

The Struggle to Shine:  
The Inward Light and Quaker Children and Youth, 1652-1762

by

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## **Abstract**

The Religious Society of Friends, also called the Quakers, were a group of antinomian Christians whose origins lay in the chaotic period of the English Revolution. They were characterized by a radical belief in the spiritual equality of all peoples, no matter their sex, race, or social status. This equality was based on the Quaker notion that an element of the divine, the “inward light” of Christ, existed within all people. This equality also encompassed Quaker children and youths, in various ways that changed over time in the movement’s history. This thesis relies on printed and manuscript sources, mostly Quaker in origin. It explores the relationship between the Quaker belief in the inward light and the lives and portrayals of the religion’s youngest members. This thesis argues that the theology of the inward light was critical to the experience and conception of Quaker childhood and youth.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

One of the disruptive and radical sects that arose during the English Civil War, the Society of Friends was based on the belief that the “inward light” of Christ existed within every person, of all races, genders, and ages. While the consequences of this belief within the family have been explored, especially in terms of Quaker women’s role in domestic and religious life, its implications for childhood and childrearing are less well studied. Few early modern Englishmen and women disputed the natural hierarchy of child-parent relations, but for Quaker families, belief and practice were more complex. The inward light rendered children and parents spiritual equals. Although this did not override traditional parental authority, Quakers believed that the inward light could, and should, guide even young children. This thesis will explore the effects of the Quaker belief in the inward light of Christ on the actions, lives, and depictions of young Friends. It will cover the period from the movement’s origins in the early 1650s to the middle of the eighteenth century, when the Quakers were an established sect with different concerns than their radical forebears.

The early Quaker movement was very disruptive to existing family structures, for converts often joined the Quaker movement against their parents’ will. In addition, the emerging sect’s historical context – the tumultuous years of the English Revolution and Interregnum – encouraged millenarian beliefs both in Quakers and in society more generally.<sup>1</sup> Some have argued that, because of this, early Friends paid little attention to

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 182. Barbour argued that “early Quaker thought was apocalyptic, viewing the era as the climax of history.”

either traditional family structures or to potential new modes of childrearing.<sup>2</sup> This was, broadly speaking, true, but early Quaker nomenclature complicated this de-emphasis. Far from downplaying the importance of the family, early Friends expanded its meaning, portraying themselves as a united, religious family. They identified themselves with names like “Children of the Light” and the “Church of the Brethren.”<sup>3</sup> Once the era of mass conversion had passed, however, the traditional family gained new importance. After the political and religious situation in England became more stable after the Restoration in 1660, and the Act of Toleration in 1689, new Quakers came not from conversion en-masse but primarily from within existing Quaker families.

This transition was problematic in some respects. Quakerism was not merely a set of beliefs passed from one generation to the next, but also a cluster of practices and, ultimately, a lived experience of closeness with the spirit of Jesus Christ that was thought to reside within each individual. Thus, to be a Friend, a child must have a genuine, conversion-style experience, like the first Quakers. Parents believed that their role included fostering a mindset receptive to experiencing the inward light, although the importance of the transformative conversion was later moderated, and meetings gradually recognized “birthright” Quakers, and officially did so in 1737.<sup>4</sup> In addition, parents needed to inculcate in children beliefs and practices that fostered radical social equality, especially plain speech and plain dress, all while protecting the young from the corrosive influence of mainstream English society.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 167. Vann notes that Meeting epistles did not mention children until 1688, and that few books addressing the duties of parents and children were published before this point.

<sup>3</sup> J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), 64.

<sup>4</sup> Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 108.

The Quaker movement also challenged traditional gender norms. The inward light meant that husbands and wives were spiritual equals, at least in theory, and many women played an important and active role in advancing Quakerism. Quaker women participated in meetings, traveled through Europe and the Atlantic World on preaching tours, and published pamphlets defending the tenets of their faith.<sup>5</sup> This challenge to traditional gender roles had implications for young Quakers as well, even aside from the impact of being reared by a spiritually empowered mother. George Fox believed that Quakers should educate children of both genders in schools, and this belief persisted among Friends over time. Susan Mosher Stuard has noted, for example, that five of the first eleven women who became physicians in America were Quakers.<sup>6</sup>

As this thesis demonstrates, the Quaker movement also challenged traditional ideas about childhood, childrearing, and the relationship between young and old English people. There were several different, and contradictory, contemporary schemes that described and delineated the “ages of man” in early modern England. Very generally, English people recognized an infancy that lasted until about age seven; a childhood that ran until age fifteen, and a youth that ended anywhere between age twenty-one and forty.<sup>7</sup> Paul Griffiths has studied the “vocabulary of age” through early modern English court records, using cases from London and Norwich that used age-titles and also

