

Dear Reader,

This is a draft of Chapter Two in a book I am writing called *White Work*. If you have suggestions for me, please send to watkinsmarym@gmail.com.

I share the preliminary Table of Contents below so you can see the wider context of the work which is racial reparations.

Thanks, Mary

White Work: Following the Path of Anti-Racist Genealogy to Racial Reparations

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Chapter 2

Wrestling with Hypocrisy, Racism, and Self-Interest: A Century of Quaker Complicity with Slavery (1657-1758)

definition of hypocrisy: The practice of claiming to have moral standards or beliefs to which one's own behavior does not conform...

When it was time for me to attend high school, my parents decided to send me to a Quaker school. Neither of my parents mentioned Quaker ancestors as a reason for this choice. Indeed, I don't think they knew they had any. They did not seem to choose the school for any of its Quaker ideals. Indeed, sometimes my mother would claim that the school had been my downfall because I had resonated with its emphases on nonviolence, equality, simplicity, and social and racial justice; emphases she did not share. In adulthood, I became a member of the Society of Friends because I found myself more aligned with Quaker beliefs and practices than those of other faith communities I knew. Quakers call this becoming a Quaker by "convincement," as opposed to being a "birthright" Quaker, e.g., born into a Quaker family and community.

It was a total surprise to find out many decades later through genealogy that some of my ancestors on both sides of my family were Quakers. On my father's side, Henry Watkins I's (1585-1655) son, Henry Watkins II (1639-1714), became a Quaker in the 1660's. Several of his children and grandchildren lived as Quakers. His daughter, Elizabeth, was imprisoned in 1685 for

a month at the age of 16 for refusing to take an oath. Quakers believed that people should always speak the truth. Oaths opened the door to a double standard with regard to the truth.

On my mother's side, Robert Fearne (1630-1680) was an early Quaker in England. He was imprisoned for a year for refusing to pay tithes to support the military. After his death, his wife, Elizabeth, and son, Joshua (1658-1693) immigrated as Quakers to Darby in Chester County, east of Philadelphia. Joshua Fearne was active as the High Sheriff of Chester County, justice of the court, and a member of Pennsylvania's Provincial Assembly. Several subsequent generations of that side of my family lived as Quakers east of Philadelphia. Gradually they either intermarried, thereby losing their Quaker membership, or joined other faith groups before they moved west, principally to Indiana. Marrying into this strand of the family was a Quaker, John Gittens (1696-1741), who emigrated to Barbados from England.

As I researched these families, it wasn't long before I discovered that some of them enslaved people. Henry Watkins II's son, Thomas Watkins of Swift Creek, Virginia (1639-1760), bequeathed the people he enslaved not only to his children, but even to his grandson, causing them to inherit the "sin" of slaveholding. In my ignorance, I had never entertained the thought that many Quakers—widely known as abolitionists—were slave traders and enslavers. By the end of Thomas' life, he had become an Anglican. Indeed, by the time of his death in 1760, there was growing pressure on Quakers to manumit (to free from slavery) those they had enslaved. James Watkins, a Quaker in Virginia's Blackwater Monthly Meeting manumitted Kinchin in 1776.

Most Quakers speak in glowing terms of Quakers' contributions to abolition. They start the story with John Woolman in mid- 18th century New Jersey. This is not when and where the

story begins with regard to Quakers and slavery. This false beginning elides the earlier history of Quakers owning human beings, beginning in Barbados and Colonial Virginia.

Thousands of Quakers enslaved Africans in the second half of the 17th century, using the unpaid labor of enslaved Africans to accumulate fortunes, large and small. Other Quakers profited mightily from their involvement in the lucrative slave trade. While professing some of the key tenets of their spiritual life—equality, nonviolence, and the Golden Rule—they nonetheless embraced the brutalities of slavery. This hypocrisy was sustained in the colonies for a century before Quakers made slave trading an actionable offence amongst its members in 1758. It was another eighteen years before the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting prohibited enslavement itself. Quaker historian, Brycchan Carey, describes the path to abolition as “neither easy nor inevitable.”ⁱ What made it uncertain? What slowed and hobbled its course, costing so African descended people a hundred years of brutal forced servitude in Quaker households and businesses?

We, too, are guilty of hypocrisy whenever our actions do not correspond with our professed values and understandings. What might we learn from looking closely at Quakers’ complacency and complicity with slavery, not just their eventual renunciation of slavery?

The Birth of Quakerism in England

George Fox (1624- 1691), the founder of Quakerism, was a religious seeker from a young age. He traveled throughout England for four years in his early 20’s, fasting, reading the Bible, and seeking spiritual direction. His profound disappointment in both religious and political leaders opened him to a radical insight.

When all my hopes in them [the ministers he had consulted] and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, oh then, I Heard a voice which said, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition," and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.ⁱⁱ

He apprehended that there was no need for an intermediary between a person and God; God could speak directly to one if their heart was open. During the next five years, he continued to wander and open himself to spiritual experiences. He was "led" to disrupt religious services, protesting their hypocrisy. This resulted in prison sentences for what his prosecutors considered "blasphemy." In 1658 he married Margaret Fell, long considered the mother of Quakerism.

There was a deep hunger for many in England for a more direct relationship with God. Fox gave voice to this possibility and began to find hundreds of followers. In 1652, when Fox was 28-years-old, The Society of Friends (aka Quakers) came into existence, drawing to it members of many of the smaller sects that had arisen since the 1500's: The Family of Love, The Seekers, The Ranters, the Levellers, and the Diggers.

From the beginning, Quaker teachings were deemed subversive by Protestants. Perhaps they were really Catholics, some thought, because they would not swear an Oath of Abjuration, promising they were not. Quakers refused to swear oaths because they believed one should always tell the truth. To swear an oath implied that one might ordinarily lie. Perhaps, some said, Quakers were in league with the devil. Perhaps they might overthrow the government, given their aversion to authority.ⁱⁱⁱ Quakers intruded on formal religious services, imploring worshippers to leave their religion and forsake its hypocritical hierarchy. They refused to pay church tithes that supported ministers. They did not believe they needed such men to perform

their weddings and instead instituted their own ritual of matrimony. Deference to others who claimed higher status was refused. Quakers would not bow and remove their hats to honor such self-proclaimed authorities. For Quakers, every person has that of God in them, a divine spark. This included women, and it came also to include “Indians” and enslaved Africans.

In the beginning of Quakerism, the Quaker peace testimony was left up to individual conscience.^{iv} By 1660, Quakers made a peace declaration to King Charles II:

We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end and under any pretence whatsoever, and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into the all Truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, not for the kingdoms of the world.^v

It would be another 29 years before England passed the Act of Toleration in 1689. Before then, Quakers were harshly punished for their transgressive acts and beliefs. They suffered imprisonment, public whipping, tongue boring, branding, and ostracization. Four hundred and fifty Quakers died in prison, subjected as they were to cramped, unheated, and unhygienic conditions and beatings.

To share their experience of direct relationship with God, members proselytized in pairs of two. They were called the “First Publishers of the Truth.” In 1655, a mere three years after the beginning of the Society of Friends, Ann Austin and Mary Fisher traveled to Barbados, England’s most important colony in the Americas, to share their beliefs with English colonists. They had been imprisoned in England for their beliefs and knew they might face this again in the colonies.

