and ministers came of age. Many slaveholding Quaker leaders were

replaced and new antislavery Quakers took their place to join the existing antislavery Quaker leadership, forming a new majority. Two documents published in 1754, by John Woolman and Anthony Benezet, are symbolic of this change. The next chapter introduces the key elements of Woolman's and Benezet's antislavery theologies.

4 **To be Redeemed from Babylon: the Antislavery Theology of John Woolman and Anthony Benezet**

If then the business of mankind in this life is to first seek another, if this cannot be done but by attending to the means, if a summary of the means is not to do that to another which (in like circumstances) we would not have done unto us, then these are points of moment and worthy of our most serious consideration.

JOHN WOOLMAN (1971d, p. 199)

This book argues that the growth and development of religious antislavery arguments was not the result of one single person's influence. Instead, aspects of an abolitionist theology can be traced back to Fox and Edmundson and early Quaker theology. The development of antislavery thought among Quakers was the result of a consistent under current of dissatisfaction with existing Quaker involvement in slavery, punctuated by vocal critics who innovated and expanded the initial ameliorationist Quaker position. It was also the result of the cultivation of a field of arguments that placed the Quaker community in a special position in God's providential history, with special responsibilities to uphold the testimony of universal atonement, the 'Golden Rule,' peaceableness, and the individual's 'Gospel Liberty.' These arguments can be described as a covenantal view of the community before a watchful and intervening God whose actions in world affairs were contingent upon the faithfulness of the community.

The arguments of the Germantown protesters, George Keith, John Hepburn, Ralph Sandiford, Elihu Coleman, and Benjamin Lay did not lead to immediate emancipation. They did, however, point to the growing recognition by the majority of Quakers that slaveholding was inconsistent with their faith and that slavery was both a temporal and eternal threat to the Quaker community. Moreover, the blame placed by these antislavery Friends on the Quaker leaders of their day pointed to the difficulty in effecting a corporate antislavery position and implied that some Quakers would not be easily swayed to accept abolition.

This chapter assesses the antislavery arguments of John Woolman (1720–1772) and Anthony Benezet (1713–1784), the two most well-known Quaker antislavery proponents of the century. Woolman and Benezet merit special attention because of their place in the movement toward Quaker antislavery. The 1754 publication of Woolman's *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* through official Quaker channels and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's *An Epistle of Caution and Advice Concerning the Buying and Keeping of Slaves*, which was a collaboration between Benezet and Woolman, mark the point at which the antislavery agitation “from below” became the official corporate position. Scholars are conflicted as to whether Woolman or Benezet was the lead author of *An Epistle of Caution and Advice*. Most scholars recognize the influence of both in bringing the manuscript forward for official consideration (Nash, 2017, p. 38; Plank, 2012, pp. 256–257 en. 54; Soderlund, 1985, p. 27 fn. 28). Either way, the next twenty-two years was characterized by the solidifying of the religious motivations for antislavery, and evangelizing the slave-owning stragglers and those unenthusiastic to the new reform ethos in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Finally, under the leadership of Woolman and Benezet, the desire to not simply make antislavery official policy, but to go a step further and discipline slave owners, became the work of Quaker meetings.

Lost in much of the eighteenth century Quaker struggle with slavery was the social and political conditions of persons of African descent in the colonies. The quest for Quaker purity and the importance of the Quaker witness in the larger abolitionist cause cannot overlook the Quaker fixation on their own internal dealings and public appearance. This inward focus was a side-effect of their covenantal understanding of themselves as a people with an important place in salvation history. The only way Quakers could envision their capacity for doing good in the world and providing any sort of a path out of sinfulness was by forming a corporate witness to the kingdom of God, and so to dissolve the materialistic foundations of slavery in imperial economics. Reform-minded Quakers focused on the internal dealings of the Society to synchronize their ideals with their public witness to the world.

4.1 *John Woolman and the Apocalypse of the Heart*

John Woolman's antislavery advocacy was part of a larger vision for the British Atlantic world. In his faith in God's direct involvement in human affairs, in his expectation that Christ would rule society directly through the lives of the faithful, and in his understanding of himself as a prophet commissioned to make known the inner workings of the divine will and human destiny, Woolman invigorated early Quaker theology in a colonial context (Kershner, 2013, pp. 23–24). As Plank notes, Woolman believed that the “original colonization of

the Delaware Valley had been a uniquely blessed historical event because the settlers had been faithful servants of God," even if that blessing "had come with conditions attached" (Plank, 2012, pp. 12, 14).

Woolman's key assertion was that the "Government of Christ" was the only true authority in political, social, and religious spheres, a direct affront to British imperialism and the spiritual alienation of "Babylon" and "Mammon," that greedy, covetous spirit that hindered people from responding obediently to the voice of the "True Shepherd" (Kershner, 2018, pp. 75, 95; Woolman, 1971c, p. 35). But Woolman had a more sophisticated view of "Babylon" than the earlier typologies of Lay and his predecessors. Like them, Woolman did understand the slave trade in eschatological terms of final judgment and the cosmic battle between God and the forces of apostasy. However, he saw Babylon reaching deeper into colonial society and into the attitudes that shaped and guided human behavior. Babylon was the imperial trans-Atlantic social and economic marketplace, revealed in its true evil character in the commodification of human beings. More positively, Woolman advocated a form of "realizing eschatology" in which God's will spread through the obedience of the faithful and, in so doing, the kingdom comes to be made known on earth (Kershner, 2013, p. 25).

Woolman was one of the leading ministers in the Reformation of American Quakerism, travelling, on average, two months a year. Woolman visited Yearly Meeting sessions, families, and individual Meetings from New England to North Carolina, before his final journey to England in 1772 (Kershner, 2011, p. 3). Over the course of these travels and in his writings he attacked many of the expressions of imperial economics, from the use of silver dinnerware mined by slaves, to lotteries, to the expansion of British settlements into the Pennsylvania frontier and onto Native American lands. For Woolman, living into his calling as a minister was to step into the role of a prophet. This entailed the adoption of an aesthetic that conveyed in his outward appearance the inward reality of the message he preached. For example, in the 1760s he began to wear undyed clothing, which did not hide stains like dyed clothing did, as a statement of transparency of soul before God and humanity (Kershner, 2015a, p. 110).

Woolman's 1754, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* was composed in 1746, shortly after his first ministry journey to the South. Like previous Quaker antislavery advocates, he saw the 'Golden Rule' as a "doctrine" with "a moral unchangeable nature" that included treating compassionately the "stranger sojourning with thee in your land," a standard that colonists were failing to meet (Woolman, 1971d, p. 203). Woolman wove Quaker and biblical history into ethical concern for slaves. Just as Israel was a stranger amongst

the nations in the Hebrew covenant so to Quaker settlers in America were strangers in a foreign land, but God was with them. The sufferings of previous generations of Quakers and God's providential activity on their behalf "ought to humble us" toward those who are oppressed in their present situation. Otherwise God will "rise up" and visit Quakers with judgment (Woolman, 1971d, p. 207).

One of Woolman's innovations in *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* was his analysis of "natural affection," which he identified as a key hindrance to emancipation. He entertained the notion that some slave owners were actually loving and moral. Parents, Woolman noted, wished to bestow on their children all of the material and financial benefits they could. Woolman agreed that it was natural to do so. However, he then shifted the ground of the argument to show that there was something higher and truer than the "natural affection" one may have for one's children. "Natural affection" was tainted by the unintended generational consequences of involvement in a system so corrupt that it threatened the eternal welfare of their children (Woolman, 1971d, pp. 198–199). For Woolman the Quaker emphasis on family that had developed since the time of Fox meant that households must take an eternal view of their material and spiritual lives and align them with the precepts of God's kingdom, rather than adopting the narrow view of family that was a form of self-preservation and pride. He argued that a higher form of love, originating out of "true heavenly principles which sees beyond earthly treasures" must be sought. All other motivations "will rather be injurious than of any real advantage to [posterity]" (Woolman, 1971d, p. 199).

In this essay, Woolman wrote as one whose view of slavery was gaining acceptance. While Lay and other earlier antislavery advocates wrote to condemn a practice they had no control over and to encourage an undercurrent of dissenters to maintain the struggle, Woolman wrote to a Quaker community that had already been convinced that slavery was sinful, but that needed bolstering to go the next step and become evangelists for antislavery and to discipline the intransigent. Woolman recognized that these bold moves would be a shock to superficial religious unity in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, but urged that God was with them and was calling antislavery Quakers to be prophets in the manner of Jeremiah and Ezekiel: "Be not afraid of them ...," Woolman quoted from Ezekiel, "Speak my words to them, whether they will bear or forbear" (Woolman, 1971d, p. 212). In 1758, due in part to Woolman's leadership, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting appointed a committee to visit slave owners in their homes as a disciplinary measure and to convince them to emancipate their slaves.

Woolman's 1763 publication of *Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Part Second* shows the influence of Woolman's friend, Anthony Benezet. These two leading Quaker abolitionists borrowed material and tactics of argumentation from each other. In *Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Part Second*, Woolman followed Benezet's use of travelers accounts of Africa to provide a more humane description of African life, countering proslavery arguments that Africans were somehow better off enslaved in the colonies than free in their home country (Woolman, 1971b, pp. 228–232). Likewise, Benezet reproduced whole paragraphs of Woolman's antislavery writing in his own (Benezet, 1760, p. 2; Kershner, 2018, p. 161). The development of an atmosphere in which the sharing of antislavery resources could flourish was a significant development in the spread and influence of abolitionism among Friends, and, as the next section on Anthony Benezet will show, in the development of a trans-Atlantic antislavery movement.

In *Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Part Second*, Woolman argues that someone who benefits from slavery "by indirect means promotes that evil and shares in the profit of it" and so "cannot be innocent" (Woolman, 1971b, p. 233). This second antislavery essay linked average colonists to the atrocities of the slave trade through the means of British imperial economics, urging for complete abstention from slavery and its produce. Empirical information from eye-witnesses to the slave trade and visitors to Africa enhanced and made specific the implications of the 'Golden Rule.' How would the reader feel if they were in the same condition of the African? How would white colonists feel if they were the ones being captured by African slave traders, rather than the Africans being captured by European slave traders? Throughout his antislavery writings, Woolman proposed to his readers scenarios meant to illustrate the logic of the 'Golden Rule.' In so doing, he exposed the corruption of slavery and the greed that would accept the flimsiest justifications for a self-serving and evil practice (Woolman, 1971b, pp. 232–233).

Woolman questioned how an oppressive "custom" like slavery came to be accepted. Quakers had traditionally been wary of "custom," defined as any practice that arose without the careful weighing of the spirit. Woolman's antislavery predecessors had challenged slavery as a "custom" that had become accepted of humans but was not accepted by God. Like his predecessors, Woolman argued that Quaker leaders have a particular responsibility to stay clear of sin lest the whole body follow them into corruption. Instead of simply looking to the example of their slave keeping leaders, Woolman called on colonists to look to a higher standard and measure their behavior by something more perfect than the "example of men." God's revealed will (Woolman, 1971b, p. 220).

Beyond Woolman's 1754 and 1763 antislavery essays, Woolman wrote essays, epistles and a journal. His journal was published posthumously. His other essays were not as specifically targeted at slavery as his 1754 and 1763 essays were, but they confronted slavery within the broader context of human greed, British imperialism, and the in-breaking Government of Christ. For example, while travelling in England in 1772 Woolman wrote a short antislavery essay, "On the Slave Trade," which was probably inspired by his observation of slave trading vessels on his trans-Atlantic journey. In this essay, he described the slave economy as an eschatological "Revolt, and an overflowing Stream of Unrighteousness" (Woolman, 1922c, p. 497). The solution to slavery would begin with a spiritual awakening to the "humbling Dispensations of Divine Providence" and a repentant mourning for the apostasy of slavery (Woolman, 1922c, pp. 498–499). Woolman argued that British society was in a similar spiritual state as Israel and Judah, "when the Land was defiled with Blood, and the City full of Perverseness" (Woolman, 1922c, pp. 498–499). Only a total rejection of slavery and cleaving to God's inward voice could save them.

While Woolman was concerned with sin and the corporate purity of Quakers, he also posited a vision in which the sinfulness of slavery and greed would no longer be possible because of the influence of Christ in the heart. That reorientation of economic and social concerns around the reign of Christ would reveal a new manner of living. Fewer people would live in cities, where chasing material wealth seemed to be dominant, and more would lead a "Country life," where they would work moderately and trust in God's providence for their day to day survival (Kershner, 2018, pp. 57–58; Woolman, 1922b, p. 441). Absent the spiritual alienation of greed, Quakers could begin to restore society to the ideals they had advocated at Pennsylvania's founding, that the "unction from the Holy One may be our leader in every Undertaking" so that Quakers "do nothing which they know would operate against the cause of Universal Righteousness; and to keep continually in view the spreading of the peaceable Kingdom of Christ amongst mankind" (Woolman, 1922b, pp. 449–450).