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<sup>5</sup> Susan Mosher Stuard, “Women’s Witnessing: A New Departure” in *Witnesses for Change: Quaker Women over Three Centuries*, ed. Elizabeth Potts Brown and Susan Mosher Stuard (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 3. Stuard argues that “for women the apogee of the Protestant Reformation arrived with Quakerism.” *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>7</sup> Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 54-56. This paper will not examine “youths” in their thirties, but will define youth in a way more familiar to modern readers, as a stage after childhood that ends sometime in the late teens or early twenties.

recorded the age of the offender.<sup>8</sup> He found a “degree of plasticity” in definition, but also noted that eighty percent of those called “child” were under ten years old, while ninety percent of “boys” were between the ages of ten and eighteen.<sup>9</sup> While definitions were often fuzzy, the events that demarcated age-groups were clearer. Life-cycle events like service, apprenticeship, and marriage, and religious rituals and organization, had more import in defining social status than did numerical age.<sup>10</sup>

Quaker conceptions of childhood and youth differed, in some respects, from those of their contemporaries. Critically, Friends rejected the notion of original sin.<sup>11</sup> Young Quakers were thought to be innocent until the time they could conceive of sin and be sinners; this age varied, though J. William Frost suggests it was somewhere between four and eight years old.<sup>12</sup> From that age, children were expected to struggle with sin much as adults did; to listen to, commune with, and heed the inward light; and to participate in Quaker meetings. This last assumes an un-childlike demeanor, as Quaker meetings were largely silent affairs: worshippers spoke only when moved by the light of Christ within. Quakers believed this spirit could and did move children to action. For example, Patience Scott, an eleven-year-old New England Quaker, was “moved of the Lord” to join four adult Friends and travel 105 miles to Boston in 1659, to speak out against the “persecuting spirit” of the town’s authorities. She was imprisoned for three months, and

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 24. Griffiths’ Norwich sample is drawn from the period between 1565 and 1646, while the London court documents date from between 1556 and 1580.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (Glenside: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002), Prop. IV.

<sup>12</sup> Frost, *The Quaker Family*, 67.



put on trial for her effrontery.<sup>13</sup> These beliefs and practices may indicate the special qualities of Quaker childhood.

### **I: Historiography of the Society of Friends**

The history of Quakerism is complicated by what Christopher Hill called the “natural tendency ... to push back into the seventeenth century the image of the sober, grey-clad, moderate, industrious and prospering Quakers which we know from the eighteenth century.”<sup>14</sup> This tendency is compounded by the fact that many histories of the Society of Friends have been written by Quakers. As Barry Reay noted in 1985, “to a large extent we are still forced to see the Quakers through the spectacles of their latter-day co-religionists and sympathizers.”<sup>15</sup> Two notable examples from the early-twentieth century illustrate this phenomenon. W.C. Braithwaite wrote an important two-volume history of the Quaker movement, and was also very active within the Society of Friends.<sup>16</sup> Rufus Jones, a historian of American Quakerism, was also a prominent practicing Quaker.<sup>17</sup> Jones was the only Quaker to ever deliver two Swarthmore lectures. He also served in administrative roles in the Society of Friends, and envisioned a modern

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<sup>13</sup> James Bowden, *The History of the Society of Friends in America, Volume One* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1850), 168-169. According to this account, which Bowden found in a 1659 letter, the governor of Boston recognized a supernatural power in Scott, whose words were “far beyond the ordinary capacity of a child of her years.” However, the governor believed that the Devil was the source of this power, not the inward light of Christ. *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Hill, “Forward” in Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (London: Temple Smith, 1985), vii.

<sup>15</sup> Reay, *The Quakers*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> See William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism, Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961) and *The Second Period of Quakerism, Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961). For an example of Braithwaite’s work within the Society of Friends, see William C. Braithwaite and Henry T. Hodgkin, *The Message and Mission of Quakerism* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1912).

<sup>17</sup> See, among other works, Rufus Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1911).

Christianity re-invigorated by Quaker mysticism and spirituality.<sup>18</sup> In this regard, my own approach is similar to Leo Damrosch's: secular, but wary of being too cynical about religious experience and belief.<sup>19</sup>

Later generations of historians have approached Quakerism from different perspectives. Social historians such as Richard T. Vann studied the Quakers because of the abundance of written sources by and about Friends.<sup>20</sup> This evidentiary bounty allowed Vann to explore the evolution of the Society of Friends from a loose group of radical, vagrant preachers, to a decorous sect. Vann's contemporary, Hugh Barbour, focused on the spiritual rather than the social aspects of Quakerism.<sup>21</sup> Barbour's work emphasized the spiritual journey that a Quaker conviction entailed, and argued that the Quakers should be seen within the broader context of English puritanism.<sup>22</sup> Barry Reay attempted to place the Quakers in another historical context: that of the English Revolution. While he did not attempt to supplant Barbour, Reay thought the history of Quakerism could be improved, and argued that previous works did not make adequate use of non-Quaker sources.<sup>23</sup> This was especially problematic, since Reay asserted that "fear and hatred of Quakers, as part of a more general fear of sectaries" led to the restoration of Charles II.<sup>24</sup> Most recently, Adrian Davies has explored the role of Quakers within English society, from the Interregnum into the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Davies focused

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<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Gray Vining, *Friend of Life: The Biography of Rufus M. Jones* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1958), 185, 302, 302-303.