They convinced several people to become Quakers before traveling on to Boston in 1656. The Boston Puritans believed that attempts to dissuade people from the established religion was the work of the devil, a work fit for witches. While Quakers were convinced they were reviving the truest aspects of Christianity, Puritans denounced them as blasphemous, taking issue with Quaker views on direct revelation, the sacraments, and ministry.^{vi} Dissuading people from following hypocritical ministers and joining the Quaker fold was the work they had come to do. Austin and Fisher were arrested, searched for signs of being witches, imprisoned, and then expelled and forced to return to Barbados.

Quakerism in Virginia

In Virginia, a series of orders and laws were passed to rid the colony of Quakers. In 1657, a law was passed that forbid ships from bringing Quakers. If they did, they would be fined and forced to take the Quakers back to England. The next year, 1658, the General Assembly banished Quakers from the Virginia colony and fined one hundred pounds anyone who welcomed a Quaker in their home. In 1660, fines were imposed on those who failed to comply with militia regulations. Quakers were opposed to both participation in and funding of militias. A 1660 Virginia Statute described Quakers as “an unreasonable and turbulent sort of people, teaching and publishing lies, miracles, false visions, prophecies and doctrines.”^{vii} In 1661, a law was passed that fined anyone, including Quakers, who failed to attend services of an established church for a period of one month. In 1662 and 1663, laws were passed requiring children to be baptized Anglican and requiring everyone to attend Anglican services. Those attending Quaker meetings were fined 200 pounds of tobacco. Quaker marriages were not recognized.

In 1664 the Conventicle Act made it illegal for five or more to gather for worship outside the established Anglican church. While other sects that were considered heretical met in secret, Quakers met openly, knowing many would be arrested. Hundreds were imprisoned and hundreds more came forward to relieve them of their places. This demonstration of religious conviction gathered empathy from the public and helped to pave the way for the passage of the Act of Toleration in 1689. This act enabled the Quakers and other Protestants to hold their religious services openly and not have to conform to doctrines from the established church. However, in 1672 Quakers were forbidden by the Virginia colony to admit Africans to their meetings for worship.

Henry Watkins II (1637/1638-1714), my sixth great grandfather who was a Quaker, was fined in 1684 by the Henrico Court in Virginia for continuing in his Quakerism. In 1699, he contributed 500 pounds of tobacco so that a new Quaker Meeting House could be built at Curles in the Virginia Colony. He acquired a total of 590 acres. 360 of these acres, on the south side of the Chickahominy River, he gave to his sons. The rest, 230 acres, was his plantation at Malvern Hills. There is no record that he enslaved people. However, people around him did and it would not have been unusual if he had joined them.

Attempting to escape persecution, many Quakers moved to less desirable land, south of the James River (at Lower Norfolk, Nansemond, and Isle of Wight), near the Dismal Swamp, and to the Eastern Shore of Virginia (at the mouth of Nassawadox Creek). Since these lands were less suited to large scale tobacco production, Quaker colonists were likely to be in trade relations with other colonies and with the Caribbean.^{viii} Indeed, the Quakers in Virginia, such as Henry Watkins II, were in close contact with the Quakers in Barbados. Quaker proselytizers often

travelled between Barbados, Virginia, and Maryland. Quaker voices in Virginia were not raised to protest slaveholding and the slave trade, but Virginia Quakers would have been aware of the developing discourse on slavery among Quakers that started in Barbados. Barbados was to quickly become the most important English colony, and the largest community of Quakers in the Western hemisphere. Once sugar became its favored crop, the trafficking and enslaving of Africans rapidly increased.

Early Complicity with Slavery Begins at the “Top”

Quakers’ early complicity with slavery can be seen in the attitudes and beliefs of their founder, George Fox. In 1657, Fox wrote an epistle from England, “To Friends Beyond The Sea, That Have Blacks And Indian Slaves.”

.....*God*, that made the World, and all things therein, and giveth *Life* and *Breath* to all, and they all have their *Life* and *Moving*, and their *Being* in him, he is the *God* of the *Spirits* of the *Flesh*, and is no *Respecter* of *Persons*;.. And he hath made all *Nations* of *one Blood* to dwell upon the Face of the Earth, and his *Eyes* are over all the *Works* of his *Hands*, and seeth every thing that is done under the whole *Heavens*... And the *Gospel* is preached to every creature under Heaven; which is the Power that giveth *Liberty* and *Freedom*, and is *Glad Tidings* to every *Captivated Creature* under the whole heavens...

Fox argued that whether one is free or enslaved, Christian or heathen, that all are of one blood; all are able to receive the light. He does not argue against the kidnapping of “creatures,” although he did argue for preaching the gospel to those captured. He believed this would engender a spiritual—but not a literal—freedom. In addition, he argued that one should be merciful to the enslaved: “And so, ye are to have the *Mind* of *Christ*, and to be *Merciful*, as your

Heavenly Father is merciful.” While it is noteworthy that he addresses the condition of slavery, without yet having witnessed it directly, he does not call for its end or for immediate manumission, but for the amelioration of slavery through “merciful” conduct. Implicit in the call to preach the Gospel to enslaved Africans is his cultural assumption of that Christianity is a superior form of religion and that Quakerism is the correct expression of Christianity.

Ameliorative and Gradualist Approaches to Slavery

Enslaved people were trafficked to Barbados beginning in 1627 to work on sugar plantations. The Slave Codes, developed between 1661-1688, legislated the right of enslavers to beat, mutilate, and execute their slaves. In 1655, Quakers Ann Austin and Mary Fisher arrived in Barbados to proselytize. They found an interested audience and were able to convert many families. By 1680, there were 1200 Quakers on Barbados, 6% of the population. By 1700, there were thousands of Quakers living in Barbados who worshipped in five meeting houses. Quakers were plantation owners, shop owners, and merchants. All but four Quaker families enslaved Africans.^{ix}

In 1671, George Fox travelled to Barbados. He gave a sermon that, in part, urged enslavers to teach their captives about the Lord. It also enjoined them to direct their overseers to “deal mildly and gently” with the enslaved and not to use cruelty. He then went on to say the enslaved should be made free after serving for thirty years. While arguing against lifelong slavery, he was willing to acquiesce with sentences of thirty years, most or all of an enslaved person’s working life.

In 1676, Fox reiterated these themes in *“Gospel family-order...being a short discourse concerning the of families, both of whites, black, and Indians.”* Through preaching to the

enslaved, those enslaved could gain spiritual freedom, he argued. They would cease to practice polygamy. One should, he enjoined, act tenderly toward the enslaved.

...And therefore now you should preach the everlasting covenant, Jesus Christ to your *Ethiopian*, the *Blacks* and the *Tawny-Moors* that are in your families, that so they may be free Men indeed, and be tender of and to them, and walk in Love, that ye may answer that of God in their Hearts, being (as the Scripture affirms) all of one Blood...