Woolman's economic critique includes an extended discussion of "Babel" and "Babylon," two biblical cities associated with greed and human attempts to defy God. In the pursuit of wealth, Britons had created a system of trade that robbed the poor of necessities so as to deliver luxuries to the wealthy, alienating both from the type of intimacy with God that Woolman believed was to be known by all (Kershner, 2013, p. 31). Divine revelation could govern society directly if humanity rejected apostasy and adhered completely to the voice of Christ. Quoting Revelation 18, Woolman called prophetically to his fellow colonists as his antislavery predecessors had done before him, "Come out of Babylon, that ye be not partakers of her Sins" (Woolman, 1922b, p. 444).

In their interpretation of Revelation 18, Hepburn and Coleman focused on the role of Babylonian merchants as traders in the souls of human beings. Similarly, Woolman expanded the link between the merchants of Babylon and the merchant slave traders of his day, but he explicitly described Babylon as an urban city, an economic engine that supported the work of the merchants. Babylon was a type of Babel because in its economic greed it defied God. "This Babel or Babylon, was built in the spirit of self-exaltation ... This Citty [*sic*] is presented as a place of business, those employed in it, as merchants of the Earth" (Woolman, 1922b, pp. 444–445). Woolman's critique of British imperialism — its dependence on port cities, trans-Atlantic shipping, and the human beings who were trapped in its tentacles — was both economically and spiritually more radical than previous antislavery advocates. In Woolman's analysis, Babylon in the eighteenth century was pervasive, extending from frontier settlements in the colonies to the capitals of Europe, to the Ivory Coast of Africa. And all of it was a "revolt" against God's Government, a "foundation laid in violence" that could not stand if God was just (Woolman, 2010a, pp. 100–101).

By contrast, Woolman advocated a corporate Quaker identity as a holy "Citty" [*sic*], an eschatological community on earth, preserved as a pure witness for the world (Woolman, 1922b, pp. 450–451). The inward revelation of God's kingdom in the faithful, which can be described as an apocalypse of the heart, could be hindered by human sin for a time. However, the realization of Christ's "spiritual Kingdom" would ultimately "subdue and break in pieces all Kingdoms that oppose it, and shall stand for ever" (Woolman, 1971c, pp. 48–49). In other words, Woolman viewed the faithfulness of the Quaker community as playing a crucial role in the *telos* of God's purposes in history and contributing to the realizing of God's kingdom on earth (Kershner, 2018, pp. 124–126).

4.2 *Anthony Benezet and the Broadening of Quaker Antislavery Discourse*

While Woolman and Benezet shared an intense antislavery commitment and a desire to reform American Quakerism, they are very different in their spirituality and prioritized different sources to fashion their antislavery arguments. Benezet was not an apocalypticist like Woolman was, neither was his social program driven by a realizing eschatology in which the kingdom of Heaven was fully available on earth. Instead, Benezet was more humanitarian than religious radical. He incorporated traditional religious rationales for antislavery along with Enlightenment philosophy and travelers' narratives to provide his readers with a broad antislavery critique. In doing so, he created a trans-Atlantic antislavery movement that extended beyond the internal religious

debates within Quakerism. After the 1754 *Epistle of Caution and Advice*, Benezet wrote eight antislavery tracts, some as short as three pages and some well over 100 pages (Brendlinger, 2007, p. 15; Plank, 2012, pp. 256–257 en. 54).

Born into a French Huguenot family, Benezet's parents learned of Quakers in London before moving across the Atlantic to Philadelphia in 1731. There, Benezet attempted a career as a mercantilist, but gave it up on religious grounds (Jackson, 2009, pp. 6–7, 20). He was concerned about the treatment of all living things, and so he became a vegetarian to avoid eating food produced by slaves and, also, out of compassion for animals (Jackson, 2009, pp. 19–20). Benezet was known in Philadelphia as a school teacher who, in 1750, organized and taught the first school for African-American children in Philadelphia (Jackson, 2009, p. 244).

Teaching would take much of his energy for the rest of his life, but he managed to maintain an important trans-Atlantic correspondence and published antislavery ideas. Benezet corresponded with Granville Sharpe (1735–1813), the English jurist who successfully defended the escaped slave, James Somerset of Virginia, from being recaptured on British soil. Benezet also corresponded with the Methodist founder, John Wesley (1703–1791), who read Benezet's *Some Historical Account of Guinea* (1771) — a tract countering Africans from perceptions of inferiority used to justify their enslavement — before entering the antislavery fray and writing his own antislavery tract. Benezet also influenced English abolitionist, Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846), who, like Wesley, had initial concerns against slavery that were solidified when he read *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, and converted him fully to the antislavery cause and a leading role in ending the slave trade in the British Empire (Brendlinger, 2007, p. 28). Benezet's correspondence and wide reading expanded the antislavery debate into new areas. He also actively recruited new adherents, like the Founding Father Benjamin Rush (C. L. Brown, 2006, p. 397).

In the mid-eighteenth-century books on the natural beauty of Africa and descriptions of its people, authored by merchants, missionaries or physicians on slave trading vessels, became available in the colonies (Davis, 1975, pp. 47–48). Benezet selectively incorporated this source material into his antislavery writing, in keeping with his primary purpose as an antislavery propagandist (Jackson, 2009, p. 83). Jonathan Sassi notes that the travelers' accounts Benezet cited were proslavery justifications for the institution, but were used to support his antislavery cause (Sassi, 2006, pp. 95–96). Benezet “reversed the conventional formulation by depicting the corrupting influence of European barbarism on African civilization” (Sassi, 2006, p. 98). Yet, Benezet represented

West Africa and its people in an impossibly idyllic way. He described the people and the land as proto-Quaker, industrious, honest, and peaceful. He did not cite the passages in his sources that showed the full humanity of Africans, such as how the slave trade was supported by some African leaders (Sassi, 2006, pp. 98–99, 104). Benezet's selective incorporation of these travelers' accounts illustrate his role as an antislavery propagandist and his agency in shifting the European discourse on Africans to one that was more sympathetic to their plight.

Benezet's 1766 essay, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and her Colonies*, is an excellent example of Benezet's writing. The essay was drafted a year after the Stamp Act in 1765 and is addressed to "those in power" (Benezet, 1766). In keeping with this purpose, Philadelphia and London Yearly Meetings printed thousands of the thirty-five page pamphlet, delivering a copy to every member of Parliament, as well as to over 100 London merchant houses. Quaker meetings in England and the American colonies received copies of this tract (C. L. Brown, 2006, pp. 401–402; Plank, 2012, p. 180).

Characteristic of Benezet's essays, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain* quotes extensively from philosophers, travelers, and theologians. Many of the exact sources he used in this essay he had also cited in his 1762 pamphlet, *A Short Account of the Slave Trade*, and would later use in his 1771 *Some Historical Account of Guinea* (Benezet, 2007b, pp. 137–204, 2007a, pp. 123–135). However, what is striking about *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain* is Benezet's effort to enter the political discourse of liberty between the American colonies and the Royal government.

A Caution and Warning to Great Britain opens with a reflection on slavery in an age of liberty. However, Quakers like Benezet had a different view of liberty than did most groups. As noted previously, Quakers viewed liberty as an innate, universal, God-given responsibility that was primarily religious in its meaning. For Quakers, liberty was concerned with the individual's capacity to exercise free will in worshiping God and in obeying God in the physical realm to the extent revealed in one's conscience. By contrast, Republican philosophers and American Patriots both viewed liberties and natural rights as belonging to humanity in general, without necessarily belonging specifically to each person. Some people were deemed unfit for liberty and would endanger the public if they were allowed to exercise it freely (Calvert, 2018, pp. 36–39). Benezet does not parse these differing views of liberty, but he calls on British politicians to expand their narrower interpretation of the phrase to include Africans (Benezet, 1766, p. 3).

Both the philosophical and spiritual arguments were wrapped in the language of sentimentalism. The rhetoric of sentimentalism humanized African suffering in ways Europeans could understand, because it contextualized antislavery discourse within the already existing “language of the moral marketplace” (Gould, 2003, p. 25). The rhetoric of sentimentalism and sensibility was a literary movement that then moved to the promotion of human happiness in general. Human beings were increasingly seen as beings of feeling. Feelings, and especially the cultivation of moral feelings, were natural to humanity and separated them from brute creatures. To lose the moral capacity of one’s feelings called into question one’s humanity. The undeserved and unearned cruelty toward Africans was used by antislavery advocates to show the irreconcilability of slavery with cultivated and enlightened moral society (Carey, 2005, pp. 4–5; Davis, 1988, p. 363).

Scholars disagree on the nature of Benezet’s sentimentalism. J. William Frost argues that Benezet did employ sentimentalism effectively in this essay, while Brycchan Carey argues that it is not “strictly” the rhetoric of sensibility because it was not as excessive as European strains. Thus, he suggests, Benezet’s rhetoric could be understood as sentimentalism within the Quaker plain style (Carey, 2005, p. 109; Frost, 1980c).

While not as excessive as some forms, Benezet’s foray into sentimentalism can be understood as part of an antislavery strategy. Sentimentalism heightened fear of divine wrath and enhanced the power of the ‘Golden Rule.’ Benezet described the suffering of Africans as increasing a burden of national guilt, which was laying heavy on Britain:

and the groans, the dying groans, which daily ascend to God, the common Father of mankind, from the broken hearts of those his deeply oppressed creatures; otherwise the powers of the earth would not, I think I may venture to say, could not, have so long authorised a practice so inconsistent with every idea of liberty and justice.

BENEZET, 1766, p. 4

Benezet’s account of “cruelties,” “suffering,” “feeling,” “groans, the dying groans,” and “pity” of the “miserable Negroes” place this argument within the stream of sentimental rhetoric (Benezet, 1766, pp. 4, 7, 21–22, 32, 35). Benezet wonders if “some grievous change” has occurred in the basic humanity of slave traders that would make them “capable of such horrid cruelty, towards their fellow man” (Benezet, 1766, p. 32). He appealed to the head and the heart, to the basic humanity of the power holders who could use their influence to dissolve

slavery. Not only was the rhetoric of sentimentalism fashionable in literary circles, and held currency among upper class Britons, it also coupled very well with the familiar antislavery argument of the 'Golden Rule.' Benezet even quoted Fox's application of the 'Golden Rule' from *Gospel Family-Order* in this essay as an example of Fox's "concern and fellow-feeling" for the enslaved (Benezet, 1766, pp. 28–30; See also: S. W. Angell, 2015, p. 283). Benezet's sentimental language took the reader into the experience of the slave so that they could not only imagine what it would be like to do unto others as one would be done by, but to feel what they felt.

Benezet's plea is powerful, interspersing his own analysis with extended quotes from others. Benezet described the accounts he presented as "detestable and shocking," especially for those "whose hearts are not yet hardened by the practice of that cruelty." Again, Benezet is tapping into the stream of sentimental rhetoric, which elevated the emotions as interpreters of virtue and morality. It was believed that what separated humans from the "brute creatures" was the capacity to have moral feelings and sentiment. To lose the moral capacity of emotion called into question one's humanity. The depravation of human sentiment is, in fact, the only way Benezet can understand the cruelty of slave masters in the West Indies and American colonies: "Must not even the common feelings of human nature have suffered some grievous change in those men, to be capable of such horrid cruelty, towards their fellow men" (Benezet, 1766, p. 32)? There is a warning in here, too. Those who participate in slavery are in danger of losing their humanity and becoming insensible creatures.

Additionally, Benezet used the philosophical arguments of "natural rights," and the consent of the governed, still layered with sentimentalism, to demonstrate the unsupportable foundation on which slavery stood. In so doing, he questioned publicly the nature of imperial authority, describing the conflict between an empire's stated values and the self-serving ways its policies were applied and implemented.

Benezet strung together ideas and quotations from philosophers such as George Wallace and Francis Hutchinson in an attempt to conjoin the emerging Republican philosophies of human rights and liberties with antislavery. The effect was to pull the popular discussion of liberty closer to the Quaker conception of 'Gospel Liberty' in its universal application, if not in its religious foundations (Benezet, 1766, p. 7). From the time of the Stamp Act through the early years of the New Republic, antislavery Quakers repeatedly alerted Americans to the hypocrisy between the public infatuation with liberty and the enslavement of persons of African descent. Benezet contends that the British say they believe in liberty, but their actions speak differently:

Britons boast themselves to be a generous, humane people, who have a true sense of the importance of Liberty; but is this a true character, whilst that barbarous, savage Slave trade, with all its attendant horrors, receives countenance and protection from the Legislature, whereby so many thousand lives are yearly sacrificed.

BENEZET, 1766, pp. 32–33

Benezet wanted, in vain as it would turn out, to make antislavery the litmus test of Enlightenment ideals and natural rights. His pamphlet was delivered to the very legislators he criticized, at a time when colonists were challenging the authority of the empire and asserting their rights of self-determination, and so inserted his antislavery argument into the public forum. However, this was not an abstract discussion of rights for Benezet. Indeed, by coupling the religious argument of divine judgment to the philosophical one of liberty, Benezet imbued the discussion of colonial rights and British authority with a theology of national guilt and the specter of divine vengeance.