<sup>19</sup> Leo Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 11.

<sup>20</sup> Vann, *English Quakerism*, viii. Vann notes that, for example, that Quakers wrote more spiritual autobiographies than "all other kinds of English Dissenters put together." *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Barry Reay later critiqued this approach, noting "when reading such work one could be forgiven for forgetting that there was, after all, a revolution in the middle of the seventeenth century, and that the Quakers were a product of this revolution." See Barry Reay, *The Quakers*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England*, xi.

<sup>23</sup> Reay, *The Quakers*, 3

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

specifically on Essex, and offered a corrective to earlier histories that stressed Quaker separatism, and popular hostility to the new movement. In Essex, at least, Davies found that “local society was far less divided by sectarianism than has been hitherto assumed.”<sup>25</sup> While Davies set out to write a social history, his approach was broad, incorporating sociological and anthropological research, allowing for a wide-ranging analysis of Friends and their practices.<sup>26</sup> Rosemary Moore’s *The Light in their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain, 1646-1666* was another important and relatively recent work, valuable for its systematic analysis of nearly all available Quaker pamphlets and manuscripts, as well as for its exploration of the movement’s earliest, liminal years.<sup>27</sup>

Other authors have explored the Society of Friends through some of its earliest and most influential members. Larry Ingle’s biography of George Fox, the most important early Quaker, sought to “rescue Fox from poorly grounded, usually uncritical, and theologically oriented works,” without simply producing another paraphrase of Fox’s *Journal*.<sup>28</sup> Bonnelyn Young Kunze’s work on Margaret Fell, a member of the gentry who joined the Quaker movement in its earliest years, and later married Fox, offered a similarly valuable study of the most important woman in the Society of Friends.<sup>29</sup> One of the most effective recent Quaker biographies was Leo Damrosch’s monograph on James Nayler, a prominent early Quaker whose Parliamentary trial for blasphemy marked a key

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<sup>25</sup> Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society, 1655-1725* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Rosemary Moore, *The Light in their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain, 1646-1666* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> H. Larry Ingle, *First Among Friends: George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), vii.

<sup>29</sup> Bonnelyn Young Kunze, *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

stage in the development of the Quaker sect.<sup>30</sup> Damrosch, a literary scholar, offers both a perceptive analysis of Quaker beliefs and a history of Nayler's Biblical reenactment at Bristol, his trial for blasphemy, and his brutal punishment.<sup>31</sup>

The Quaker movement has sometimes been presented as the product of one individual, George Fox.<sup>32</sup> While he was an important, charismatic leader, the early Quakers are better described as a "linking of advanced Protestant separatists," as Barry Reay has argued.<sup>33</sup> The relationship between Puritans and Quakers has been the topic of some scholarly debates, but "cousin" seems to be an apt appellation.<sup>34</sup> Beliefs that were later associated with The Society of Friends were held by many others in Revolutionary England. For example, Muggletonians also believed in the possibility of divine guidance and inspiration, while Ranters believed in inward spirituality and individual revelation, although they drew entirely different conclusions from these beliefs than did the Quakers.<sup>35</sup> Contemporaries saw strong links between the Quakers and the radical Digger and Leveller movements; one writer claimed that Quakers derived their ideas from the words of Gerrard Winstanley. In fact, both Winstanley and the Leveller leader John Lilburne later became Friends.<sup>36</sup> One of the largest groups of what might be called proto-Quakers were the Seekers. The Seekers were not an organized sect, but a loose grouping

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<sup>30</sup> In fact, some contemporaries believed that Nayler, not Fox, was the most important and influential of the early Friends. See Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London: Temple Smith, 1972), 186.

<sup>31</sup> Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

<sup>32</sup> Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Reay, *The Quakers*, 9. Reay argues that Fox's prominence was derived, at least in part, from the fact that he outlived many other prominent early Quakers. *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Kunze, *Margaret Fell*, 126.

<sup>35</sup> Barbour, *The Quakers*, 28; Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 190-192.

<sup>36</sup> Reay, *The Quakers*, 20.

of separatists who rejected the organized ministry and church.<sup>37</sup> Hugh Barbour has argued that “socially, spiritually, and geographically, all the separatist groups tended to be on the fringes of the great puritan movement.”<sup>38</sup> However, this analysis overlooks some rather fundamental differences between Quakers and Puritans. The Friends were universalists, believing that every individual had the potential to be saved, which was in stark contrast to the Puritan notions of predestination and the Elect. These are fundamental differences, and combined with the Quaker rejection of original sin discussed above, set Quakers apart more than Barbour has recognized.