He goes on to say that it would be acceptable to the Lord to “let them go free after a considerable Term of Years, if they have served them faithfully.” In this writing, he includes that when the enslaved are freed, they should not “go away empty-handed.” This is a modest beginning to the idea of reparations. Again, this ameliorative approach^x stops short of rejecting the slave trade and slaveholding. His suggestions are modest, given he had witnessed the brutality of slavery in Barbados.

Nevertheless, they were bold enough for their time to disturb non-Quakers in Barbados which led to their attempts to exclude new Quaker settlers. By advocating for conversion, historian Katherine Gerbner says, Fox was upsetting the ideology of Protestant Supremacy by which slavery was justified before race was invented as an alternative false rationalization.^{xi}

Concern for the Social Acceptance of Quakerism Trumps Calls for Abolition

In both Barbados and colonial Virginia, Quakers were to find themselves at odds with other landowners. They would not take part in or help fund militias. They would not defer to authority or take oaths. They would not pay church dues or marry in the Anglican church. Quakers were repeatedly fined and/or imprisoned for their willful disobedience.

While Quakers' purported commitment to equality did not lead George Fox to protest against slavery, it did lead him to urge Quakers to offer time for worship to those they enslaved, a practice that caused considerable consternation for their non-Quaker Christian white neighbors. Fox was advocating for Blacks to have their own meeting for worship. Non-Quakers feared that if Blacks met together unsupervised by white enslavers they would plan revolt.

The Anglican enslavers in Barbados were against efforts to convert the enslaved to Christianity and against worshipping alongside the enslaved. They feared that slaves becoming Christians would be a decisive step toward their freedom. They feared the Christianized enslaved would demand better treatment and ultimately reject their imposed status as enslaved people. The white planters believed that by allowing gatherings of the enslaved that the Quakers were instilling and fostering rebellion. They asserted that those who had been converted—almost none—were “more perverse and intractable.”^{xii} When a slave rebellion did occur in 1675, the Quakers and their attempts at conversion were blamed.^{xiii}

When Fox returned home to England, he was moved to write a letter to the Governor and Assembly of Barbados. Fox's rebuttal is disturbing. In it, he countered two lies or misconceptions about Quakers: mistaken claims that they were not Christians and that that they “teach negroes to rebel.” Far from challenging slavery, he asserted that Quakers would “utterly abhor and detest [the enslaved to rebel] in and from our hearts...” He counters that Quakers are teaching the enslaved “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....Then their Masters and Overseers will love them, and deal Kindly and Gently with them...” He takes offence that Quakers who are pacifists would be blamed for the violent rebellion. Rather than assert the

understandable reasons for the enslaved to seek their freedom, he chose to speak of how their conversion to Christianity would make them docile slaves. Rather than assist in instigating rebellion, Fox suggests that conversion would undermine it. Fox did not dispute slavery; he did not argue that enslaving others is inhumane or contradictory to Quakers' emphasis on equality. He sought changes that would allow slavery and Christianity to co-exist.

One of the roots of his timidity in not outright calling for manumission was his desire to have Quakers accepted by those in power and those in power were enslavers. He was not alone among Quakers in attempting to develop and maintain relationships with the wealthy and the powerful. Doing so required costly moral compromises. Having suffered from their outsider status in England and the colonies, many Quakers preferred to placate those in authority rather than be further ostracized and punished themselves.

Richard Pinder, a Quaker living in Barbados, wrote *A Loving Invitation (To Repentance and Amendment of life) Unto all the Inhabitants of Barbados* in 1660. He reminded his readers that slaves and indentured servants are made of the same blood as their masters. He warned that if masters cause suffering or death to those they have enslaved that God will be watching.

A fellow Quaker, William Edmundson, also agitated for the conversion of the enslaved, calling slavery an "aggravation" and "oppression."^{xiv} He doesn't quarrel with slavery per se, but with the kind of slavery that has no limit.^{xv} He too, however, marketed conversion as a way to make those enslaved more docile and less rebellious.^{xvi} He saw the enslaved as "accustomed [to] unclean practices, in defileing one another." He described the enslaved as "bad or worse than the Beasts of the Field."^{xvii} He positions the Quaker "master" as someone to watch over,

admonish, and educate in the way of the Lord.^{xviii} In 1676, the Barbados Council, after a minor slave rebellion, passed “An Act to prevent Quakers, from bringing Negroes to their Meetings.”

Also in 1676, Alice Curwen visited Barbados from England. Upon witnessing Martha Tavenor’s treatment of those she enslaved, Curwen wrote to her and called for not only for the spiritual freedom of those “whom thou callst they slaves,” but for their physical freedom. This was the boldest demand yet from a Quaker.^{xix}

Cultural and Spiritual Superiority: Conversion and the Creation of Race and Whiteness

Quakers were not alone in thinking their brand of religion was superior. They were joined by Protestants and Catholics from both Europe and the Americas. While Spanish and Portuguese colonizers used conversion as a tool of colonization, initially the British did not. They rationalized the use and abuse of other humans as slaves by conceiving of them as culturally inferior. As “heathens” and “savages”—as non-Christians—they were deemed in need of the discipline of slavery. There was no inquiry into African forms of spirituality that might have disabused them of their own assumed superiority.

In their eagerness to share the light of Christianity, some ministers and Quakers, like Fox, argued that efforts should be undertaken to convert the enslaved to Christianity. If this was allowed, others worried, how could a Christian justify enslaving other Christians? Conversion was placed at odds with the immense profitability that slavery and slave trading made possible. The more the push for conversion, the greater the pressure to find some other grounds on which slavery could be justified.

Katherine Gerbner, in *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* describes how race and color began to supplant religion in becoming the defining factors

of human bondage. This allowed conversion to proceed more rapidly in the British colonies, leaving the institution of slavery undisturbed.

It is troubling, indeed, to understand that the Eurocentrism that fueled beliefs of cultural and Protestant superiority led to efforts to convert and that these efforts spawned the monstrous divisions of people based on the constructs of race and whiteness, monstrous constructs that continue to destructively haunt our world today. The zeal to convert other people seen as deficient because they were not Christians, resulted in Protestant Christianity not being opposed to slavery but consistent with it. “The irony” says Gerbner, “is dark and yet unambiguous: the most self-sacrificing, faithful, and zealous missionaries in the Atlantic world formulated and theorized a powerful and lasting religious ideology for a brutal system of plantation labor.”^{xx} Quakers were at the forefront of this missionary zeal. Unfortunately, says Gerbner, “[b]y redefining slavery as a Christian institution with a religious cause [of conversion], slave owners weakened the development of an abolitionist movement.”^{xxi}

Concern for the Soul of the Enslaver, Not the Enslaved

Throughout the hundred years that Quakers engaged in slavery, some would advance arguments against slavery not because of the injustices of and harms inflicted by those perpetrating the institution of slavery, but because of the harms it was thought to visit upon the soul, safety, and possible salvation of the enslaver. Fox argued that on Judgement Day, enslavers would be judged negatively for the spiritual shortcomings of those they had enslaved and insufficiently brought into the light of Christianity.

It would have been impossible not to notice or be aware of the brutality of enslaving people in Barbados.