The religious argument in *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain* was built on a theology of judicial providentialism, “the belief that God rewarded or punished nations according to their moral character and actions” (Coffey, 2012, p. 849). The transition from the historical providentialism of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Quakers to the judicial providentialism of Benezet and other Quakers in the second half of the eighteenth century marks an important development in Quaker understandings of themselves in salvation history with implications for antislavery advocacy. The earlier Quaker view of Pennsylvania’s special standing and God’s unique preparation of Quakers to lead the world to faithfulness has become, instead, primarily a focus on warning outsiders and secular authorities of the severe cost for ignoring God’s will. Instead of leading the world, the Quaker responsibility to God in history has become that of advising the world. Penn’s hope that Pennsylvania would be the “seed of a nation” has been translated in the late eighteenth century into a Quaker hope to be the conscience of a nation.

In this new understanding the Quaker covenant remains intact, but their mission now is to influence for the better divine activity in history and mitigate through their purity the judgment that may befall Quaker and non-Quaker alike. Benezet asks Parliamentarians, “must we not tremble to think what a load of guilt lies upon our Nation generally and individually, so far as we in any degree abet or countenance this aggravated iniquity” (Benezet, 1766, p. 33)? Through the language of iniquity, guilt, divine vengeance, and tremblings before God, Benezet made central to his argument the idea of national punishments for corporate sins, where God’s providence was contingent on

human behavior (Coffey, 2012, pp. 846, 852). While due importance must be given to Benezet's ability to expand the antislavery debate into secular arenas, he never-the-less returned again and again to religious arguments of sin and divine justice and, especially, the standing of the nation before God. For him, the "iniquity" of slavery was cumulative and accruing to the nation as a whole. Soon God's wrath would break forth (Benezet, 2007b, pp. 9–10). Benezet was among the first to argue that colonial suffering during the French and Indian Wars was due to their participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and God would act again if it continued (Crosby, 2013, p. 4). In their abolitionism, Quakers could be at the vanguard of leading Britain back to the purity of its ideals; and, then, the Quakers would be the blessing they felt they were called to be.

4.3 *Conclusion*

Woolman and Benezet played important roles in leading Quakers to announce and enforce their corporate antislavery position. They reached beyond Quakers to expand abolitionism and recruit new allies and mine new sources of information. Woolman's radical spirituality cast a perfectionist vision in which a persistent listening to the inward voice of Christ would lead the individual into new behaviors and lead society to reflect the values of God's kingdom. This vision had no room for slavery or the economics of British imperialism. More than any other antislavery advocate, Woolman pointed Quakers to the fulfillment of God's purposes on earth, and pleaded with Friends "to renew our covenant and walk reverently and circumspectly before him ... to the enlargement of his spiritual kingdom, and the completion of his gracious purpose" (Woolman, 2010b, p. 267).

Benezet was more willing to look to secular and empirical sources than Woolman was. His correspondence with British antislavery advocates were important developments in what would become the Quaker effort to end slavery beyond its denominational boundaries. Benezet's strident judicial providentialism — not only aimed at Quakers but at Britons in general — challenged politicians and colonists to reflect on the tenuousness of their lives and livelihoods if they were opposed to God's principles. He reminded his readers that God's providential activity can be swayed and so they had a corporate responsibility to obey God's laws.

Woolman and Benezet were peers and worked together on the important issues confronting Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Yet, they were markedly different in the tone of their antislavery discourse and in the religious underpinnings of antislavery advocacy they emphasized. Their emergence as key leaders in the middle of the eighteenth century demonstrates that Quaker antislavery

had become intellectually diverse and compelling enough to appeal to the majority of Quakers, convincing many to become evangelists for abolitionism. This groundswell of abolitionist leaders in the second half of the eighteenth century is the topic of the next chapter.

5 The Quaker Antislavery Groundswell

The Revolutionary struggle with England suggested to many Americans that there was more than a mere inconsistency between the ideals they were propagating and the institution of slavery they succoured: there was a national sin to be purged

HUGH MACLEOD (1974, p. 5)

After the 1754 publications of Woolman's antislavery tract and the *Epistle of Caution and Advice* by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, followed by their 1758 decision to enforce these statements through a disciplinary visiting committee, a surge of antislavery activity rushed to the surface in American Quakerism. The new antislavery energy was not a simple case of cause and effect, but rather the result of an extended theological debate within Quakerism and the emergence of a new group of Quaker leaders committed to "renewing the covenant" with God through a corporate witness (Woolman, 2010b, p. 267). Unlike the earlier Quaker vision for Pennsylvania, this time the corporate witness would not be linked to a geographic location that would be the locus of the kingdom of God, but to a transnational identity of Quakers as a spiritual "Holy Nation" (Crabtree, 2015, p. 2).

Through the middle of the eighteenth century Philadelphia Yearly Meeting could claim the majority of antislavery writers. However, there was deep and growing antislavery sentiment throughout the Quaker world. In 1758, London Yearly Meeting issued its own warning against slavery. Other Yearly Meetings followed suit. By the end of the eighteenth century, every Quaker Yearly Meeting was antislavery and most had substantially ended slavery in their membership. The fact that historical records leave an imperfect account of the actual theology of Quakers of the era complicates efforts to know the full extent of antislavery sentiment and the diversity of motivations and opinions on slavery. The beginnings of yearly meeting-sanctioned antislavery activity and the development of a politically responsive abolitionism among Quakers, as examined in this chapter, demonstrates how reform-minded Quakers cultivated and publicized a self-identity as God's people even after they had lost control of Pennsylvania.

As tensions over taxation and representation between Britain and her North American colonies grew after the Seven Years' War a secular and political language of liberty, derived from the Enlightenment, became an important theoretical justification for colonial independence. To antislavery advocates, the public discourse on liberty appeared to be an opening for antislavery thought to spread beyond Quakers. It was not to be. Antislavery thought never became a significant plank in the colonial quest for independence. However, American independence and the American rhetoric of liberty and freedom did provide ammunition for antislavery Quakers. They spent considerable energy explaining the inconsistency between political discussions of liberty and the presence of enslaved humans. Once the Quaker house was in order, they could with clear conscience petition their fellow colonists, the halls of Parliament, Congress, and even the President.

The groundswell of Quaker antislavery support was not always as willing to support the lives of African Americans as they were to support abolitionism. For some Quakers, the internal struggle for abolition was all that was required of them. For others, emancipation was not enough. For these, reparations and full social and political equality became their life mission.

5.1 *The Quaker Reformation*

In the middle of the eighteenth century, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting underwent considerable changes in practice and theological emphasis. A group of reform-minded ministers, though not numerically in the majority, rose to positions of leadership in the Yearly Meeting. What they lacked in numbers they made up for in energy. They wrote, took control of disciplinary committees, and travelled extensively to spread their message (Plank, 2009a, p. 48). Quakers throughout colonial America were aware of the goings on in Pennsylvania, and like-minded Friends were heartened. As far away as Virginia, Nash explains, "word had been spreading since the 1750s about how a small number of redoubtable Quakers had unseated the conservative leaders of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, in one of the most remarkable examples of bottom-up reform in Early American history" (Nash, 2017, p. 38).

These reformers and ministers were men and women who worked tirelessly to point Quakers back to the purity of testimony of the early Friends and remind them of what they understood to be Pennsylvania's founding ideals (Marietta, 1984, p. 93; Plank, 2015, p. 38). Plank notes that women reformers, like John Woolman's wife Sarah Ellis Woolman (1721–1787), held a prestigious status in the community because of the Quaker emphasis on family and religious instruction within the household. By that same token, they were limited, to an extent, by family responsibilities. However, Plank notes that Quaker

women of the reformation wielded what influence they had in their meetings and in their families. "Their work for reform increased the perceived power and authority of women generally. This contributed directly to the rise of a bolder form of female Quaker activism in the nineteenth century" (Plank, 2015, p. 38).

Reformers attempted to eliminate apathy and corruption from Quaker membership by tightening discipline on practices that smacked of worldliness, including gambling, extravagant material luxury, and marrying outside of meeting (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, pp. 49–50). American reformers were bolstered by reform-minded ministers from England, such as Mary Peisley, Catherine Peyton, and Samuel Fothergill, who visited and travelled among American Friends in the 1750s. Moreover, reformers convincingly interpreted the French and Indian Wars that began in 1754, and culminated in the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), as God's wrath on Pennsylvania for not living up to their founding Quaker ideals (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 49).

This broad reform movement was crucial to the spread of antislavery thought among Quakers and to the "ideological hegemony" abolitionism achieved among leadership and membership in the 1750s. As Nash and Soderlund describe it, antislavery Quakers, especially Woolman and Benezet, "were able to hitch their campaign to ban slave ownership among Friends to the more general reform movement" (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 51). During the 1750s, fewer than 10% of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting leaders owned slaves, before 1730 the percentage was at 60% (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 51). New, younger leaders joined with existing reform-minded and antislavery Quakers in leadership roles during the 1750s to strengthen the critical mass of antislavery sentiment (Soderlund, 1985, p. 43).

The results of the Quaker Reformation are striking. After 1754 the new leadership in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting continued to clarify and enforce the antislavery position. The 1758 decision to discipline offenders by sending a visiting committee to labor with slave owners started the process of making antislavery a fact among Friends. After that point, those who continued to purchase or sell slaves were prohibited from contributing money to their meetings and attending monthly meeting, where the business of the meeting was conducted. Frost notes that there were 111 disciplinary actions for engaging in the purchasing and selling of slaves between 1757 and 1776 (Frost, 1980b, p. 23). In all, there were 31 partial disownments and eight complete disownments, four of which occurred in 1775–1776 as Philadelphia Yearly Meeting accomplished its final push to end slavery among its membership.

The antislavery Quakers who visited slave owners after the 1758 decision to discipline offenders were volunteers. However, in the 1760s, monthly meetings and quarterly meetings were responsible for appointing discipline committees to convince delinquents to emancipate their slaves. Few did. Then, in 1776, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting ruled that any Quaker holding slaves should be disowned. In the months prior and after the 1776 decision, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Quakers began freeing large numbers of slaves. Disownments for slave holding dealt with the intransigent stragglers, which was the case in other yearly meetings as well (Frost, 1980b, p. 23).

The antislavery groundswell went beyond Pennsylvania. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's 1754 *An Epistle of Caution and Advice* was sent to every yearly meeting and in following years others also denounced the slave trade. New England Yearly Meeting decided in 1773 that all members who continued to hold slaves would be disowned and North Carolina ruled identically in 1776. American Quakers freed most all of their slaves between 1775 and 1780 (Frost, 1980b, p. 24).

5.2 *Religious Themes in An Epistle of Caution and Advice (1754)*

Not only does *An Epistle of Caution and Advice* indicate the growing popularity of antislavery positions among Quakers, it made a significant theological contribution to the antislavery discussion. According to Carey, one important innovation in *An Epistle of Caution and Advice* was the inclusion of the language of sentiment and sensibility, which were popular in the colonies at that time (Carey, 2012, p. 195). Later antislavery writings followed this sentimental form of discourse.

An Epistle of Caution and Advice made an emotional link between the cause of the enslaved and accepted moral standards, such as prohibitions on man-stealing, the breakup of families, and violence (James, 1963, p. 134). How would Quakers feel, Benezet and Woolman argue, if their children were stolen away, the household broken up and shipped to another country? "What dreadful Scenes of Murther and Cruelty those barbarous Ravages must occasion in these unhappy People's Country ... Let us make their Case our own, and consider what we should think, and how we should feel, were we in their Circumstances" (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1980, p. 168). Moreover, the *Epistle* identified the practice and methods of slavery with the growth of an emotional insensitivity and hardened heart in the slave owner (James, 1963, p. 134). As Carey contends, these arguments, including those that focus on sentimentalism, are generally more concerned with the "hearts, minds, and souls of Europeans than of Africans" (Carey, 2012, p. 195).

An Epistle of Caution and Advice is also striking for the primacy it gives to the 'Golden Rule,' calling it a "royal Law" (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1980, p. 168). Quaker reformers in the early 1750s believed their Society was in a state of rebellion before God, having transgressed God's laws for their corporate existence. Woolman and Benezet also invoked "that valuable Blessing Liberty," by which they meant the Quaker tradition of liberty as the spiritual freedom of conscience and capacity to obey God practically in one's life. They criticized those who "grow rich by [African] Bondage. To live in Ease and Plenty, by the Toil of those whom Violence and Cruelty have put in our Power, is neither consistent with Christianity, nor common Justice" (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1980, p. 168). This statement reiterates what had become the core of Quaker antislavery arguments: Quakers must be guided by the 'Golden Rule' and must honor the God given liberty that belongs to all people universally; to benefit materially from the enslavement of others and the profits of war were inconsistent with Christianity.

The reformers believed that fellow Quakers were not fully upholding the Quaker message, nor were they obeying God's commands. Their calling and reason for existence was to "publish the Gospel of universal Love and Peace among mankind," by which they meant that their corporate commission from God was to make the revelation of God's Truth known to the world in word and deed (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1980, p. 168). Instead, Quakers were beneficiaries of violence and the robbing of liberty and, most certainly, were not treating Africans as they would like to be treated.