Although the Quaker family has been the subject of several full-length monographs, childhood was typically a secondary concern. In addition, those books that do take the Quaker family as their subject have done so in a colonial context, as was the case in Barry Levy’s *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley*, and J. William Frost’s *The Quaker Family in Colonial America*. Vann has examined the family, but primarily through the use of impersonal demographic statistics. Phyllis Mack offered some insights into the experience of Quaker youth in *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-century England*, but in the context of their mothers’ activities as prophets and missionaries.<sup>39</sup> The only book-length examination of Quaker children was Walter Joseph Homan’s *Children and Quakerism*, published in 1939.<sup>40</sup> Though the work was obviously the product of scholarly research, Homan applied the romantic notion of childhood backwards in time, depicting a Quaker

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<sup>37</sup> Barbour, *The Quakers*, 31.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>39</sup> Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-century England* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>40</sup> Walter Joseph Homan, *Children and Quakerism* (Berkeley: Gillick Press, 1939).

family life that Vann called “quite admirable and totally unhistorical.”<sup>41</sup> Since the Society of Friends had such distinctive ideas about the equality produced by the inward light, and came to deem childhood and youthful instruction so important, this is a substantial lacuna.<sup>42</sup>

The inward light of Christ was the fundamental tenet of early Quaker theology. The Biblical basis for this belief derived from John 1:9: “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”<sup>43</sup> The belief is also based on the personal experiences of George Fox, who heard the voice of God commanding him to teach other tender Christians to turn their focus inward, instead of adhering to the traditional outward forms of worship.<sup>44</sup> There was, of course, a strong element of anti-clericalism inherent in this theology as well; if the inward light was the one true guide to spiritual salvation, the established system of professionally trained priests was worse than useless. Quakers did not conceive of the light within as the entire essence of God, or the actual presence of Christ. That said, it was not an ephemeral, meta-physical or mystical experience. The light within was, according to Robert Barclay, the most skilled Quaker apologist, a “real spiritual substance” that could be felt physically. Some Friends thought that a specific organ in the body could experience God in this way, though they did not specify which.<sup>45</sup>

Early Quakers relied on analogies to convey the meaning and power of the inward presence of Christ. Most often, they used the term “light”; Frost has argued that this term

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<sup>41</sup> Vann, *English Quakerism*, 177 n. 33.

<sup>42</sup> As Frost put it, “It would be hard to overestimate the importance that Friends placed upon the correct rearing of children.” Frost, *The Quaker Family*, 75.

<sup>43</sup> *King James Bible*, John 1:9. Of course, other Protestant denominations stressed the importance of the inward working of the Holy Spirit, but Quakers extended this idea much further than Anglicans or Puritans. See Frost, *The Quaker Family*, 14.

<sup>44</sup> For Fox, the word “tender” denoted piety and religious receptiveness.

<sup>45</sup> Frost, *The Quaker Family*, 15.

was especially effective, as the light brought spiritual illumination and insight.<sup>46</sup> Another common metaphor was that of the seed. This seed was present in all from birth, but only through spiritual work and conviction could this seed be made to sprout and grow.<sup>47</sup> Frost has noted that this conception of the inward light enabled both passive and active responses. The passive aspect held that God planted the seed within humanity, while the active indicated that a Friend needed to encourage the growth and foster the health of the seed.<sup>48</sup>

Although the inward light could give guidance, joy, and assurance of salvation, for many early Quakers, the process of finding it was painful.<sup>49</sup> It could also be a physical experience; the shaking and trembling that gave the Quakers their name often accompanied the bodily experience of the inward light.<sup>50</sup> Hugh Barbour has detailed some of the language used to describe these early conversion experiences. Francis Howgill, for example, felt “Fear and Terrour ... sorrow and pain” during his conviction, until he felt remade, “a Captive [come] forth out of his Prison.”<sup>51</sup> Margaret Fell was equally explicit about the workings of the light. It would “deal plainly with you; it will rip you up, and lay you open.”<sup>52</sup> The process could take months; such was the case with Stephen Crisp, after his conviction by James Parnell. Though the truth had immediately overcome his “Wisdom and Reason,” it took two months of soul-

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>49</sup> Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England*, 98.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 98. This process could be compared with meditative practice. Friends sought the inward light through silent contemplation and reflection. This likely required practice, and possibly some frustration as well.

searching, and many “bitter Tears” before Crisp could come to terms with his spiritual transformation.<sup>53</sup>

Friends young and old relied on the inward light to guide their words and actions. It moved George Fox to climb Pendle Hill, where he had a vision of a “great people to be gathered,” an event that marked the formal beginning of the Quaker movement.<sup>54</sup> It moved young James Parnell to travel to Essex, where he preached to large crowds before his imprisonment and eventual death.<sup>55</sup> Some Friends even relied on it to solve more practical problems, such as the Quakers who maintained they had used the inward light to guide them on a transatlantic voyage from England to New England.<sup>56</sup>

Quakers called the experience of finding the inward light “convincement.” Though this was similar to conversion, the word implies an internal transformation that was far more powerful. Many of the people who joined the Quaker movement in its early days held similar beliefs: the insufficiency and corruption of the established church, the hollowness of outward forms of religion, and a sense of the equality of individuals. Convincement was, in a way, the process of individuals learning to listen to a force that had existed within them all along.