The Council and Assembly passed laws to restrict slaves' actions and movements: laws providing rewards for returning escaped slaves, assigning to masters wide latitude in the use of force to control their slaves, prescribing branding or beating for slaves who assaulted their masters, and execution for those who participated in rebellion. In practical terms, the legislation licensed a regime of extraordinary brutality... The harshness of the beatings and brandings stunned visitors. One, who was spending a few weeks on the island when the first Quakers arrived, claimed brutalizing slaves to the point of death scarcely bothered the planters more than killing dogs...[B]y any measure, the living conditions were abominable. ^{xxii}

One visitor, Richard Ligon, calculated that an enslaver who profited by 10,000 pounds a year, only spent 300 pounds a year to cloth and feed 100 slaves and indentured servants. ^{xxiii}

In this context, it is striking that many Quakers were more focused on the effects of enslaving on their own children than on those enslaved. Some argued that Quakers would compromise their children's character by owning slaves. If slaves were assigned the labors ordinarily assigned to children, the latter would not learn "the virtues of Hard work, simplicity and humility."^{xxiv} Despite this kind of warning, many Quakers even bequeathed those they enslaved to their children.

Some Quakers were also concerned that the profits accrued through the labors of the enslaved engendered lives that were far from simple and frugal. Contrary to Quaker testimony regarding the virtues of simplicity, wealthy Quakers were not immune from ostentatiousness that also then infected their children.

In 1683, Benjamin Furly urged Penn to limit slaveholding in Pennsylvania—not out of concern for slaves but to not discourage immigrants from choosing Pennsylvania as the colony they wished to establish themselves in. Often Quaker objections to slavery were laced with a sense that slavery and Africans themselves acted were pollutants to the Delaware Valley.^{xxv}

In 1696 a Welsh Quaker living outside Philadelphia, Cadwalader Morgan of Meirion, wrote a letter to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in which he shared his deliberations over whether or not he should purchase a slave. Rather than cite concern for the welfare of the enslaved person, he worried over whether he would be able to keep his vow of nonviolence and whether the enslaved person would bring wickedness into his household.^{xxvi} Morgan appealed to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to warn against slaveholding and the importing of slaves.^{xxvii} Far from proclaiming the human rights of those enslaved and the effects of violence on those enslaved, he asserted *their* moral corruptness. “What if I should have a bad one of them, that must be corrected, or would run away, or when I was from home and leave him with a woman or maid, and he should desire to commit wickedness?”^{xxviii} The Yearly Meeting agreed, giving the following advice to its members:

...be more careful not to Encourage the bringing in of any more Negroes, and that such that have Negroes be Careful of them, bring them from the Loose, and Lewd Living as much in them lies, and from Rambling abroad on First Days or other Times.

Even the 1754 “Epistle of caution and advice concerning the buying and keeping of slaves” of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting emphasized how slave keeping hardened the heart of the slaveholder and caused “a decline in pure Religion and Sobriety.” Katherine Gerbner argues that these kinds of urgings issued from the ways that the English viewed Africans—as

“unenlightened at best and dangerous at worst.”^{xxix} Despite their proclaimed ideals, Quakers shared the racist rhetoric of other Anglo-American enslavers of their time.

Despite these advices and warnings, there was an increase in the number of enslaved people coming to Pennsylvania in the early 1700’s. Pennsylvanians established their own codes to restrict both those enslaved and free Blacks. Intermarriage was banned in the state. A separate court for Blacks was established. Free black children could be indentured without their parents’ permission. There were restrictions on the traveling, drinking and trade of free Blacks.^{xxx}

Quakers were increasingly punished and ostracized in Barbados for their urging of the conversion of the enslaved and for supporting Quaker meetings among the enslaved. In addition, they were fined and jailed for their refusal to pay church taxes and to serve in the militia. Their livestock was often seized in quantities that were out of proportion to what they owed in fines for failing to support the militia or their non-attendance at prescribed church services. Gragg describes Quakers in Barbados as weakened by their outsider status, intermarriage, epidemics, accommodation to secular society, apathy, and dissension.^{xxxi} John Richardson, a Quaker who visited the island in 1702, noted that there was a growing “Love of Money, Pride, and Forgetfulness of God.”^{xxxii} The profits made from the labor of the enslaved enabled the ruling planters to live lavishly, as though they were English aristocracy. As Bajan historian Hilary Beckles puts it, racial supremacy became the guiding light.^{xxxiii} Quakers had hoped to bring some reforms to Barbados, but, in the end, they had clearly failed.

By the late 1600’s, many Quakers began to migrate from Barbados. Many went to the Quaker “mecca” of Pennsylvania, founded by Quaker William Penn on principles of equality, truth, simplicity, and peace; principles that were both proclaimed and violated. Penn conceived

of Pennsylvania as a “holy experiment,” one where religion could be freely practiced, one that was not organized around the military, and where people could practice Quakerism. William Penn himself owned slaves. While he hoped that Pennsylvania would feel like the Kingdom of God had arrived on earth. It surely did not feel that way to those held there in slavery. Pennsylvania, Barbados, and Virginia—indeed, all the British colonies—had profitability at the center of their intentions. Slavery was consistent with this aim and, for excess profits, it was too often required.

The Quaker migrants from Barbados often brought the people they enslaved to the City of Brotherly Love, Philadelphia and its surrounds. Indeed, around 1690, ten slave ships arrived from Barbados. While the Quakers from Barbados were steeped in the cautions and concerns of Fox, Edmundsen, and Curwen, they were also steeped in ameliorist approaches to slavery and in the everyday brutalities of slave management. Borrowing from the Slave Codes from Barbados, enslaved people found away from their place of servitude in Philadelphia on Sundays without a ticket from their owner were given 39 lashes. The City of Brotherly Love was also afraid of the rebellious possibilities of Blacks gathering together.^{xxxiv} Quakers had found ways to have daily and ongoing enslavement in their households coexist with their Quakerism, even when it violated their commitments to equality and nonviolence. By offering spiritual freedom, they took physical servitude in stride and continued to profit from it. This was a devil’s bargain that contributed to a century of hypocrisy in most Quaker communities.

Even when Pennsylvania Quaker households did not enslave people, they often profited nonetheless from the triangular slave trade by trading timber and food for slave-produced sugar

and cash, the latter being used to import goods from Europe.^{xxxv} Speaking against slavery in this context was to speak against one's own economic interests.

For too long Quakers focused on slavery as a sin for the slave trader and the slave holder rather than a grievous social condition perpetuating multiple forms of violence on those enslaved. "Most reformers," says Soderlund, "viewed slaveholding as a sin to be banned from the Society, rather than a condition from which Afro-Americans must be delivered." This formulation delayed humanitarian efforts to protect those manumitted from recapture, to offer free education, and to provide financial and material resources to those exiting slavery to begin a secure and resourced life.^{xxxvi}

Passing the Buck to Maintain Slavery

...There is a saying, that we shall doe to all men like as we will be done ourselves; making no difference of what generation, descent or colour they are. And those who steal or robb men, and those who buy or purchase them, are they not all alike? Here is liberty of conscience, w[h]ich is right and reasonable; here ought to be likewise liberty of ye body...