5.3 *The Broadening of Antislavery Action*

The 1758 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting minute that created a disciplinary committee to visit slave owners and inform them of their violation of the prohibitions on slave trading and purchasing for term of life cited the French and Indian wars as divine retribution for involvement in slavery (Soderlund, 1985, p. 30). The 1758 decision did not ban slavery, but it did allow abolitionist leaders in local meeting the authority to discipline slave traders and foreshadowed steps for the complete eradication of slave holding among Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Quakers in the 1770s. The five men who were appointed to the 1758 visiting committee were John Woolman, John Sykes (1682–1771), John Scarborough (1704–1769), John Churchman (1705–1775), and Daniel Stanton (1708–1770) (Soderlund, 1985, p. 31). The committee disbanded after the work was undertaken by local Quaker bodies.

Once monthly meetings and quarterly meetings took leadership for antislavery discipline the number of active antislavery Quakers increased. Quaker antislavery writers in the early eighteenth century mentioned that other Friends shared their views, but who those anonymous antislavery Quakers were cannot be known because they did not leave a historical record. Even after 1750, in the era of the Quaker antislavery groundswell, the record is incomplete. Most antislavery Quakers did not publish an antislavery tract, and the relatively few Quakers who published memoirs or journals did not always mention their criticisms of slavery in their journals.

John Churchman and Daniel Stanton were considered weighty enough antislavery proponents to be appointed to the 1758 disciplinary committee to visit slave holders, but they rarely discussed slavery in their journals. Stanton called slavery a "great iniquity" in a passing comment (Stanton, 1848, p. 167). Churchman only mentioned slavery in reference to the judgment it would bring upon Philadelphia because of the "poor enslaved Negroes" (Churchman, 1779, p. 236). Fothergill hardly mentioned slavery at all, and when he did, it was as a symptom of a general spiritual depravity: "Maryland is poor; the gain of oppression, the price of blood is upon that province — I mean their purchasing, and keeping in slavery, negroes — the ruin of true religion the world over, wherever it prevails" (Fothergill, 1845, p. 189). Stanton, Churchman and Fothergill, like most of the antislavery Quakers of the groundswell, spent more time in their committee-related and interpersonal labors against slavery than condemning the practice in memoirs or in antislavery tracts (Kershner, 2018, pp. 159–160). As a result, only a partial understanding of their antislavery sentiment and motivations are available. In fact, in making abolition a central concern of his journal and public ministry, Woolman is the exception in eighteenth-century Quakerism, but he was not the only one with that concern (Kershner, 2018, pp. 160–161).

As Quakers considered the full implications of refusing the "gain of oppression" they attempted to foster a moral economy through their consumer choices. This impulse was present in Lay, before the Quaker reformation, but it became more prevalent as Woolman and other reformers extended what was required for consistency with Quaker witness into new arenas. The trade in slaves and the products of their labor was a visible sign of moral corruption, and, so, Holcomb argues that some consumers developed an increased awareness of how consumer goods were produced. Quakers as a whole did not believe that abstention could be practical, but many did believe that God would intervene in the trans-Atlantic economy to assist them in their efforts (Holcomb, 2016, pp. 100–101). Like Woolman, Quaker reformers, William Boen

(~1734–1824) and Joshua Evans (1731–1798) adjusted their attire, wearing undyed clothing to reflect in their personal appearance their theological convictions, including, in Evans' case, growing a beard (Boen, 1834, p. 12; Evans, 1837, pp. 23–25; Holcomb, 2015, p. 99; Ross, 2014, p. 19).

Boen, an African American convert to Quakerism, is an exemplar of the spirituality and ethical conviction of the Quaker reformation in the middle of the eighteenth century. Even though Boen's published memoirs appear in the nineteenth century, his personal impact and spiritual affinities place him among the reformers of this period. The delay in accepting him into membership (he had to wait 50 years after his initial application to membership) and in publishing his memoirs (which did not appear until 1834) illustrate the difficulties experienced by devout African Americans within Quakerism, and the distance between Quaker antislavery concern and convictions for racial justice.

5.4 *William Boen's (~1734–1824) Anecdotes and Memoirs of William Boen, A Coloured Man*

In 1763, Boen (or Bowen) entered into an agreement to secure his freedom and married a woman named Dido in a Quaker ceremony (H. J. Cadbury, 1936, pp. 194–195). The marriage certificate includes the signatures of both Quakers of European descent, such as John and Sarah Woolman, and African Americans, which Plank argues signifies the full participation of African Americans in the event (Gummere, 1922, pp. 608–609; Plank, 2012, pp. 171–172). About that time, William Boen applied for membership in the Society but was refused. In its rejection, the meeting urged Boen to “continue faithful,” which he did despite the discouragement of being refused membership. The minutes of the decision do not give a reason for the judgment, and Emma Lapsansky-Werner warns scholars about attributing racist motivations without evidence for it (2011, p. xiv), but the account of well-known ministers familiar with the case suggest that race was a factor (H. J. Cadbury, 1936, p. 196). Additionally, anecdotes of Woolman's comments on the matter suggest that he viewed the decision as a grave injustice that would merit divine judgment and that not only should Boen be a member, but he should be immediately approved as an Elder (H. J. Cadbury, 1936, pp. 196–197). Boen had to wait until 1814, another fifty years, before he was finally accepted into membership.

According to the accounts of Woolman and other ministers, and the statement issued by Mount Holly Quakers in memorial of Boen's death, Boen was a Quaker exemplar. He maintained a testimony against “hireling ministers,” war, and used Quaker plain speech. Boen dressed in undyed clothing, like the leading ministers of the reformation Woolman and Joshua Evans had. When

asked by a peer if he was endeavoring to walk in the footsteps of Woolman, Boen responded, "I am endeavouring to follow the footsteps of Christ" (Boen, 1834, p. 12). As a protest against slave labor, Boen boycotted those products he knew to have profited from the practice of slavery (Boen, 1834, pp. 9–11; H. J. Cadbury, 1936, pp. 195–196). In this way, Boen's actions show a commitment to the Golden Rule. In his economic and social dealings, he opposed practices that oppressed others spiritually and physically.

He also embodied the apophatic spirituality that became dominant among Quaker reform-minded ministers of the second half of the eighteenth century. Boen borrowed Robert Barclay's *Apology* from John Woolman's personal library, a book that influenced eighteenth-century Quakerism by emphasizing the dualism of spiritual and physical worlds and led to the view that the goal of life on earth was to become an empty vessel for God (Dandelion, 2005, pp. 48–49; F. B. Tolles, 1942, pp. 77, 81). When asked about fellow Quakers who were not opposed to slavery, he said that it did not bother him so long as each person was following God's leading. "Obedience is all, with me," Boen responded. "I believe it is required of me, not to use these things [produce of slave labor]; and if it has never been required of them, not to use these things, then they are as much in the way of their duty, in using them, as I am in the way of my duty, in not using them" (Boen, 1834, p. 13). In extremes, this apophatic spirituality could manifest itself in a form of spiritual determinism, where spiritual leadings were to be received objectively and given ultimate authority regardless of the social and physical consequences they may have abetted. Placing ultimate significance on the individual's ability to know and enact God's will by passively surrendering to it was typical of the spreading quietism of Quakers in that era, and one implication of the Quaker tradition of liberty of conscience.

The extent to which Boen held these views is difficult to ascertain. The author and compiler of Boen's *Memoir* had an agenda in fashioning Boen's story. The author suggests that it was Boen's good behavior as a slave, and Christian conversion, that made "a great change in" Boen, which convinced Boen's owner to set him free (Boen, 1834, pp. 6–7). The author seems to have chosen those recollections of Boen that fit in well with the quietistic sensibilities of early nineteenth-century Friends. That Boen never spoke ill of white Quakers embroiled in slavery seems like a detail more important to his white peers than a necessary corollary of his spirituality and antislavery protests. On one hand, it is impossible to say that Boen's views on Quaker faith and his spiritualization of his own antislavery leading were exactly as represented in the memoirs that bear his name. On the other hand, one wonders what freedom he had to critique Quakers who had refused his membership for fifty years. By focusing

his protests against slavery on the realm of personal conviction, such as his boycott of the produce of slavery, Boen showed that the Quaker tradition of liberty both enabled his voice and the legitimacy of his protests, while also limiting its scope and application beyond personal morality. His boycott of slave-labor produced goods and his confidence that abolitionism would “grow and increase among Friends” suggests that abolitionism was essential to his view of God’s activity in the world, guiding humanity providentially into a new and more just society (Boen, 1834, p. 17).

5.5 *Moses Brown (1738–1836) and the Spreading Reformation*

After Philadelphia Yearly Meeting’s 1754 endorsement of an antislavery position, the abolitionists were successful in making antislavery reform part of the general Quaker reformation in other yearly meetings, as well (Frost, 1980a, p. 171). The distribution of antislavery sentiment throughout Quakerdom in the second half of the eighteenth century demonstrates how influential the arguments of early abolitionists had been and how quickly ideas could spread in the British Atlantic Quaker world. In New England Yearly Meeting, reformers began arranging manumissions of Quaker-owned slaves as an official function of the Yearly Meeting in 1769. The next year they adopted a statement against any slave transfers except manumissions, and met with slave owners in an official capacity to warn them of their delinquency. The reformers were successful in these visits, but faced a few who “were mostly of the elder sort, [that] manifested a disposition to keep [African Americans] still in a continued state of bondage” (Drake, 1965, pp. 78–79). In 1773, the Yearly Meeting prohibited slave ownership in its membership, and, in 1774, formed a political lobby to work for laws that eased restrictions on manumissions. After nine years of persuasion and disciplinary actions against slave holders who did not willingly emancipate their slaves, New England Yearly Meeting declared in 1782 that they were free of slave holders (Drake, 1965, p. 79; Frost, 1980a, p. 172).

An important conversion to abolitionism among New England Quakers was that of Moses Brown (1738–1836), the former slave trader and leading Rhode Island wealthy merchant. In 1773, Brown received a vision in which God told him to release his slaves. As described in chapter three, eighteenth-century dreams were often segues into new understandings of one’s self in relation to an “alien other,” often increasing one’s acceptance of the “alien other” in ways that made dramatic changes in behavior (Sobel, 2000, p. 14). Pile, Woolman, Churchman, Brown, and, later, Warner Mifflin are all examples of the role of dreams in antislavery breakthroughs (Churchman, 1779, p. 243; Drake, 1965, pp. 79–80; Nash, 2017, pp. 42–43; Woolman, 1971c, p. 186).

Brown's sorrow and guilt for having been involved in slavery motivated him to persuade others to abstain (M. Brown, 1980, p. 258). In 1784, a bill promoted by Brown and his Quaker allies to ban the slave trade in Rhode Island was rejected by the state legislature. Opponents noted that many Quakers used the products of slave labor, such as tea and sugar, and so it was hypocritical of them now to seek a ban. Brown regretted that it was Quakers who sponsored the bill since their non-participation in the Revolution due to their opposition to war was deeply unpopular and tainted the bill's reception. However, Brown did earn a partial victory: the Rhode Island assembly limited slave imports and approved a manumission bill that set the stage for the gradual abolition of slavery in New England (Rappleye, 2007, pp. 227–230). Then, in 1787, Brown and Rhode Island Quakers successfully steered a bill into law that made it illegal for any citizen of the state to "import or transport, buy or sell, or receive on board their vessel" any person from Africa without voluntary consent (Rappleye, 2007, p. 248). Political victories aside, slave traders and merchants, including Moses Brown's brother, John, continued to find ports in nearby cities, or else treated the law with "impunity" (Rappleye, 2007, pp. 259–260, 270).

Beginning in 1767, New York Yearly Meeting Friends began to make official movement toward abolition. In 1768 they ruled that "where the way opens liberty ought to be extended to [African Americans]" (Drake, 1965, p. 80). In 1771, the Yearly Meeting appointed a committee to dissuade slave owners from continuing in the practice. In 1776 and 1777, the Yearly Meeting threatened disownment to any that participated in slavery and in 1787 they declared their membership free of involvement in slavery (Drake, 1965, p. 81). It took longer in Maryland Yearly Meeting, where slave owners were disowned by 1792, after more than a decade of persuasion (Drake, 1965, p. 82).

Emancipation among Quakers in North Carolina and Virginia was complex because of laws calling on slave owners to deport to Africa any slaves they freed. Virginia ended such restrictions in 1782, in part due to Quaker political lobbying, which allowed Virginia Yearly Meeting to prohibit slave owning in 1784, and by 1794 their membership was clear of slavery.

The situation in North Carolina was even more difficult. In 1776, North Carolina Yearly Meeting advised its members to emancipate their slaves. Many Friends did so only to have the freed slaves seized and resold into slavery. In 1781, North Carolina Yearly Meeting declared that any of their members who were not willing to free their slaves should be expelled. Friends also petitioned the legislature to repeal the law that allowed for the seizure and resale of freed slaves. Maintaining historic Quaker antislavery arguments of the 'Golden Rule,' they asserted that "no law Moral or divine has given us a

right to or Property in the Persons of any of our fellow Creatures any Longer then they are in a state of Minority” (Frost, 1980d, p. 255). They also reminded the legislature of God’s justice, when “that awfull day will come in which the Earth shall Disclose her Blood, and shall no more cover her slain” (Frost, 1980d, p. 255). By 1808, North Carolina Yearly Meeting Quakers realized that the only possible way they would be able to emancipate their slaves was by becoming a collective slave owner, holding the slaves of their membership in trust until they could be relocated out of state and freed without seizure (Drake, 1965, pp. 83–84).