Some Quaker writers attempted to convey these ideas to children and young people, using even more inventive and metaphorical language. William Smith addressed Quaker children in part of his book *Universal Love*.<sup>57</sup> Smith wrote that children should “mind the Light with which Christ enlightens you, which Light is in your Conscience,

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-105.

<sup>54</sup> George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1963), 150.

<sup>55</sup> Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers, for the Testimony of a Good Conscience...* (London: Luke Hinde, 1753), 190-192.

<sup>56</sup> Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 51.

<sup>57</sup> William Smith, *Universal Love* (London: n.p., 1668), 46. Each section of the book is addressed to a different segment of society, from the aged, to servants, merchants, and so on.



and with its Light it will let you see when you think any bad thought, or speak bad words.”<sup>58</sup> Another example of such a text was Thomas Lawson’s *A Serious Remembrancer to Live Well*.<sup>59</sup> Lawson was motivated, in part, by the death of his son Jonah, who died aged fourteen in 1684.<sup>60</sup> Lawson addressed children and young people “who are inwardly touched,” and wrote that they should “make a Good Confession of the Pure Divine Principle in you.”<sup>61</sup> If they continued with the grace of God, these children and young people would “receive the Quickening Power” and their “Hearts shall grow warm.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, they could become “inward Jews, Worshippers of God in Spirit and in Truth.”<sup>63</sup> Lawson emphasized the primacy of the inward experience, stating his message plainly: “Remember that under the First Covenant, the Law was written in *Tables of Stone*; but in the New Covenant, the Law is written in the *Heart*, in the inward parts.”<sup>64</sup> This ably conveys a key tenet of Quakerism, in words that a young, tender child could comprehend.

The most important social implication of the theology of the inward light was equality between all people. One of George Fox’s early revelatory experiences concerned this equalizing power: “Now the Lord God opened to me by his invisible power, ‘that every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ;’ and I saw it shine through all; and that they that believed in it came out of condemnation to the light of life, and became

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Lawson, *A Serious Remembrancer to Live Well: Written Primarily to Children and Young People...* (London: n.p., 1684).

<sup>60</sup> Richard L. Greaves, ‘Lawson, Thomas (bap. 1630, d. 1691)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16208>, accessed 8 Jan 2016]

<sup>61</sup> Lawson, *Remembrancer*, 9.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. Lawson was a botanist, and George Fox proposed that he start a “garden-school” that would use plants as well as books to educate children. See Greaves, “Lawson, Thomas.”

the children of it.”<sup>65</sup> One result of this belief was the Quakers’ refusal to acknowledge their social superiors by addressing them with the formal “you.” Instead, they used thee and thou, words that became associated with the Society of Friends over time.<sup>66</sup> Quakers also refused to render “hat honour” to their superiors in public and to remove their hats in court, actions that could have serious consequences.<sup>67</sup> A number of scholars have explored how the inward light rendered husbands and wives spiritual equals, at least in theory, and studied the many women who played important and active roles in advancing Quakerism.<sup>68</sup> Margaret Fell, for example, wrote an important pamphlet defending the right of women to speak in church.<sup>69</sup> Quakers were among the first to advocate the abolition of slavery, as they believed that slave and master were, in fact, spiritual equals.<sup>70</sup> Later Friends based their campaign for humane treatment of prisoners on the inward light of Christ.<sup>71</sup> However, the implications of the inward light for the lives of young Quakers and Quakers’ conception of childhood has not been thoroughly explored, especially during the movement’s earliest years.

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<sup>65</sup> George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1963), 70.

<sup>66</sup> George Fox actually tried to prove that all languages used a form of “you” as a plural form of address only. See George Fox, Benjamin Furly, and John Stubbs, *A Battle-door for Teachers & Professors to Learn Singular & Plural You to Many, and Thou to One, Singular One, Thou, Plural Many, You...* (London: Robert Wilson, 1660).

<sup>67</sup> Krista Kesselring, “Gender, the Hat, and Quaker Universalism in the Wake of the English Revolution” *The Seventeenth Century* 26.2 (2011), 299-322.

<sup>68</sup> Stuard, “Women’s Witnessing,” 3. See also Mack, *Visionary Women*; Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775* (New York: Knopf, 1999); and Kunze, *Margaret Fell*.

<sup>69</sup> See Margaret Fell, *Womens Speaking Justified, Proved and Allowed of by the Scriptures...* (London: n.p., 1666).

<sup>70</sup> See Brycchan Carey, *From Peace to Freedom: Quaker Rhetoric and the Birth of American Antislavery, 1657-1761* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); J. William Frost, *The Quaker Origins of Antislavery* (Norwood: Norwood Editions, 1980); and Larry Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados: Challenging the Culture of the Planter Class* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Anne Isba, *Excellent Mrs. Fry: Unlikely Heroine* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010) and John Bellers, *His Life, Times, and Writings* ed. George Clark (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1987).