1688 Germantown Protest

The first Quaker anti-slavery statement to be publicly voiced in North America was written in 1688 in Germantown, Pennsylvania.^{xxxvii} It was called the 1688 Germantown Protest. Its four Dutch-German authors--- Garret Hendericks, Derick up de Graff, Francis Daniell Pastorius, and Abraham up Den Graef--boldly stated they were "against the traffick of men-body" and urged not only the end of the slave trade but the freeing of all slaves. Unlike Penn or Fox, they declared that slavery and Christianity were not compatible. Slavery should not be

considered a practice suitable for Christians. Those enslaved have the right not only to spiritual liberty but to bodily liberty.

They used the Golden Rule to build empathy for the enslaved: “Is there any that would be done or handled in this manner? Viz., to be sold or made a slave for all the time of his life?” They argue that the Golden Rule should be applied, regardless of “generation, descent or Colour.” They reminded Quakers of their own fear of being taken into slavery by Turks. They underlined that the enslaved had every right to rebel against their servitude and posed the query of how would Quakers respond to rebellion when they are supposedly committed to nonviolence through their Peace Testimony. Would they use the sword against those seeking freedom or allow themselves to be taken into slavery? The writers made it clear that if one is not to steal, one must not steal persons and their labor. They added that potential immigrants would avoid Pennsylvania because of the possibility of slave rebellion, limiting the colony’s possibilities for growth.

In the light of the current tragedy of the U.S. separating children from their parents at the U.S.-Mexico border, it is note-worthy that the Germantown protesters underlined the inhumanity of separating families and the selling of enslaved children away from their mothers and fathers.

Pray, what thing in the world can be done worse towards us, than if men should rob or steal us away, and sell us for slaves to strange countries; separating husbands from their wives and children.

This bold moral rejection of slavery was offered by the four Quaker men to the preparatory Quaker Meeting at Dublin in Pennsylvania. Instead of entering into dialogue about it

until a judgment could be delivered, they said that it was “not expedient...to meddle with it” and referred it up the Quaker chain of command to the Quarterly Meeting. Here too the opportunity to grapple with its contents until a positive consensus was determined was rejected: “it being a thing of too great a weight for this meeting to determine.” It was referred further upward to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. They dismissed coming to judgment on the Germantown Protest, stating—while evading—that it “was adjudged not to be so proper for this Meeting to Give a Positive judgment in the case, it having so General a Relation to many Other P[a]rts and therefore at present they forbear it.”^{xxxviii}

While many Quakers had themselves escaped persecution and imprisonment in Europe, many saw no contradiction in enslaving Africans. While half of the Quakers in the Philadelphia area owned enslaved Africans, the German Quakers, coming from a society unaccustomed to slavery, did not.^{xxxix} Three of the men had long associations with the Mennonites. Indeed, Mennonites refused to enslave people or engage in the slave trade from the beginning of their tenure in the colonies.^{xl} This contrast throws Quakers’ complicity and complacency into sharp relief. It could have been otherwise.

Quaker meetings tried to have it both ways: take up the “weighty” issues of slave trading and slaveholding and then defer the issue to a higher body.^{xli} While this acknowledged the anti-slavery voices in their midst, the deferral served those members who continued to profit from slavery and who had no desire to do otherwise.

Extruding, Muffling, and Punishing Abolitionists

Until the mid 1750’s most of the Quakers in leadership positions in Pennsylvania enslaved people. Many also held legislative positions in addition to holding power in Quaker meetings.

When anti-slavery protests were brought to Quaker Meetings, it was usually from those on the peripheries of power. This was certainly true of the Germantown protesters who did not hold positions in the existing Quaker hierarchies of the day..

While those on the periphery may have initially been listened to, as is Quaker custom, if their protest became too sharp and insistent, they could find themselves extruded from the Quaker community. In some instances, those who were most loyal and adherent to Quaker testimonies and values of equality, peace, simplicity, and nonviolence were the ones shoved outside the community of Quakers. Such was the situation of Benjamin Lay (1682-1759). He was not the only one.

Marcus Rediker, one of Lay's biographers, calls Lay "an antinomian radical—someone who believed that salvation could be achieved by grace alone and that a direct connection to God placed the believer above man-made law."^{xlii} Lay was not one to bow down to worldly authority but to rail against the injustices of his day, be they capitalist values, the death penalty, the killing of animals, consumerism, and, of course, slavery. He refused to drink tea and alcohol and rejected tobacco as well. He had been schooled by the place of his birth-- Essex, England --to disrupt when injustice occurs. Indeed, says Rediker, the people of Essex had a history of protesting against the enclosure of common lands, unfair elections, the allocation of grain, weavers' wages, and the authority of ministers and the church."^{xliii}

Benjamin and his wife, Sarah Lay (1677-1735), directly encountered the horrors of slavery when they lived in Barbados for four years. As a shopkeeper there, he witnessed the stinging and persistent hunger of those enslaved. Sarah Lay witnessed the barbaric torture of an enslaved person, accused of running away by his Quaker enslaver. When she protested his treatment, the

Quaker enslaver showed no remorse.^{xiv} They were convinced that slavery was unchristian and certainly in violation of Quaker values. In addition to creating a stream of writing against not only slave trading but slaveholding, Benjamin Lay took his message directly into houses of worship and other public meeting places. He seized his audience's attention and their ire by what we now call "performance art."^{xlv}

In 1738, he addressed the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, declaring that slaveholding is the greatest sin in the world. It doesn't matter who the person is—man or woman, rich or poor, white or black. God, he said, respects all people alike. He went even further, saying that those who violate the Golden Rule can expect physical, moral, and spiritual death. Before arriving at meeting, he had prepared a military costume and sword under his usual clothes and armed a book with a bag of red berry juice. When he reached his final statement—"Thus shall God shed the blood of those persons who enslave their fellow creatures"—he revealed his costume and pierced the book with his sword. The blood-like substance flowed down his body and then he splattered the "blood" on to the heads of enslavers. Rather than take heed of his dramatic prophecy, members of the meeting carried him out and placed him on the porch of the meeting house. At the end of meeting, Quakers had to literally step over him to keep on their paths.

Lay was deeply concerned by enslavers' stealing and selling African children and, once in the colonies, separating African children from their parents to sell them. He tried to raise Quaker awareness on this issue by hiding a 6-year-old child for several hours, while his parents and neighbors grew increasingly concerned about the child's welfare. He was trying to arouse their empathy about what having a child stolen from them might feel like. He had also aroused their ire.

His unsettling and confrontational messages were rebuffed by personal attacks on him. Some derided him as “unhinged,” “a trouble maker,” “a disorderly person,” “deranged,” “mentally deficient,” while others heckled and laughed at him.^{xlvi} He was accused of “indiscreet zeal,” violating the mores of peaceable conduct that were expected of attenders at Quaker meetings. While Lay argued that those who violated Christian and Quaker principles should be dismissed from their churches, it was Lay who got thrown out of Quaker Meetings—both physically and through the cancelling of his memberships in various meetings. Not only was he disowned by the Quakers, but they even took out ads in Philadelphia newspapers to announce that he was not representing Quakers and that Friends did not approve of his book, *All Slave-Keepers that Keep the Innocents in Bondage, Apostates*, published by Benjamin Franklin in 1738. While fellow Quakers made Lay a victim of public shaming and their form of cancel culture, he was not deterred.