5.6 *Antislavery and Liberty*

Between the Seven Years’ War and the American Revolution a trans-Atlantic discourse on liberty captivated newspapers and the imaginations of public intellectuals. The American Patriots used a secular, Enlightenment-based understanding of liberty to justify their grievances against perceived British abuses in taxation and oversteps in governing. Quakers like Anthony Benezet, examined in the last chapter, and John Dickinson, David Ferris, David Cooper, the Dillwyn brothers, and Richard Wells examined in this chapter, tried in vain to link the cause of antislavery to the Patriot’s clamor for liberty. After the Revolution, Warner Mifflin, Benjamin Banneker, and Paul Cuffe continued to use the rhetoric of liberty in urging the New Republic to abolish slavery.

The Patriots viewed rights as defined within and against a state and attributed generally to white, propertied, Protestant men, but not given specifically to each individual human being. The Quaker view of liberty transcended the state and entailed a fundamental spiritual equality before God and a subsequent freedom to obey God’s revelation in one’s physical life. By contrast, the Patriots’ theoretical attribution of a restricted liberty to humanity in general coupled with a belief that the full liberty of some could be a threat to the general liberty of the community meant, in practice, that rights and liberties could be withheld or restricted for those deemed unfit (Calvert, 2018, pp. 35–37).

The concept of “slavery” was an important part of Patriot propaganda, but they understood the term as a political metaphor. When the Patriots rallied colonists to their cause for fear that they would be “enslaved” by London politicians, they were not criticizing slavery itself or the enslavement of Africans. Rather, the Patriots used a rhetoric of slavery as a symbol to describe the political and social status of those whose virtue was insufficient to preserve their freedom. Africans were pawns in this rhetorical move, coming to symbolize a culture that was devoid of the virtues necessary for sustaining liberty.

Therefore, Patriots blamed persons of African descent for their enslavement and used their example as a warning to their fellow colonists. If British encroachments were left unchecked, Americans would show themselves to be incapable of exercising the virtues of freedom like the Africans had. The metaphor of slavery was, then, both a justification of African enslavement and a warning to colonists of their political destiny if they did not assert their rights (Bradley, 1998, pp. xiv, 4–6; Dorsey, 2009, p. xii).

After making strides against slavery among their membership, Quakers entered the public and political discussion of slavery and liberty. However, they did not understand the importance of political rhetoric in framing their cause, nor could they employ the growing American nationalism effectively (Bradley, 1998, p. 82). Quakers argued that abolishing slavery would be an example to the nations of American righteousness, and vindicate the Patriots' claims of American innocence, virtue, and purity.

Moreover, Quakers of the revolutionary era were motivated to effect in the public realm the internal reforms they had already undertaken. They searched for a way to maintain their corporate identity as benefactors of divine Providence and Publishers of Truth, but their neutrality in the emerging conflict between the colonies and Britain led to widespread accusations that Quakers were loyalists and British sympathizers. This public perception tarnished their image and hindered their ability to compel Americans to form a society consistent with Quaker theology. Unable to craft a national identity consistent with Quaker covenantal theology, they instead developed a trans-Atlantic, trans-national religious identity that would uphold their covenantal responsibilities over and against the political nation-states that had rejected their message (Crabtree, 2015, pp. 9–10). Friends believed God had set them aside for purity, but if they neglected this calling they would break covenant with God and bring calamity upon themselves (Crabtree, 2015, p. 38).

5.7 *John Dickinson's Politically Engaged Antislavery Activity*

The Quaker Patriot and Founding Father, John Dickinson (1732–1808), provides an example of one form of politically engaged antislavery advocacy. Dickinson was not a member of a Quaker meeting, but was born into a Quaker family and attended Quaker Meeting his whole life. His religious circle was Quaker but the "Penman of the Revolution," as Dickinson has been called, was also President of Delaware and Pennsylvania under the Articles of Confederation and his political activity led to compromises that were not always appreciated by the Quaker reformers who were gaining in influence (Calvert, 2009, pp. 177, 189).

Dickinson was in a unique position among the Patriots to argue that the Quaker view of liberty, in which rights should be applied beyond white, Protestant men, should include subordinated people, and should be adopted over the secular view of liberty that was dominating political debates. Jane Calvert demonstrates that his Patriot peers rejected this “expansive conception of rights” and withheld the political and personal physical liberty of African Americans that Dickinson believed should extend to all individuals (Calvert, 2018, p. 31). As his political stature grew and as he drew closer to the Quaker community, Dickinson looked for ways to include abolitionism in his political work. He attempted to include an antislavery clause in the Articles of Confederation, which was rejected by his fellow politicians. He also shaped Pennsylvanian laws that would make emancipation easier and paved the way for its gradual emancipation law of 1780 (Calvert, 2018, p. 43).

Yet, some of Dickinson's antislavery activity was less than adequate to Quakers. When he emancipated thirty-seven of his own slaves in 1777 he indentured them for twenty-one years, in many cases retaining their labor into their advanced age. Dickinson wrote that he emancipated his slaves because of a fear that “the recording Angel stood ready to make Record against him in Heaven had he neglected it,” but he did not adequately explain why he indentured his slaves past the normal age for indentured servants (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 146). Despite his concern for emancipation — albeit delayed for many of his own slaves — Dickinson's legacy on racial equality is mixed. He supported a law denying African Americans property ownership. Like many Quakers, Dickinson may have concluded that abolition and the capacity of freed African Americans to secure food, shelter, and education may have been all that was required of him (Calvert, 2018, p. 55). In his role as a political leader in the New Republic, Dickinson prioritized the political expediciencies he thought were necessary for the new nation's health and vitality but gave the individual experiences of African American a less important status (Calvert, 2018, pp. 56–57).

5.8 *David Ferris' “Letters” of 1766 and 1767*

While Dickinson had the political prestige to draft antislavery legislation but did not seek the full social and political equality of African Americans, other Quaker antislavery advocates sought a broader interpretation of liberty that included practical steps for social and political integration. Wilmington, Delaware, Quaker David Ferris (1707–1779) used the ‘Golden Rule’ to show the sinfulness of slavery and, also, to demonstrate the suffering of African Americans (Grundy, 2014, pp. 20–21). Ferris dismissed claims by slave owners

that they could not manumit their slaves because the manumitted African Americans would become burdens on society, calling on British colonists to trust God's providence: "Don't plead that they are too old, or they are Drunken or thievish and the like, and therefore wont be able to get their living, all this is nothing to You, do your Duty and leave them to providence" (Ferris, 1980b, p. 186).

However, slave owners should not manumit slaves without also making some restitution. In an extension of Hebrew law, "they ought to be furnished liberally out of your Stock, this was a Charge to Israel of old, thus to Treat their Brethren and now all mankind Deut xv 13 are our Brethren, and ought to be used as Such" (Ferris, 1980b, p. 186). God's material and spiritual blessing on the Hebrew people required that when servants were freed, they were owed some of the bounty God had given the servant's master. Quakers, as the new Israel, were in a similar relationship of blessing from God and, thus, must relate to subordinate classes in a similar manner.

To ignore one's duty to the enslaved would be to deny the inward revelations of God, what Ferris described as "the Light [that] is So far arisen among us as a People" (Ferris, 1980a, p. 182). Transgressing that leading would prohibit Quakers from "Stand[ing] valliant for the cause of Truth" in other respects as well, causing Quakers to "whither and die: and become useless in Society altogether, and will rather be a hindrance to Israel's march" (Ferris, 1980a, p. 182). Thus, Ferris advocates expelling from the Quaker "Camp" those "Leprous persons ... who will not quit their beloved gain of oppression ... who withstand the deliverance of Captives, and will not let the oppressed go free" (Ferris, 1980a, p. 182). By the late 1760s, Quaker slave owners were already seen as a threat to the "Testimony" of the Quaker body and to the purpose for Quaker existence (Ferris, 1980a, p. 182). Fearing divine judgement on slave holders specifically and white Britons generally, Ferris claimed that the suffering of slaves was temporal but that of their oppressors would be worse because it would be eternal, "a more dismal & fatal Consequence than outward [bondage] can be" (Ferris, 1980a, p. 182). This view correlates with the physical/spiritual dualism that prioritized eternal matters over physical ones, but in this usage the dualism was influenced by Quaker judicial providentialism, and, so, fearful of impending damnation for the European-American sinners. It shows how the specter of eternal judgment for enslavers had come to control antislavery motivations more than the earlier articulation of the spiritual/physical dualism that justified slavery on the basis of eternal bliss for the enslaved through their Christianization.

5.9 *David Cooper's A Mite Cast into the Treasury and A Serious Address to the Rulers of America*

In two antislavery tracts New Jersey Quaker, David Cooper (1724–1795), criticized the hypocrisy of colonists who called for liberty from Britain for themselves without considering the need for liberty for their slaves. Cooper argued that the ‘Golden Rule’ was a law, given by Christ, that outlawed slavery (Cooper, 1772, p. 5). Much of his 1772 tract, *A Mite Cast into the Treasury*, is an exposition of this principle. The violation of the ‘Golden Rule,’ he contended, results in “robbing them of their freedom” (Cooper, 1772, p. 14).

Cooper's second tract, *A Serious Address to the Rulers of America* (1783), was intended to be read broadly in the colonies at a time when Quakers were out of favor due to their non-participation in the American Revolution and in the midst of inaccurate criticisms that they were Tories. As a result, Cooper published this tract anonymously, obscuring its Quaker origins. Both of Cooper's tracts seek to insert Quaker antislavery arguments into the broader colonial milieu, confronting colonists with a Quaker understanding of religiously motivated liberty.

For Cooper, it is only “habit and custom” that perpetuates the degradation of “people with black skin” (Cooper, 1783, p. 05). Quaker antislavery advocates argued within the Quaker community that slavery was maintained because of sinful “custom” and here Cooper broadened the earlier Quaker application of “custom” as a practice inconsistent with God's will to indicate practices inconsistent with the American virtues that supposedly vindicated the Patriot's cause. In fact, he argued that slavery damaged the reputation of American virtues and caused “foreigners” to look with “indignation” on Americans who protest when “their own rights as freemen ... [are] the least infringed” but “these very people are holding thousands and tens of thousands of their innocent fellow men in the most debasing and abject slavery, deprived of every right of freemen, except light and air” (Cooper, 1783, p. 5). Cooper argued that slavery was unjust by God's principles and natural law, and its prevalence imperiled the American mission. Quoting from the Declaration of Independence, Cooper proclaimed that the virtues that led America to throw off British oppression should naturally be extended to African Americans by the same principles of equality and natural rights, or else face God's judgment and be condemned by posterity (Cooper, 1772, p. 12, 1783, pp. 5, 12–13).

While Cooper broadened the Quaker antislavery argument to America as a whole, he is essentially using the same covenantal framework: The ‘Golden Rule’ is a divine law that should characterize human relationships and if transgressed will arouse God's wrath. America's providential deliverance from

British oppression levied a responsibility on Americans to extend their newly received liberty to the enslaved, and slavery is a corruption that destroys the virtues Americans claimed to embody and voids the witness of America in the eyes of the world. Cooper poignantly used the Patriot's words against them: "Have we reason, to expect, or dare we ask of him whose *ways* are all *equal*, the continuance of his blessings to us, whilst our *ways* are so *unequal*" (Cooper, 1783, p. 22). Without abandoning the religious themes in Quaker antislavery, Cooper sought to couch them in the secular providentialism of the founding of the new nation. Quaker antislavery advocates of the late eighteenth century would use this method to little effect, but the attempt represents an awareness among some Quakers that ridding Quakerism of slavery was only a partial step to fulfilling God's will. Their task would not be completed until they had expended what powers they had in agitating against slavery in whatever institutions they were associated with.

5.10 William Dillwyn's Brief Considerations on Slavery, and the Expediency of its Abolition

If Quakers had given up on the idea of converting the world to join Quakers, the religious themes within antislavery could at least convert the world to act Quaker and to obey God's law so as to convert America to the Quaker conscience. For example, in his *Brief Considerations on Slavery*, William Dillwyn argued that northern colonies without a heavy slave presence were not clear from their duty to use political means to end slavery wherever it existed (Dillwyn, 1773, p. 6). The "divine command, Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," Dillwyn argued, must be upheld if the colonial cause against Britain were to have the force of "conscious innocence" and "the justice of our cause" (Dillwyn, 1773, pp. 8–9). Rather, "liberty" should be applied broadly according to the Quaker understanding of the concept so that freedom of conscience could prevail, not a merely secular liberty applied only to those with force of arms to keep others subjugated (Dillwyn, 1773, p. 8).

Antislavery Quakers were most concerned with the spiritual and moral implications of slavery. As a result, they did not always propose practical steps for the emancipation and integration of large numbers of freed slaves into American society. When Quakers focused their antislavery arguments internally this oversight in practical proposals was ignored because the 'Golden Rule' was absolute and must be obeyed and internal purity, in many cases, took priority. However, in the general American population, concerns about the impracticality of emancipating all slaves and integrating them into society were immense.