The similarities between the religious roles of women and young Quakers are striking. In her study of female prophets in seventeenth-century England, Phyllis Mack argued that “it was precisely because women had no formal authority as ordained ministers or magistrates that their activities were so effective in shaping and sustaining the Quaker’s charismatic movement in its formative years.”<sup>72</sup> Children too occupied this social space, though with the caveat that, unlike women, male children at least could expect to age into more socially prominent roles. The Christian tradition of paradox gave the weak and powerless rhetorical power; early modern Quakerism, however, went beyond the usual interpretations of Biblical authority in its inclusion of women and young people.

Mack also situates her study in a way that is applicable to children. She notes that it is difficult to re-construct the religious experiences of people so unlike ourselves, and that some might question the usefulness of such an undertaking. In response to this imagined question, she writes “most obviously, we can trace a direct line from the earliest Quaker women leaders to the nineteenth-century movements of abolition and women’s suffrage and to twentieth-century feminism and peace activism.”<sup>73</sup> A more circuitous line can be drawn from the young Friends who undertook religious missions in Quakerism’s early years. Later Quakers have campaigned for children’s rights, against children becoming soldiers or labourers, and worked to save children from tragedies like the Holocaust.<sup>74</sup> Like modern adult Quakers, today’s young Friends do not take action like

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<sup>72</sup> Mack, *Visionary Women*, 4. Though Mack approaches her topic broadly, the majority of the women in her study were Quakers. See *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>74</sup> “Rights of the Child,” *Quakers in the World: Quakers in Action* (<http://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/165>). *Quakers in the World* is an independent charitable trust, funded in part by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, “a Quaker trust which seeks to transform the world by supporting people who address the root causes of conflict and injustice.”

their early modern counterparts, though some are actively integrated into Meetings from a young age.<sup>75</sup> Indirectly, the study of Quaker youth is important in another respect. The Quakers who fought for the abolition of slavery, for women's rights – really, for almost every Western social cause – were once children, and typically Quaker children: as such, they shared the legacy of young radicals like George Fox, James Parnell, and Mary Fell. Moreover, they grew up in a faith whose theology pre-supposed their spiritual equality with their elders, and so could, from a young age, participate in adult life in a way that was closed to most early modern youth.

## **II: Historiography of Childhood**

The history of childhood has received an increasing amount of attention since the publication (1960) and translation (1962) of Philippe Aries' *Centuries of Childhood*. It is not merely historians who have been concerned with the study of youth; many other disciplines are expanding their analyses to include and account for the “formative” years, and the interdisciplinary field of Childhood Studies has emerged as a scholarly discipline in its own right. Aries' most important argument was that the sentimental idea of childhood did not exist until sometime in the seventeenth century. His thesis was founded partly on demographics; since children died at such high rates in the medieval and early modern period, “people could not allow themselves to become too attached to something that was regarded as a probable loss.”<sup>76</sup> Aries also studied paintings, and argued that parents in the past dressed their children like miniature adults. Children also seemed stiff

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<sup>75</sup> “Working with Children 0-12 Years,” *Quakers in Britain* (<http://www.quaker.org.uk/working-children-0-12-years-0>).

<sup>76</sup> Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood* (London: Pimlico, 1996), 37. Claire Gittings has demonstrated that, in 1640, around one quarter to one third of all children died before their fifteenth birthday. See Claire Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 7.

and adult-like in their poses, which for Aries was more evidence that they were perceived merely as miniature adults.<sup>77</sup>

Most histories of childhood published in the immediate wake of *Centuries of Childhood* accepted Aries' basic ideas about children and the family. Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* was similar in argument and scope to *Centuries*, and also relied on elite sources.<sup>78</sup> Stone's arguments tended to be teleological, describing a linear progression through family structures that culminated with the one we know today.<sup>79</sup> Lloyd deMause's edited collection, *The History of Childhood*, published in 1974, made Stone's source use and theorizing look positively restrained. DeMause subscribed to the "psychogenic theory of history," which posits that the primary force of historical change is the personalities instilled by parents in children through childrearing practices, an analysis predicated on Sigmund Freud's theories of personal development.<sup>80</sup> DeMause was extremely critical of social historians, including Aries, who sought to explain away what he saw as extremely damaging practices, for example contact with a child's genitals or excessive physical discipline.<sup>81</sup> Much of the scholarship in *The History of Childhood* was fundamentally ahistorical, and predicated more on modern theory than historical evidence. Though some of deMause's models are

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<sup>77</sup> Aries, *Centuries*, 48-49.

<sup>78</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982).

<sup>79</sup> Stone wrote that family structures progressed from the "open lineage family" known in the period from 1450 to 1630, to the "restricted patriarchal nuclear family," which characterized the period from 1550 to 1700. The culmination was the "closed domesticated nuclear family," which arose in the period from 1640 and 1800. See Stone, *The Family*, 69, 91, 101-102, 180.