George Fox, Quakerism’s founder, had introduced a hierarchical structure with rituals of self-censorship and collective discipline into Quaker life.^{xlvii} Quakers were opposed to building fancy churches, preferring to meet in simple meeting houses. They called each congregation a monthly meeting. Each quarter these local meetings gathered for a regional meeting, called the quarterly meeting. Preparatory and local meetings for worship reported to quarterly meetings that covered a larger geographical area. The quarterly meetings reported to Yearly Meetings that covered a much larger geographical area. To carry one’s ministry outside of one’s own meeting, the members of one’s meeting had to agree to issue a certificate for itinerant ministry. To change meetings, there was a conferral process between one’s old meeting and the potentially

new meeting. To publish one's writings, one was to gain permission from a group that held this responsibility.

In 1737, Lay was removed from membership of Abington Monthly Meeting because he was deemed "disruptive." Two of those who sat in judgment of his conduct were enslavers.^{xlviii} Lay did not gain permission from his Quaker peers to publish his writing and so he turned to Benjamin Franklin in 1738 to publish *All Slave-Keepers That Keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates*. He did not mince his words! He called "Man-stealers" the spawn of Satan. He was clear that God "did not make others to be slaves to us." It did not matter what color or nation the person belongs to. For as Jeremiah (22:15) said: "Wo unto him that buildeth his House by Inequity, and useth his Neighbour's Service without Wages, and giveth him no for his Work." Lay had taken the time to get to know some who were enslaved and was clear that if they had been given "the same Education, Learning, Conversation, Books, [and] sweet Communion in our Religious Assemblies" that their "Piety, Virtue and Godliness" would exceed that of many of the people who owned them.

Quakers railed against his book and denied him his right to speak at Quaker meetings. They declared that they "could not approve of his ministry." He was not the only principled abolitionist to be attacked. Ralph Sandiford, who boldly described involvement with slavery as a sin, was so attacked by his contemporaries that his psychological suffering and early death are often attributed to his treatment by fellow Quakers.

When anti-slavery Quakers in Chester Monthly Meeting unanimously voiced their views against the slave trade in 1715, they were countered by injunctions from the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting that they should not sow division in their meetings; that they should not offend those

who owned enslaved people.^{xlix} Meeting leaders urged members to “forbear judging or reflecting on one another either in public or private concerning the detaining and keeping them [blacks] Servants.”^{li} When John Farmer, a Quaker from Nantucket, took his abolitionist concerns to the Newport Yearly Meeting, he was censored and forbidden to publish his critique. Quaker William Sotheby worked for total emancipation. Knowing he would not be able to gain approval from Quaker overseers of what Quakers could publish with the support of their meetings, he published them himself. For this principled breach of protocol, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting censored him.^{li}

Words, But No Actions

Once an action was deemed an enforceable breach of Quaker discipline, Quakers had the practice of sending several seasoned members to meet with those who required discipline. Often there was more than a single conversation. A chance was usually given for reform, but, if unsuccessful, the person might be disallowed from Meetings for Business and positions of leadership. In some cases, they were dropped from membership. A range of offences were deemed actionable, including drunkenness and assault.

The Philadelphia Yearly meeting had advised as early as 1719 that Friends should not buy or sell enslaved persons. But there were no sanctions attached, no teeth of enforcement or punishment. It took almost forty years, until 1758, for trading in enslaved persons to become an actionable offence. It took eighteen more years for the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1776 to make the owning of enslaved people an actionable breach. Some members and meetings proclaimed the righteous moral that one should cease slave trading. Fewer still mentioned the sin of enslaving of people. Others lobbied to leave in place leadership and decision makers who

gained profit from human trafficking and from enslaving itself. While in the majority, they tenaciously held on to their power to forestall emancipation.

A Changing Tide

In the mid-1750's, Quakers in Pennsylvania began to resign from their posts in colonial government to protest involvement in the Seven Years War. Once unburdened by their legislative tasks, their energies more decisively turned to cleaning their own "house" of the worldly trappings they had accumulated, while turning to humanitarian causes, including abolition. By this time, there were fewer enslavers in the ranks of Quaker leadership positions, creating an increased possibility of meetings being able to turn to meaningful action against slave trading and slaveholding. Now fewer than one in three Quakers in leadership positions enslaved people.^{lii}

In 1754, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting offered the "Epistle of caution and advice concerning the buying and keeping of slaves." Rather than solely focusing on slave trading, it was unambivalent in advising Friends to "avoid, in any Manner encouraging that Practice of making *slaves* of our Fellow Creatures." This epistle crystallizes the various critiques of slavery that had been circulating among Quakers for a hundred years: "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." Slavery was against the Golden Rule; it was inconsistent with Quakers' Peace Testimony; slave trading was Man-Stealing, punishable by death in the Bible; and slavery, by separating wives and husbands, promoted adultery.

In 1758, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting finally added teeth to what earlier were advisories. It made slave trading “an enforceable breach of Quaker discipline.” The Golden Rule was invoked once again to call for the emancipation of all slaves. Provisions were created to monitor whether members were in compliance. If after efforts to counsel enslavers, they were still noncompliant, they would now be excluded from Meetings for Business, disallowed from making contributions to the poor and to their meetings, and stopped from holding leadership positions.^{liii} Three years later, in 1761, the London Yearly Meeting took the same step, saying that slavery was “a practice so repugnant to our Christian profession.” English and colonial Quakers were now formally in agreement: they would work to prevent Quakers from being involved in the “unchristian traffick of dealing in Negroes.” Finally, in 1776, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting prohibited slaveholding and advocated disownment for those who would not manumit the enslaved. While meetings varied in their responsiveness to the injunctions from the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Quakers on both sides of the Atlantic were now in the position to become principled leaders of an international abolitionist movements. Their own house had finally been set in order.

By 1784—ninety-six years after the Germantown Protest that had voiced the essential arguments against slavery-- no Quakers were enslavers in the U.S.^{liv} During the previous century, many Quakers had amassed fortunes from forced and stolen labor and human trafficking. Others had enjoyed lives of comfort, made possible only through the withholding of freedom to others. While enslaved families were separated when individual members were sold to separate locations, while small communities of enslaved people were continually broken apart by the slave trade, while the bodies and life energies of the enslaved were used up for the financial

benefit of others, the standard of living rose for enslavers. This “higher” standard of living became a source of misplaced pride, adding to the denigration of Afro-Americans who were the primary source of labor for its creation. The city of Philadelphia, the continuing center of organized Quaker life, grew and thrived, becoming the center of the colonies as the Revolutionary War approached.

Quaker Failure to Recognize and Root Out Cultural, Religious, and Racial Supremacy

While George Fox declared the enslaved “equal before God and able to receive the light,” even a hundred years later this still did not mean that Blacks were conceived of as equal before men. Segregation flourished. Even after Philadelphia Yearly Meeting not only proclaimed the evils of slavery but also punished, sometimes extruding, members who failed to reform, most Quakers did not treat those enslaved and freed Blacks as equals to be fully included. Indeed, it was not until the mid-1790’s that Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Quakers even allowed African-Americans to become members of the Society of Friends.^{lv} There were still Quaker cemeteries that divided white from Black graves. While some meetings raised funds to assist Africans with necessities they lacked, they too often did so with a patronizing air. Some schools were created for African children, with the explicit or underlying hope to “civilize” them according to the mores and beliefs of the Quaker community.