These concerns coupled with prejudicial views in which African Americans were believed to be unfit to govern themselves, led most Americans to consider slavery to be consistent with the 'Golden Rule' because it would be unloving to allow African Americans freedom for which they were unprepared, when social chaos and rampant crime would ensue (Bradley, 1998, p. 126). So, when Ferris called on colonists to emancipate their slaves and leave the rest to "providence," without proposing a plan for integration, few would have been persuaded (Ferris, 1980b, p. 186). Dillwyn, though, showed himself to be both politically savvy and practical, making proposals for a process of gradual emancipation utilizing a combination of public and private support for freed slaves (Dillwyn, 1773, pp. 10–14).

5.11 *Richard Wells' Articles in the Pennsylvania Packet*

Two years later, in 1774, as the Continental Congress was descending on Philadelphia, Richard Wells wrote a series of articles for the *Pennsylvania Packet*, ostensibly for the purpose of discussing proposals for nonimportation of British goods. However, as delegates from across the colonies arrived, anti-slavery was added to the themes of the series. Wells argued that the colonies must act with a united front to stop the slave trade, because the British had rejected some attempts at ending the trade. Intercolonial cooperation against the slave trade, Wells said, would make British interference more difficult (Bradley, 1998, p. 113).

In his articles, Wells contended that colonial appeals to England cannot be made on the basis of liberty when every colony is involved in human slavery. He wrote that slavery must be solved before England would be sympathetic to colonial pleas. "Let him who claims an exemption from the control of Parliamentary power, shew to the world, by what right, human or divine, he keeps in cruel slavery his *fellow man*" (Wells, 1774, p. 80). If colonists claim that Americans should be afforded the same rights as Britons, shouldn't also African Americans be released from bondage (Wells, 1774, p. 80)? Moreover, he argued that the cause of antislavery was good for America because it further demonstrated the purity and consistency of their cause, and "cannot but rouse every man who has the welfare of his country at heart" (Wells, 1774, p. 3). Wells' argument shows that as the American Revolution approached Quakers began exploring new ways to get their message out and that they felt the colonial conversation on rights and liberties was an opportunity to spread the antislavery message. These arguments were ultimately unsuccessful in integrating anti-slavery appeals into the American cause, despite the seemingly obvious connection to liberty.

5.12 *Warner Mifflin's Memorials and A Serious Expostulation with the Members of the House of Representative of the United States*

Despite the public unpopularity and persecution of Quakers for their non-participation in the American Revolution (Frost, 1980b, p. 25; Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 78), some Quakers worked to lobby the new American government to reconcile its stated principles with the inconsistency of institutional slavery, and even to expand antislavery beyond manumissions and into areas of racial justice and restitution.

Warner Mifflin is perhaps the most outstanding Quaker abolitionist of the late eighteenth century. He not only emancipated a large number of slaves, he also advocated political and legal remedies for slavery, designed a system of reparations, used his consumer purchases to anticipate the later Free Produce Movement and encouraged the full membership of African Americans in Quaker meetings (Nash, 2017, pp. 96–97). Nash calls Mifflin in the 1780s a "one-man abolitionist society," traveling to state legislatures to lobby for changes to laws that made abolition difficult (Nash, 2017, p. 132). One measure of Mifflin's success as an abolitionist is the difference in composition of African American inhabitants in Mifflin's home county in Delaware and the composition of other Delaware counties. In Mifflin's Kent County, more than half of the population's African Americans were free as of the 1790 census. In nearby New Castle and Sussex counties, where proslavery sentiment was dominant, 80% and 85% were enslaved, respectively (Nash, 2017, p. 53).

One area where Mifflin distinguished himself from his Quaker peers was in his political petitioning. As the American Revolution wound down, he believed that politics would be crucial to spreading the gospel of antislavery. His *Memorials* (1792) and his *Serious Expostulation* (1793) attempted to defend Quakers from charges of being dangerous to America, while asserting traditional Quaker antislavery arguments of the 'Golden Rule' as a divine law that trumped human law (Mifflin, 1793, p. 14, 1980, p. 283). Like other abolitionists of the antislavery groundswell, he employed notions of divine wrath and corporate sin in a judicial providentialism that warned legislators of their "national iniquity" and "national guilt" (Nash, 2017, p. 187). American politicians could either secure God's beneficial providence, or stand in violation of divine intent (Mifflin, 1980, p. 283). Indeed, in words foreboding of future conflict over slavery, and a belief in God's intervention in human affairs to rectify injustice, he asserted that "the Almighty will manifest his displeasure in a more conspicuous manner than has yet appeared" (Mifflin, 1980, p. 281).

After the Revolution, Americans could no longer demur on slavery as a British problem. If slavery in America continued, they owned it and they were

responsible. Like the traditional Quaker covenantal understanding of God's providence in freeing them from oppression in England, Mifflin believed America's independence heightened their corporate responsibility before God and the nations to make good on the virtues they touted (Mifflin, 1793, pp. 9–10). Mifflin forcefully asserted that political liberty from England, if not also conjoined with the divine law of equity and universal compassion, would be hollow and God would ultimately revoke whatever privileged standing Americans thought they merited: "I am interested in the welfare of this country; but I cannot have any conception that this nation will long fare well" while "tyranny and oppression" are upheld by Americans (Mifflin, 1793, p. 10).

Mifflin remonstrated to Congress that his plea was based on "that divine precept and perfect rule of universal equity," the 'Golden Rule' (Mifflin, 1793, p. 4). Mifflin also pushed Quakers to consider fully their complicity in the evil of slavery and the need to not only emancipate slaves, but to pursue financial restitution to them. In this cause, he went further than his Quaker peers (Nash, 2015, p. 12). Mifflin was not the first Quaker to argue for reparations. John Woolman and his brother Abner Woolman did so, as did David Ferris (Nash, 2015, p. 12; Woolman, 1971a, p. 272). Their view of reparations went beyond the token cash payment and tools that were customary for indentured servants to receive. Nash argues that these Quakers viewed compensation of freed slaves for their years of servitude as a material recognition of the injustice they had committed. However, unlike the Woolmans or Ferris, Mifflin had something at stake when he advocated for reparations. He was making a commitment to his many emancipated slaves. He paid them with land, livestock and cash for the time they had worked for him (Nash, 2015, p. 12). Mifflin integrated the need for restitution into his antislavery evangelism and urged others to take the same step (Nash, 2017, pp. 99–103).

Most Quaker antislavery advocates who left published records of their views were persons of European descent; many were either well educated themselves or had the resources and time to self-educate. Toward the end of the eighteenth- and into the early nineteenth centuries, Quakers of European descent actively looked for African American spokespersons who could advance the antislavery cause. Notwithstanding the importance of this strategy to European Quaker antislavery efforts, African Americans were already actively resisting slavery and the effects of prejudice and, also, seeking to be faithful to their religious convictions. The Quaker and emancipated slave, William Boen, discussed above, is an example of an African American Quaker Reformer whose personal witness impacted Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Quakerism. When his memoirs were published in 1834 that influence spread and became part of Quaker antislavery efforts in the early nineteenth century. At the end

of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century, two other African American antislavery voices came to prominence: the wealthy pan-Africanist and Quaker, Paul Cuffe, and the scientist and Quaker sympathizer, Benjamin Banneker. Both illustrate the varying strategies employed by African Americans to promote abolitionism. Their accounts also illustrate the difficulties they experienced within and beyond the Society.

5.13 *Benjamin Banneker's Almanac*

When Quakers spread beyond their strongholds in Pennsylvania, New England and the South, they sometimes encountered individuals who were predisposed to their religious convictions. In some cases, abolitionism was also a point of contact between Friends and non-Friends who were sympathetic to their religious concerns. The work of Benjamin Banneker (1731–1809), a free black from Baltimore County, Maryland, provides an example of the way Quaker antislavery networks encouraged and even coopted African Americans into their antislavery rationale. However, while abolitionism was an important point of contact between Banneker and Quaker antislavery networks, Banneker asserted independence from them, and, so, shows the flexibility of antislavery rationales as they mainstreamed beyond a particularly Quaker theology at the turn of the nineteenth century. In this way, Banneker represents the pragmatic and rational strain of the American enlightenment.

Banneker was the grandson of a white indentured servant and her one-time slave, and the child of the marriage of a free African American woman and a freed slave who eventually became a propertied landowner with a farm capable of supporting his family (Bedini, 1999, pp. 16–17, 24–25). At the age of twenty-two he made a wood clock even though he had only seen two timepieces in his life: a sundial and a pocket watch (Bedini, 1999, pp. 42–43). This aptitude would later be recognized by members of the wealthy Quaker family, the Ellicotts, who built a grist mill on land that neighbored the Bannekers. Besides the Ellicotts, the most significant Quaker influence in Banneker's life was the teacher of the small, integrated school he attended as a child (Bedini, 1999, pp. 51, 76–77). Among his scientific and engineering achievements, Banneker assisted Major Andrew Ellicott while surveying the land that would become Washington D.C. Also, from 1792 to 1797, he published an annual almanac. In 1793, the almanac printed Benjamin Rush's plan for a United States peace office along with a letter Banneker had written to Thomas Jefferson and Jefferson's response. These unique contents gave the almanac considerable prestige. In 1795 the fame of the almanac had grown to the extent that nine different printers carried *Banneker's Almanac* (S. W. Angell, 2011a, pp. 1–2; Bedini, 1999, pp. 190, 195).

Quaker antislavery networks publicized Banneker's almanac and his remarkable scientific achievements. Abolitionists had been looking for African Americans to showcase as an example of intellectual achievement (Bedini, 1999, pp. 104–105), and believed Banneker could provide this example for their cause (Bedini, 1999, p. 152). The Ellicotts of Baltimore County shared news of Banneker's achievements with James Pemberton, the Philadelphia Quaker abolitionist and president of the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society. Originally founded in 1775 by Anthony Benezet and later re-formed in 1787, the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society, as it was commonly known, wished to use its influence for a political lobby against slavery and to test slavery laws by defending African Americans. It also wanted to reproduce abolitionist societies in other places, thereby creating a formal network of abolitionists. The Maryland Abolitionist Society was founded in 1789 and was modeled closely on the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society (Bedini, 1999, pp. 101–102). Both Societies played important roles in the promotion, publication and distribution of Banneker's almanacs (Bedini, 1999, pp. 101, 152–153).

Bedini argues that Banneker was initially “somewhat put out” by the attention to his work garnered by his race; he believed his work was valuable in itself, because of the accuracy of his calculations (Bedini, 1999, p. 155). In his disappointment, Banneker decided to write directly to Jefferson, who had made some well-known remarks justifying slavery based on his assessment of the intellectual limitations of African Americans. Along with his letter, Banneker submitted a sample of his almanac calculations. This letter was a turning point in Banneker's public response to slavery. Bedini notes that never before had Banneker mentioned racial oppression or antislavery in his writings. He was aware of slavery, but the “matter of slavery apparently remained relatively remote” during his childhood and he nowhere expressed “any real concern for the subjugation [of] his race or a willingness to champion the antislavery cause” (Bedini, 1999, p. 156). The correspondence between Jefferson and Banneker would be significant in its ability to publicize the almanac as well as in advertising abolitionist networks (Bedini, 1999, p. 157).

The use of Banneker's almanacs in support of the antislavery cause are obvious from the editors' description: “[The almanac is an] extraordinary Effort of Genius ... calculated by a sable Descendant of Africa, who, [demonstrates] that mental Powers and Endowments are not the exclusive Excellence of white People” (Banneker, 1791, p. 2). With the overnight success of his first published almanac, James Pemberton and the Ellicott's encouraged Banneker to begin work on the 1793 almanac and to include the letter to Jefferson and his

response. Banneker agreed to do so and became conscious of his important role in the antislavery movement (Bedini, 1999, p. 188).

Banneker's letter to Jefferson is remarkable, firstly, because it was the first of its kind: a free African American writing directly to one of the most powerful politicians in the country with the purpose of persuading him (Bedini, 1999, pp. 155–157). Secondly, Banneker redeployed the common argument of spiritual equality but combined it with a statement of the full intellectual and emotional equality of all humans. For Banneker, the equality of humanity was not *merely* spiritual, as in pertaining only to spiritual and eternal things. Instead, he pointed out that divinely ordained spiritual equality also translated into the creation of natural beings "of one flesh," and having the same physical and emotional "sensations" and "faculties" (Banneker, 2011, pp. 2–3). Then Banneker returns to the more traditional antislavery argument that down-played social distinctions and appearances as irrelevant to God's intention that all people are "of the same family" and "stand in the same relation to him" (Banneker, 2011, p. 3). Banneker upheld his scientific achievements as evidence of the full equality of African Americans.