<sup>80</sup> Lloyd deMause, ed. *The History of Childhood* (New York: The Psychohistory Press, 1974), 3. DeMause took this position even further in a later book, *The Origins of War in Child Abuse* (New York: The Institute for Psychohistory, 2010).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

thought provoking, the book should serve as a cautionary example of how the historical study of childhood and youth can go awry in the absence of evidence.

*The Family Life of Ralph Josselin* by Alan Macfarlane offered a different perspective than the typical post-Aries study. Published in 1970, the book was subtitled *An Essay in Historical Anthropology*: Macfarlane wore his social science influences on his sleeve.<sup>82</sup> Macfarlane did not offer a large-scale narrative about sweeping changes that transformed family life, but rather a case study based on the diary of one man. The use of a single source, albeit one shaped by the particularities of a single person, allows for a more nuanced view of a family, which was in stark contrast to Aries and Stone, who selected from a broader base of evidence to back up their grand theories of change over time.<sup>83</sup> Macfarlane's work tended to downplay such changes. Like many modern parents, Josselin welcomed his children with joy and grieved their loss, and his diary portrays a stable and loving family.<sup>84</sup>

Linda Pollock has mounted the most forceful opposition to Aries' thesis, in *Forgotten Children: Parent-child Relations from 1500-1900*. Pollock studied hundreds of diaries and autobiographical works, and while some scholars saw rapid changes in attitudes towards children and young people over time, she found a remarkable degree of consistency. Pollock allowed that there may have been some "slight changes in the concept of childhood" and notes that some parents, in all eras, are ambivalent towards their children.<sup>85</sup> She agrees with Aries on one small point: parents generally had more

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<sup>82</sup> Alan Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

<sup>83</sup> Macfarlane, too, was not above grand, sweeping arguments. In *Marriage and Love in England, 1300-1840*, he argued that England's early adoption of capitalism was linked to its familial structures. See Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England, 1300-1840* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

<sup>84</sup> Macfarlane, *Ralph Josselin*, 81, 100, 112-115.

<sup>85</sup> Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 140-141.

mutated reactions towards the deaths of young infants compared to the deaths of older children. The deaths of very young children were mourned more for what the child could have become, than for who they were.

Later scholars have internalized some of Pollock's lessons, and some recent monographs have explored childhood in a restrained and thoughtful way. Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos' *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England*, for example, focused on life-cycle labour like service and apprenticeship. Earlier historians may have viewed this process, in which young people are removed from the family home to work in other homes or learn trades, as tantamount to abuse, robbing the child of a vital loving atmosphere. In contrast, Ben-Amos viewed life-cycle labour as part of a "phase which consisted of a series of mental, social and economic processes through which the young were transformed in adults."<sup>86</sup> Her study of this part of a person's upbringing remained rooted in its early modern context, not held against some contemporary standard of appropriateness. In keeping with some of Pollock's observations, Ben-Amos found that the period between the onset of puberty and adulthood lasted as long in early modern England as it does today, about twelve or thirteen years. Ben-Amos used apprenticeship records as well as autobiographies and diaries in a more effective and historical way than some of the earlier historians of childhood, and avoided any pronouncements of sweeping change in her period.

Another book that offered a restrained analysis of young people was Paul Griffiths' *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640*. Griffiths, too, reacted against earlier scholarship that saw "an almost magical break in mentalities

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<sup>86</sup> Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 7.

and structures ... located somewhere in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.”<sup>87</sup> Like Ben-Amos, Griffiths was concerned with service and apprenticeship, but he investigated how these systems were enforced, using judicial sources to explore how young people conformed to and resisted the structures of authority that shaped their lives. Moralists viewed youth as a “contested territory,” a “tempestuous age which required careful taming,” as well as a time of hope and promise.<sup>88</sup> Griffiths showed that, far from denying the existence of childhood, early modern English people perceived of it in a way familiar in the modern era: an important, transitional stage whose course had implications for young people, families, and society as a whole.

Anthony Fletcher’s *Growing up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600-1914* marked something of a return to the large-scale survey, both in chronology and scope. It differed from some earlier works of this kind, however. Perhaps reflecting modern notions of personal identity, the book focused on gender and class, which both shaped a child’s upbringing and were shaped by that upbringing. Fletcher offered a lengthy survey of prescriptive parenting literature, but was careful to note that practice did not always closely follow moralists’ suggestions.<sup>89</sup> He also responded to Joan Scott’s call for the use of gender as a category of historical analysis, examining the role gender played in parenting and childhood alike. The most interesting section of *Growing up in England* seeks to recover the voices of children themselves. Noting that children often speak to their parents and other adults with the object of pleasing them, Fletcher uses youthful diaries from the period after 1750 in an attempt to reconstruct a child’s mindset

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<sup>87</sup> Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, 3.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 19

<sup>89</sup> Anthony Fletcher, *Growing up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), xvi.



and worldview.<sup>90</sup> Gendered ideas complicated this process, as boys' diaries tend to present their emotional lives as a blank, since constraint, inhibition, and control were such vital aspects of masculinity.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, Fletcher's work offers a more careful view of the process of youthful identity formation, exploring both continuities and changes without over-emphasizing either.