Most Quakers did not recognize their own racist prejudices that cast Blacks in a light of inferiority. Their own false representations of Blacks engendered a white paternalism laced with condescension.^{lvi} For instance, the Western Quarterly Meeting in 1778 called for “Religious Instruction & Encouragement, in a Life of Sobriety, & the Fear of God...to encourage, them to an

Honest, Industrious Care for the Necessaries of this Life; which may be a means to preserve them from the Corruptions that these poor People have been too much indulged in.”^{lvii}

Historian Soderlund describes Quakers with a humanitarian orientation as reformers intent on supervising, surveilling, and controlling those freed.^{lviii} They did not want to bring disrepute to the Society of Friends for manumitting people who were then deemed by whites to behave poorly or who might become fiscal burdens on their towns. Many monthly meetings arranged to regularly visit the formerly enslaved their members had manumitted. They urged them to place their older children into apprenticeships and to send their younger children to Quaker-led schools. Some monthly meetings invited Blacks to white-led Quaker meetings “to promote Piety and Virtue amongst them, and impress in their Minds, a Sense of the Nature of Spiritual Worship and Adoration, to the Author of their Being.”^{lix} The condescension of Quakers was not lost on members of the Black community. In *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit*, Soderlund lays the situation bare.

From the perspective of the blacks involved, then Quaker philanthropy was less than satisfactory. Quaker meetings extended financial help when needed, but exacted a price for that aid in supervising the binding out of children and the drawing up of contracts between blacks and their employers. In accepting monetary help, freed men and women discovered, as do recipients of public assistance today, that they lost independence in making decisions concerning their own families. And beyond financial matters, the Friends also expected the blacks to conform to white Christian (perhaps Quaker) standards of morality, attend special Friends meetings held for blacks (but conducted by whites), and send their children to special schools set up for blacks (but

again controlled by white Quakers). Blacks benefited from the Friends' system of mutual aid and endured, with varying degrees of patience, their paternalistic concern.^{lx}

Unfortunately, as Soderlund underlines, as Quakers became leaders in the trans-Atlantic abolition movement, their attitude of paternalism—along with their efforts to surveil and control Black people and their communities—became an integral part of the abolitionist movement. The “gradualist, segregationist, and paternalistic policies [that] developed for almost a century within the Society of Friends” now became widely shared in the white abolitionist movement.^{lxi}

Prefigurative Exceptions and Helpful Structures for Organizing

There were notable exceptions to this racist paternalism by Quakers who had taken the time to form ongoing relationships with freed Blacks and enslaved people. Through these relationships, they had come to recognize and appreciate Blacks' intelligence, skills, and values, and to acknowledge the prejudices of most of their fellow Quakers.

Anthony Benezet established a school for free Blacks in Philadelphia in 1750. He worked with the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1770 to open the Africans' School. He believed that Blacks were just as capable of learning as whites. He and abolitionist John Woolman began to collaborate. Now that the leadership determining what could be approved and printed by Quakers was more decisively in favor of abolition, Woolman decided in 1754 to publish *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes: Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination*. It was accepted and widely disseminated. This was the first antislavery tract to be approved by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. In it, Woolman appeals to the younger generation to break with the practices of their elders. He also counters the self-created sense of

superiority that had cast aspersions on “Negroes,” calling it a “Darkness in the Understanding.”

He asks his reader to consider the ways that “Negroes” have been treated.

Again, to conclude a People froward, perverse, and worse by Nature than others (who ungratefully receive Favours, and apply them to bad Ends) this will excite a Behaviour toward them unbecoming the Excellence of true Religion.

To prevent such Error, let us calmly consider their Circumstance; and, the better to do it, make their Case ours. Suppose, then, that our Ancestors and we had been exposed to constant Servitude in the more servile and inferior Employments of Life; that we had been destitute of the Help of Reading and good Company; that amongst ourselves we had had few wise and pious Instructors; that the Religious amongst our Superiors seldom took Notice of us, that while others, in Ease, have plentifully heap'd up the Fruit of our Labour, we had receiv'd barely enough to relieve Nature, and being wholly at the Command of others, had generally been treated as a contemptible, ignorant Part of Mankind: Should we, in that Case, be less abject than they now are? Again, If Oppression be so hard to bear, that a wise Man is made mad by it, *Eccl. vii. 7*, then a Series of those Things altering the Behaviour and Manners of a People, is what may reasonably be expected.

Those who think that “Negroes” fall short must remember how they and others have treated them and ask themselves if they would have fared any better under these oppressions.

While one might question the rightness of some of Woolman's descriptors, this is a critically important argument. As discussed in Chapter One, once those enslaved began to become Christians, white Christians could no longer argue that they should be enslaved because they were non-Christians. Christian enslavers turned to the racist argument that Africans could be enslaved because they were inferior peoples. Woolman, like Frantz Fanon two hundred years later, argued that it was Christians' treatment of Africans that resulted in behaviors and conditions that were then derided by those who had created them, misreading them as essential characteristics rather than the result of abuse and exploitation..

Woolman warned that the assumed superiority of enslavers spawned a destructive legacy for their children. Children who were brought up with luxury and ease, arrogantly lorded over the enslaved like young masters. In such families, exploitation became naturalized and passed from generation to generation. Woolman carefully held together concerns for both those enslaved and for enslavers.

Many Quakers were more focused on the latter and on making sure the Society of Friends was made pure by eliminating their members' participation in chattel slavery, than they were on the welfare of the formerly enslaved. Soderlund describes the contrast between this kind of tribalistic reform tradition and a humanitarian reform tradition. Those embarked on the latter were aware that many Blacks needed legal assistance and protection from corrupt or unfair whites. They urged former enslavers and their own meetings to support older and disabled Blacks who could not work.^{lxii} They set about creating schools for Black children. Some Quakers used their energies to try to manumit relatives of freed Black people.

One hundred and eighty-nine years before emancipation, George Fox had called for some restitution to those formerly enslaved, saying they should not “go away empty-handed.”^{lxiii} A hundred years before emancipation, Quakers and their Quaker meetings began to turn their attention to paying restitution for past labor, presaging the current racial reparations movements. Abner Woolman, John Woolman’s brother, turned to his meeting to decide how much he should pay to two enslaved people his wife inherited from her father and then manumitted. This practice of asking other Quakers to determine the appropriate amount of restitution became more common. Unfortunately, they did not ask the manumitted themselves. Some Quakers paid “freedom dues” to those who were manumitted, compensating them for forced labor from age 18 on.^{lxiv} If the enslaved person had already died, the dues were to be paid to next of kin.

While I have focused on what delayed and hobbled Quakers’ path to abolition, during the hundred years surveyed here, Quakers *had* slowly developed what historian Brycchan Carey describes as “a discourse of antislavery that underpinned and informed all later antislavery discourse, both in America and Europe.”^{lxv} Their meetings allowed for some measure of dialogue around slavery over decades, even as their leadership throttled full expression and delayed decisive judgment against slavery. Once their own religious house was finally more fully in order, Quakers could now advance their arguments to the larger society. In 1790, Quakers petitioned the US Congress to abolish slavery. In 1807, the British Parliament outlawed the slave trade.