While Banneker was a common attender at Quaker meetings for worship and deeply religious, he never joined the Quakers or any other church (Bedini, 1999, p. 265). Instead, he received a revelation in a dream that he believed portrayed the insufficiency of formal religious affiliation and described the path of faith as not only being "honest to Man, thou must be honest and faithful to thy God" (Banneker, 2011, pp. 347–348). This religious independence can be seen as an element of the Quaker view of liberty and an interesting manifestation of the early Quaker insight that church membership and creeds could not identify true faith. Only in humbly following one's "guide" in one's spiritual profession and in one's outward behaviors was true faith known (Bedini, 1999, p. 347). Each person must follow God's will for themselves and have the temporal freedom to do so.

Banneker provided a more direct and personal antislavery plea than the often theoretical and second-hand petitions of his Quaker antislavery forebears. Ironically, Banneker's letter to Jefferson was, itself, Jeffersonian in its distaste for superstitions of the mind, like prejudice, and in its democratic quality. Unlike Quaker abolitionists who attempted to harness the Enlightenment for the antislavery cause, such as David Cooper, Richard Wells, and Benezet, Banneker's critique of slavery was not directly grounded in antecedents of the Quaker tradition, but in an empiricism rooted in his observation of nature, humanity, and himself. Unfortunately, the association of his almanacs with antislavery causes may have also led to their eventual discontinuation. Banneker's

almanac was a new genre of almanac that was focused on a particular topic. In his case, it contained essays concerning the promotion of abolitionism. When a short, reactionary period against abolitionism grew at the turn of the nineteenth century, his almanac fell out of favor (Bedini, 1999, p. 206).

Banneker's example as a Quaker-sympathizer, but one who was not steeped in a Quaker culture the way he might have been if he were surrounded by Friends in a Quaker stronghold like Philadelphia, suggests that while Quaker antislavery networks were important to his career, he may have developed his theology independent from them. Banneker's independence is important because in his use of common antislavery arguments such as the 'Golden Rule,' liberty, and equality, he shows how widely these arguments had become associated with abolitionism at the end of the eighteenth century. However, Banneker redeployed these arguments in different ways than Quaker antislavery advocates had. His use of the 'Golden Rule' was less sentimental than Benezet's and formed an intellectual critique of the irrational prejudices that blinded even the most strident advocates of reason, like Jefferson. Banneker argued that for Jefferson's "kindness and benevolence" toward African Americans to grow he should "put your soul in their souls' stead" (Banneker, 2011, p. 4). Moreover, Banneker critiqued the self-serving sentimental rhetoric of Jefferson and the supposedly virtuous Founding Fathers, asking if their words amounted to more than "tender feelings for yourselves" (Banneker, 2011, p. 4). Likewise, having lived his life in liberty of body and spirit, Banneker's view of liberty integrated them both so that one was impossible without the other, thereby undercutting those who argued that liberty of Spirit could sanction the oppression of bodies. For a religiously motivated antislavery rationale to be translated into the vernacular of early America it would take a voice that was not native to Quakerism, like Banneker's.

Coming to his own sense of his capabilities as a young man with only one Quaker influence at that time, Banneker did not need Quakers to give him a rationale to support his antislavery views, it was already obvious in the accomplishments of his life. While there is no evidence that Banneker saw himself as part of a special covenant with God that included a higher responsibility for ethical dealings like some Quakers did, Banneker believed God's "miraculous and providential preservation" could be seen in the securing of independence from Britain. This was a view he shared with Jefferson, but, unlike Jefferson, Banneker believed the divine blessing of America was "counteract[ed] ... in detaining by fraud and violence so numerous a part of my brethren" (Banneker, 2011, p. 4). Neither being born into Quakerism nor tracing his spiritual and intellectual roots from seventeenth-century Quakers, Banneker, instead,

shows a pragmatism and independence that was better able to address cultural prejudices outside of Quakerism than distinctly Quaker arguments could. Banneker's contribution to abolitionism, then, was not only in his remarkable scientific achievements, but as an American philosopher who challenged prejudice empirically with reason and the evidence of his life.

5.14 *Paul Cuffe's Letters*

Perhaps the most ambitious plan for preserving the lives of African Americans from enslavement, and assisting them in escaping the prejudices they suffered even when not enslaved, was Paul Cuffe's (1759–1817) scheme to establish a colony of free blacks in Sierra Leone. Cuffe's antislavery efforts were among the most important of any figure in the history of American abolitionism. The son of a modestly successful, freed slave, Cuffe adopted his father's entrepreneurial legacy and built a growing business in Westport, Massachusetts (Thomas, 1988, p. 30; Wiggins, 1996, p. 47), and used his entrepreneurial and networking acumen to operate as an international independent agent in an age of American-British feuds.

As a young man, Cuffe worked on a whaling vessel and gained experience in navigation. In 1774, the British naval blockade cut off the islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard from the mainland. With the help of his brother, Cuffe built an "open boat" to smuggle cargo through the blockade at night. Cuffe evaded the British but was captured by "Refugee Pirates" (Cuffee, 1812, pp. 10–11). Cuffe was released, but his boat and cargo were seized (Wiggins, 1996, p. 48). Undaunted, Cuffe immediately set about building another boat and acquiring more cargo. Eventually Cuffe had success in his trading ventures, built bigger and bigger ships, sailed further and further from home, created an interracial and international network of partners (Cuffee, 1812, p. 18; McDaniel & Julye, 2009, p. 192; Wiggins, 1996, p. 53) and became one of the wealthiest free African Americans in the United States (S. W. Angell, 2011b, p. 15; Johnson, 2015, p. 173).

Cuffe's mother, a Wampanoag Native American, attended Quaker meetings and raised her children "in the Light," though the family were not members (Thomas, 1988, p. 5). In 1780, Cuffe and other African-American residents of Westport protested tax payments on the basis that "by the laws of the constitution of Massachusetts, taxation and the whole rights of citizenship were unified. If the laws demanded of them the payment of personal taxes, the same laws must necessarily and constitutionally invest them with the rights of representing, and being represented, in the State Legislature" (Cuffee, 1812, p. 8). Since these basic rights were withheld from the state's African American citizens, they would not pay the tax and Cuffe was imprisoned (S. W. Angell,

201b, p. 15). The protesters eventually paid the tax but endeavored to lobby the State Legislature for justice. The Legislature passed a law that provided all freed African Americans liable to taxation at the same rates as whites “all the privileges belonging to other citizens” (Cuffee, 1812, pp. 7–8).

Cuffe was a frequent attendee at Quaker worship when he was accepted into membership at Westport Monthly meeting in 1808, and well-known among Quakers and abolitionists because of his business and social ventures throughout America (Wiggins, 1996, p. 57). He attained a traveling minute from his meeting for travels through the States, had it signed on his journey, and returned it to Westport where he gave a report of his efforts before the whole Meeting (Wiggins, 1996, p. 61). A transcript of a sermon Cuffe preached at the Arch Street Meetinghouse in Philadelphia describes a vision in which his heart was removed from his body and he submitted to having it cleaned and healed and replaced within him like a “Physician” operating on a diseased organ. “Thus he said he felt himself a changed man and a new creature” and urged his audience to likewise submit themselves “to that Physician who could heal them” (H. J. Cadbury, 1936, p. 213). This experience was conversionary, and attests to Cuffe’s spiritual and moral optimism for human regeneration.

Having taught himself to do math and to read, Cuffe was aware of the advantages provided by education. For much of the eighteenth century New England Yearly Meeting Quakers had provided some basic education in their meeting houses, but under the leadership of Moses Brown, Friends consolidated their educational offerings in the boarding school that bears his name in Providence, Rhode Island. Historian Rosalind Wiggins suggests that this move could have inadvertently excluded African-American children from educational opportunities (Wiggins, 1996, p. 52). Cuffe tried to organize community members for the development of a local interracial school, but the idea of interracial education was resisted. Undeterred, he took matters into his own hand and provided a school building on his own property that would be open to all children regardless of race (Cuffee, 1812, p. 15; Wiggins, 1996, p. 52). The education of persons of color remained a priority for Cuffe. His personal correspondence shows that on his extensive travels he advocated for African American and Native American children to be educated and, ideally, by teachers of their own race (Wiggins, 1996, p. 270).

In his tax protest and his emphasis on racial justice in education, Cuffe used, in his own way, forms of tax resistance that Woolman had used to protest the French and Indian War and educational justice that Benezet had employed in teaching African-American children (Benezet, 2007b, p. 13; Plank, 2012, pp. 133–134). Yet, Cuffe’s vision was more expansive and more sensitive to

the conditions of African Americans in a hostile country. As a pan-Africanist, he worked to promote the economic and social good of all people of African descent (Thomas, 1988, pp. 109, 113).

As Sylvester Johnson has shown, part of Cuffe's motivation for advocating emigration as a way to deliver African Americans from their oppression was "the colonial status of free Blacks in the United States" (Johnson, 2015, p. 174). By 1810 Cuffe had lost hope that the United States would allow free African Americans to have full and equal citizenship because "White supremacy was yet a central tenet of US nationalism" (Johnson, 2015, p. 174). Cuffe's entrepreneurial success and his network of powerful persons revealed the extent to which the American economy was designed to exploit African Americans and deprive them of the basic rights that were guaranteed to whites. The invention of the cotton gin and the expansion of the plantation system after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, and the subsequent recommitment by white politicians to legitimize enslavement, reinforced Cuffe's observation that "slavery determined the political economy, imbuing Whites with a naturalized sense of participation in political rule" (Johnson, 2015, p. 174).

In 1810, Cuffe founded a colony in Sierra Leone where free African Americans could resettle and collaborate with indigenous African industries. The goal was to establish a trading outpost in Africa that would trade with Western nations and, as he saw it, bring prosperity and "civilization" to Africa (Wiggins, 1996, p. 271). Johnson asserts that, at least initially, Cuffe was prejudiced against native Africans due to a "Christian supremacy." However, his work with Africans in Sierra Leone convinced him that free blacks from America and native Africans could work together in developing a trading outpost there (Johnson, 2015, p. 177). His vision was for a self-sufficient colony that could harvest African resources without participating in slavery, creating a viable alternative to the slave economy and trading with the "white brother" as equals (Wiggins, 1996, p. 271). Whereas some colonial Quaker reformers, like Woolman, viewed wealth and commerce as potential causes of spiritual depravity and social injustice, Cuffe saw a lack of civilization and economic development as a hindrance to the work of the spirit that his colony in Sierra Leone could help remedy. He was certain that his resettlement endeavor, and the early interest in it, showed God's "provedencial [*sic*] hand" intervening in world affairs to keep African Americans from perpetual misery (Wiggins, 1996, p. 78).

Cuffe's view of providence is similar to Banneker's and dissimilar to many of the antislavery Quakers of the eighteenth century for the same reason: Cuffe viewed God's hand working in history in general, not in Quaker-specific ways, to relieve the suffering of the oppressed. Cuffe explained in his "Memorial

Petition" to President Madison in 1813 that his life, success, and endeavors "to relieve the suffering of His fellow creators [*sic*]" were motivated by his commitment to "equity and Justice" (Wiggins, 1996, p. 252). Cuffe was confident in the power of human industriousness to improve African-American conditions and shape Western society for the better. For Cuffe, God's work of liberation in the world was not a special favor to Quakers because of their faithfulness, it was, instead, a confidence in the upward sweep of human history that followed the American Revolution.

Cuffe's African resettlement venture was disastrous for him financially, but he remained committed to the idea. The War of 1812, trade restrictions, disruptions in communication and abilities to travel, and the impounding of his ships meant that by 1816 he knew the free trade association would not work out as he had hoped. In 1815, he transported 38 free African Americans to Sierra Leone (McDaniel & Julye, 2009, p. 59), and he continued to hope that non-slave related trade and industry would develop there to "kill this clandestine traffick" of the slave trade (Wiggins, 1996, pp. 68, 252).

At first, Cuffe and free African Americans were optimistic: a group of free blacks had voluntarily abandoned a white settler nation and emigrated to a new "pioneering opportunity to live as privileged elites in a settler colony," similar to what white emigrant settlers had accomplished in the Americas (Johnson, 2015, p. 184). However, as Johnson argues, this understanding meant that "freedom was further inscribed as a colonial project," justified by the Christian superiority of the new emigrants (Johnson, 2015, p. 184). Despite the initial optimism, the venture hit snags when Cuffe was not repaid the cost of emigration and some of the cargo brought to America from Sierra Leone sat unsold in warehouses. His last hope for the colony was that the United States government would authorize and support his voluntary resettlement plan, but a bill to do so could not pass the House of Representatives (Thomas, 1988, pp. 109–110).

As the prospects for the work of his international network, the Friendly Society, languished, the conditions for African Americans worsened. Cuffe's hopes for fostering racial harmony were replaced by a desire to save free and enslaved African Americans. Convinced that he must do something, Cuffe turned his support to the work of the American Colonization Society which asserted that "slaves should be freed and colonized 'either in America or in Africa, or in both places'" (Thomas, 1988, p. 108). Initially the American Colonization Society had support from African Americans, but it soon became clear that a motivating factor for the white participants was the forced removal of freed African Americans to Africa as a way to reinforce the racial hierarchy

that supported enslavement. The existence of free and sometimes prosperous African Americans was understood to be a threat to slave owners' authority (Thomas, 1988, p. 111). Cuffe supported colonization because he believed the emigration of African Americans to another location was the only way for African Americans to live free. When African Americans saw the racist motivations of some of the white leaders, many withdrew their support and by 1817 many free African Americans no longer viewed colonization as a viable option (Thomas, 1988, pp. 111, 117).