One Quaker ritual to encourage self-reflection and community discernment is the introduction of queries to monthly and quarterly meetings. These queries, crafted by the yearly meetings, are steadfastly and regularly addressed by monthly and quarterly meetings, helping

Quakers learn and reflect on the central spiritual tenets of Quakerism so they are better able to knit them into their lives. In 1743, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting added a query concerning slavery: “Do Friends observe the former advice of our Yearly Meeting, not to Encourage the Importation of Negroes nor to buy them after Imported?” Such an addition finally normalized and encouraged ongoing reflection regarding whether individuals were conforming to the community’s expectation to halt their participation in the slave trade.

Another Quaker practice was for seasoned members to visit and speak with members whose behavior was in conflict with the central tenets of Quakerism. In 1730 the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting enjoined monthly meetings to monitor and chastise members who were enslaving people. John Woolman and other elders were asked to visit with those still trafficking enslaved persons and owning enslaved persons. Oftentimes, multiple visits would be made until the member in violation manumitted those they had enslaved or refused to do so, whereupon the enslavers were removed from Quaker membership.

Carey describes political change as a three-part process where the change is first imagined, then advocated, then enacted. He argues that by 1720 Quakers everywhere were aware of the dialogues concerning slavery in Philadelphia. While the Quakers had initially focused on equality with regard to spiritual freedom—the possibility for every person to be able to experience the inward light of God--they eventually embraced the need for physical freedom as well. Kindly treatment of someone enslaved for life or for thirty years was finally judged to be woefully inadequate, as was continuing slavery while treating those one enslaved more “mildly.”

Coda

Sadly, as I learned this history, it was not difficult to locate its analogues in the present moment. This is so not only with regard to how humans continue to live in the face of oppression, racial and cultural supremacy, and imposed inequality and injustice, but also in the face of human wrought widespread ecocide and degradation. If Benjamin Lay, John Woolman, or Anthony Benezet were alive, they insist on connecting human oppression and the oppression of animals, as they did in their own lifetimes by becoming vegetarians. They would recognize and reject ameliorist and gradualist approaches to widespread climate change, species loss, and the deadening of soils and waters. They would also recognize how we make arguments for climate action based on its consequences for humans, without barely a nod to the earth, sky, waters, and other-than-human creatures that are condemned by the consequences of our actions and inactions. They would not be surprised to see how we dismiss and, even at times, punish those who startle and dismay by their performance art of protest. We, like early Quakers, are pretty good at thinking about what should be done, without being willing to put teeth behind our advisories. While continuing to place into positions of power those who profit economically—historically and currently-- most from the status quo, we neutralize the efforts of many on the peripheries of institutional power who insist on a radical revision of daily practices that contribute to the unfolding catastrophe. Presumed human superiority over other creatures and the earth itself is used to maintain the right to pollute, to extract, murder, and desecrate without adequate sanctions. Kicking the can along from one climate change conference to the next has been largely accepted as “the way things are,” while oil lobbyists make sure the interests of their corporations are not curtailed. While protest becomes more organized in some spheres, in other places oil drilling, fracking, and resource extractionism become more concerted. Addiction to

fossil fuels and self-created standards of comfort continue to be normalized in the face of mounting climate wrought disasters, wiping out not only humans but also bioregions and countless other-than-human creatures.

Quakers and Mennonites were the first religious groups in the U.S. to be united in their memberships against slavery. While Quaker abolitionist resolve strengthened at the end of the 18th century, the cancer of chattel slavery was metastasizing in the American South. In the century before the Civil War, many of my ancestors in North Carolina and Tennessee accumulated excess profit from the stolen freedom and labor of kidnapped Africans and African-Americans, held in servitude through legislation, violence, and brutality. It is to this period that I will turn to next.

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- ⁱⁱ Margaret Hope Bacon, *The Quiet Rebels: The Story of Quakers in America* (New Society Publishers, 1985): 13.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Bacon, *The Quiet Rebels*, 15.
- ^{iv} Bacon, *The Quiet Rebels*, 18
- ^v Quoted in Bacon, *The Quiet Rebels*, 19
- ^{vi} Larry Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados: Challenging the Culture of the Planter Class, Vol. 1* (University of Missouri, 2009): 42
- ^{vii} W. Craven, *The Southern Colonies in the 17th Century, 1607-1689* (Louisiana State University Press, 1964): 230
- ^{viii} Quakers in Virginia, <http://www.virginiaplaces.org/religion/quakers.html>
- ^{ix} Katherine Gerbner, "Slavery in the Quaker World," *Friends Journal* (2019).
- ^x Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, 2012
- ^{xi} Katherine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).
- ^{xii} William Noel Sainsbury & John William Fortescue, eds., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, 1677-1680* (Public Record Office, UK, 2012): 611.
- ^{xiii} Katherine Gerbner, "The Ultimate Sin: Christianizing Slaves in Barbados in the Seventeenth Century," *Slavery and Abolition*, 31, 1(2010): 57-73.
- ^{xiv} Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, 64.
- ^{xv} Adam R. Beach, "A Reappraisal of the Quakers and the Development of Anti-Slavery Thought," *The Eighteenth Century*, 54, 4 (2015): 513.
- ^{xvi} Gerbner, "Slavery in the Quaker World."
- ^{xvii} Quoted in Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados*, 137.
- ^{xviii} Katherine Gerbner, "'We are Against the Traffik of Men-Body': The Germantown Quaker Protest of 1688 and the Origins of American Abolitionism," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 7, 2, (2007): 155.
- ^{xix} Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, 2012.
- ^{xx} Gerbner, *Christian Slavery*, 196.
- ^{xxi} Gerbner, "The Ultimate Sin," 70.
- ^{xxii} Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados*, 31-32
- ^{xxiii} Robert Ligon & Karen O. Kupperman, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (Hackett Publishing Co., 2011).
- ^{xxiv} Gerbner, "'We are Against the Traffik of Men-Body,'" 155.
- ^{xxv} Jean Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton University Press, 1985), 174.
- ^{xxvi} Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, 97
- ^{xxvii} Gerbner, "'We are Against the Traffik of Men-Body.'"
- ^{xxviii} Quoted in Gerbner, "'We are Against the Traffik of Men-Body,'" 155.
- ^{xxix} Gerbner, "'We are Against the Traffik of Men-Body,'" 158.
- ^{xxx} Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 41.

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- xxxix Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados*, 144.
- xxxix Quoted in Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados*, 156.
- xxxix Hilary Beckles, *A History of Barbados* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- xxxix Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*.
- xxxix Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, 12.
- xxxix Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 176-177.
- xxxix Gerbner, "Slavery in the Quaker World."
- xxxix Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, 76.
- xxxix 1688 Petition Against Slavery. Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust.
- xl Theodore W. Allen & Jeffrey B. Perry, *The Invention of the White Race, V. II: The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America* (Verso Books, 2012), 31(footnote 82)
- xli Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 166.
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