Cuffe worked creatively and effectively to propose solutions to the enslavement and oppression of African Americans. As a merchant and entrepreneur, he used his experiences and knowledge to oppose the slave trade and to use commerce justly to support equality. He used his immense knowledge of ships and their cargos to identify ship names and captains who had been caught engaging in the slave trade illicitly and reporting this information to political leaders and newspapers (Thomas, 1988, pp. 104–105). Cuffe wished to extend the values and rights to all Americans that were being reserved only for whites. He linked to abolitionism Quaker values of self-sacrifice, God's guidance in history, and hard work. Cuffe's vision was more ambitious and his skill more capable for the abolitionist task than many of his antislavery Quaker peers. Ultimately, his vision did not reach its potential. However, later colonization schemes would look to Cuffe's example and initial success — sometimes with dubious motives — as a reason to experiment with other forms of resettlement (Johnson, 2015, p. 186–189).

5.15 Conclusion

The Quaker antislavery groundswell went public with the 1754 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting publication of *An Epistle of Caution and Advice* and Woolman's *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*. These two documents established Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the 1750s as predominately abolitionist in sentiment, if not in fact. The arguments in these antislavery documents refined and redeployed the existing tradition of antislavery dissent. Through the leadership of Woolman and Benezet, the antislavery message was successfully wed to a broader reformation of discipline in the second half of the eighteenth century as Quakers began to worry that they were not upholding the covenant. They thus desired to increase disciplinary proceedings, addressing their internal affairs so that they aligned with their stated principles.

Antislavery reforms spread beyond Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. New England Yearly Meeting, London Yearly Meeting, and elsewhere began to

incrementally question slavery and then discipline slave owners. Some Quakers, like Mifflin and others, took religious and moral positions against slavery that occasioned economic loss. Compelled by their belief in a just and wrathful God who acted in world affairs to reward the faithful and punish wrongdoers, the message of the 'Golden Rule' was a litmus test of personal morality and the purity of the Quaker community.

The changes to slavery in Philadelphia after the Seven Years' War were exceptional, and illustrate statistically the impact of the Quaker antislavery groundswell in the city where Quakers had the most influence: Slave importation ceased completely; by 1780 the number of slaves had fallen by nearly 65% and by 1800 there were only 55 slaves in the city (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, pp. 74–75). Neither Quakers nor Quaker religious ideals fully explain this phenomenon. As argued by Nash and Soderlund, the heavy loss of life resulting from slavery took a toll on the slave population. Many slaves fled their masters. There were also economic transitions in Philadelphia's economy that supported new labor needs for which hired, free laborers were superior to owning slaves. Also, the revolutionary sentiment on liberty may have touched the conscience of some (Nash & Soderlund, 1991, p. 75).

Yet, the written accounts of Quakers who gave religious explanations for antislavery activism are significant records documenting the intersection of social and religious motivations. The particularities of the Quaker theological tradition shaped Quaker views of their place and responsibility in salvation history. For them, God revealed truth directly, was active in history, and demanded obedience from all people regardless of race or social standing. These religious themes meant that Quakers of the eighteenth century were actively introspective on the demands of the divine will and motivated to purify themselves. By the end of the eighteenth century, Quaker antislavery commitments remained diverse as Friends examined what God required of them and as Quaker antislavery critiques were shaped by African-American voices. Some Friends were content that none of their members owned slaves. Others believed that emancipation was not enough; reparation must be made and communities beyond Quakerism must be evangelized before God's justice was unleashed.

6 Conclusion

The history, rise, and progress of Quaker antislavery advocacy from its initial ameliorationist position as articulated by Fox to its trans-Atlantic abolitionist form as espoused by Cuffe and Mifflin demonstrates the role of individuals in

shaping and expanding a theological tradition to new vistas. Abolitionism was not inherent in Quaker origins, and many Quakers participated in the institution of slavery without much concern. At the same time, the seeds of abolition were present within Quaker theology. Most importantly, the Quaker belief that they were birthed of divine providence and delivered from persecution for the purpose of a corporate witness to the nations meant that many Quakers were committed to searching out the ever-expanding implications of their testimony. The Quaker message of liberty and their history of deliverance was seen by most antislavery Quakers as a responsibility that they must fulfill through the purity and faithfulness of their corporate testimony, or else God would revoke their standing and Quakers would "wither and die" (Ferris, 1980a, p. 182).

This covenantal understanding of history drove antislavery Quakers to consider whether they had accommodated to sin in a way that diminished their message and endangered their existence. As Woolman argued, "our duty and interest is inseparably united, and when we neglect or misuse our talents we necessarily depart from the heavenly fellowship and are in the way to the greatest of evils" (Woolman, 1971d, p. 208). It was not taken for granted by reform-minded Quakers that they were being faithful to God, nor that God's blessing would always be upon them. Their conduct within history would determine their corporate destiny. The pressures of Quaker theology in which they must always "prove" themselves before God created a socio-religious introspectiveness and insecurity that, ironically, fostered confidence in the inevitable march of divine truth in history.

The leading British abolitionist and Anglican, Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846), wrote that Protestant Christianity was essential to ending slavery. However, as Christopher Leslie Brown has argued, Protestantism was equally responsible for the expansion of slavery as it was to its demise (C. L. Brown, 2008, p. 518). That there were "inert antislavery impulses" within Christianity that could be employed to end slavery does not imply that Christian theology was necessarily against forced human bondage (C. L. Brown, 2008, p. 519). A variety of factors, including economic changes, rhetorical conventions such as sentimentalism, and the eighteenth-century spread of revivalism and reform were all part of the religious and cultural reasons for abolition (C. L. Brown, 2008, p. 519). However, important to these broader cultural and religious developments were the theological innovations within the Quaker tradition, which eventually overflowed to other sectors of the British Atlantic world.

Since Quakers had never fully accepted slavery, even when some of their members participated in the institution enthusiastically, Quakerism provided a context for a centuries-long development of Christian antislavery sentiment.

Even before Quakers publicly and corporately renounced slavery, the presence of antislavery voices throughout Quakerdom was consistent. While several Quakers published religiously motivated antislavery tracts, even when prohibited to do so by their co-religionists, none ever published a proslavery tract. From the late seventeenth century on, Frost argues, proslavery Quakers “were on the defensive” (Frost, 1980b, p. 27). However, scholars have noted that it is only because Quakers were involved in slavery for generations that they were eventually in a position to abolish it in their membership (Carey & Plank, 2014, p. 1).

Abolishing slavery, in itself, did not mean that Quakers were concerned for the equality of African Americans or wished to include them in a shared religious life. Fear of God’s judgment and corporate purity often predominated over concern for African-American conditions. In fact, Quakers were reluctant to open membership up to African Americans. For most of the eighteenth century, when white Quakers brought persons of African descent to Quaker meetings they were often made to attend separate, specially organized meetings intended to teach Christian values and prepare for manumission, rather than to convert them to Quakerism (McDaniel & Julye, 2009, p. 182).

The African-American path to Quaker membership was sometimes experienced as inconsistent and arbitrary. In 1758, North Carolina Yearly Meeting established regular meetings for worship for African Americans in four locations, and appointed white Quakers to monitor the meetings to ensure that “good order” was kept. In 1784, regular meetings for persons of African descent were established in New York. By the 1790s, meetings for African Americans were held regularly from South Carolina to Nantucket. In some of the meetings appointed for African Americans in Philadelphia, hundreds of people attended. However, these specially appointed meetings did not mean that white Quakers intended to include African Americans in membership. In 1790, some Philadelphia Yearly Meeting advocates of African-American membership successfully lobbied for monthly meetings to have ‘Liberty’ to accept members regardless of race, but it was rare for them to do so (McDaniel & Julye, 2009, pp. 182–184).

Finally, in 1795 and 1796, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Quakers commenced a serious discussion concerning African-American membership. They considered that if they really believed that all people were of one blood and that the ‘Golden Rule’ was essential to their faith, including African Americans in membership was the only way to be consistent with their principles (Nash, 2017, pp. 199–200). In 1796, Friends finally opened membership up to people of all races (Frost, 1980b, p. 26).

The year prior to that decision, Joseph Drinker submitted a plea for the inclusion of African Americans into Philadelphia Yearly Meeting membership. Drinker was not a well-known Quaker or antislavery activist like his relatives Henry and John Drinker. He was simply a Quaker in good standing and the plea for full membership is his only known record on the topic, but it left an impact (Drinker & Drake, 1947, pp. 111–112). Here, at the end of the eighteenth century, Drinker redeploys several of the religious themes that had been used in Quaker antislavery since Fox's *Gospel Family-Order*, but this time for the purpose of exposing the Quaker prejudice that allowed for discrimination of religious membership. He argued that it was "Prejudices" and "Externals," rather than the revelations of God that had hindered the full membership of African Americans "in direct opposition to our Fundamental [*sic*] Principles" (Drinker & Drake, 1947, p. 111).

The fact that most Quakers had emancipated their slaves by this time, or been disowned, was not enough according to Drinker. The theological convictions that animated Quaker antislavery also pertained to membership. The spiritual equality and liberty in which "God is no respecter [*sic*] of Persons," and so each person must be able to follow God's will as manifest in their conscience physically and spiritually, meant they must be able to worship when and where God led them (Drinker & Drake, 1947, p. 111). Drinker argued that Christ's universal atonement implied that Christ "had other Sheep that were not of this fold" and so Quakers should anticipate the spread of their message beyond Euro-centric groups, until all people were brought under "one Shepherd and one Sheepfold" (Drinker & Drake, 1947, p. 111). If Quakers did not apply these principles to African Americans seeking membership among them, they would "be charged with Hypocrisy" in regards to the witness they had "held forth to the world" (Drinker & Drake, 1947, p. 111).

Drinker's conviction that Quakers had been given a special witness to the world, which must be upheld internally among Quakers and externally before the world, or else judgment would ensue, was a further application of the covenantal theology that had led Quakers to emancipate their slaves and to lobby their American leaders to do the same (Drinker & Drake, 1947, p. 112). The new rule, and Drinker's soaring rhetoric aside, the case of Boen, Cuffe, and Banneker show that African Americans were not always fully integrated into the life of the meeting. There were many reasons to deny someone membership, even if the official position was that all were welcome. In many cases, African Americans remained the "alien other" and were encouraged to form their own churches. The inconsistency of Quaker application of antislavery

principles suggests that slavery continued to be a topic of debate even after some leaders advanced their case for antislavery.

Antislavery advocacy and the Quaker reformation would not have happened without the undergirding theology of sin and guilt. Purification from sin and the imperative to “renew the covenant” drove Quakers into an intense examination of Quaker behavior (Woolman, 2010b, p. 267). The goal was to clear the corporate Quaker witness from the taint of worldliness. Quakers like Lay, Woolman, and Mifflin, were concerned with sin and the “duty” they were under before God and the world, but they also extended the vision beyond the narrow confines of the meetinghouse and into the political, social and economic spheres in which oppression reigned (MacLeod, 1974, pp. 20–22; Nash, 2017, p. 194; Woolman, 1971d, pp. 198–199).

The more closely Quakers of the eighteenth century identified with the Hebrew prophets and the first generation of Quakers, the more likely they were to be abolitionists. The more a Quaker believed suffering was good for the individual and the corporate body, the more likely they were to adopt antislavery views. The more a Quaker believed their temporal and eternal well-being depended on God’s providential care, which was contingent on their obedience to divine laws like the ‘Golden Rule,’ the more likely they were to extend their faith to advance antislavery concerns.

Beyond direct Quaker antislavery reforms, Philadelphia remained important to abolitionism. After the American Revolution, Philadelphia became the “largest and most important center of free black life in the United States,” despite the racism that developed in Philadelphia in the early nineteenth century (Nash, 1988, p. 2). Indeed, Philadelphia became a center of the trans-Atlantic campaign to abolish the slave trade and a place where free or escaped African Americans could start new lives and form independent organizations and churches more reliable than White benevolence (Nash, 1988, pp. 4–5).

Moreover, Quakers continued to expand their antislavery protests to their fullest implications. Free-labor movements in the nineteenth century brought together Quakers, women, and black abolitionists in an effort to remake an ethical trans-Atlantic economy. Advocates believed that the free-labor production of cotton, sugar, and rice would force slave owners to release their slaves when the market for slave-labor goods disappeared. This never did happen, but it shows the nineteenth-century legacy of the eighteenth-century personal boycotts of the “gain of oppression” by Lay, Woolman, Evans, Mifflin, Boen and others (Holcomb, 2016, pp. 3–4, 8). Boycott as a means of social and economic protest remains a mainstay of reform movements.

The role of religion in supporting slavery makes it impossible to claim that religious commitments are the sole explanation for slavery's abolition among Quakers. However, the long religious debate within Quakerism does show the impact religious motivations for antislavery had in convincing some people that they must extricate themselves from human bondage, and some fewer, that they should make economic restitution for the crimes they had committed.

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