Pollock has provided the most forceful refutation of the Aries thesis. She wrote that "there is no dramatic transformation in childrearing practices in the 18<sup>th</sup> century," and called that notion "a myth brought about by over-hasty reading, a burning desire to find material to support the thesis and a willful misinterpretation of evidence."<sup>92</sup> Instead, the modern method is an enduring one: "historians would do well to ponder just why parental care is a variable so curiously resistant to change."<sup>93</sup> While Pollock's source base was robust, and her arguments effective, I find it difficult to reject the earlier tendency to argue for changes over time altogether. Today, cross-cultural differences in parenting and the experience of childhood clearly emerge from differing social and intellectual contexts and in turn influence adult behavior and social mores. A historian should be open to the possibility that changes over time may have had a similar impact.

### **III: Conclusion**

Quaker formative experiences rest uneasily within the larger history of childhood. The field has been concerned with charting the large-scale changes in adult perceptions of children, especially the growth of romanticism surrounding the innocence of youth. Other scholars argue that these changes are overdrawn, and that familial relationships have a

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

<sup>92</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 271.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

more enduring character. The study of Quaker childhood and youth is an opportunity to explore the history of childhood in a different way. Instead of tracking large scale, long-term changes or continuities in parental attitudes and childhood experiences, Quaker children offer a view of differences motivated by religious belief within a common culture.

This thesis explores several stages and aspects of the Quaker movement, and the place of children and young people within each. Chapter one examines the earliest years of the Society of Friends, and in particular the career of James Parnell. Parnell had an active role spreading his faith, and was an effective preacher despite the fact that he died before he reached the age of twenty. Other young Friends reenacted signs, spoke prophecies, and suffered physical abuse and imprisonment for their beliefs. Belief in the inward light of Christ empowered these youths, as it implied spiritual equality with their elders. Moreover, their resiliency and religiosity was seen as evidence of the power of the inward light to transform and guide all individuals. This chapter draws on Parnell's own writings, as well as contemporaneous accounts of his, and other young Friends', careers.

Chapter two charts the shift in the Society of Friends from a radical, outlawed movement, to a more respectable and organized Christian sect. Parents needed to create the conditions that would allow their children to experience the inward light of Christ, while also keeping them apart from the corrosive influence of the world outside the Society of Friends. Young Quakers left the sect because they were disillusioned with the strictures of the Society of Friends, or they were expelled from their fellowship because they adopted worldly ways, or married non-Quakers. This chapter relies on epistles

circulated by the Society of Friends, as well as manuscript evidence of four generations of a Yorkshire Quaker family.

Lastly, chapter three studies the deathbed performances of young Quakers, drawing on *Piety Promoted*, a series of books that contained accounts of the last days of faithful Friends.<sup>94</sup> As young Friends died, they adopted roles that transcended the limitations of their age. They prayed for their families, and encouraged their siblings and friends to be devout and to fear God. They also spoke movingly of their acceptance of death, and their assurance of salvation. The accounts of these dying young Quakers appeared side by side with those of older, established Friends, demonstrating again the egalitarian power of the inward light, even as the radicalism of the early Quaker movement subsided.

The study of Quaker children illustrates some of the problems involved in the history of childhood. The Friends, in embracing the universalism of the inward light and rejecting original sin, had a different view of young children than their contemporaries, but this did not lead to a sentimental view of young people. In fact, in some ways it can be said the early Quakers did not recognize childhood as a separate stage of life in important respects, since children were expected to participate in adult religion as soon as they were mentally and physically able. It may be, too, that the social activism associated with Quakerism has its roots in childhood experiences and training in addition to the belief in the inward light. The Quakers have been at the forefront of nearly every Anglo-American movement for social justice in the past three hundred years. Their distinctive and inclusive religious beliefs empowered men and women of all social classes, children

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<sup>94</sup> John Tompkins compiled the first edition of *Piety Promoted*, which was published in 1701. By 1775, Tompkins and other compilers had produced an additional 8 parts.

and youths, and eventually, people of all races.<sup>95</sup> The content of beliefs and efforts to inculcate them are interrelated, to be sure, and the study of Quaker childhood and youth offers an opportunity to explore this complex relationship.

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<sup>95</sup> In 1989, there were more Quakers in Africa than in the rest of the world combined. See Paul Gifford, "Review of Ane Marie Bak Rasmussen 'A History of the Quaker Movement in Africa,'" *Africa*, 67, pp 656.

## **Chapter Two: “The Quaking Boy”: Children and Youth in Early Quakerism, 1651-1689**

In the radical, early period of Quakerism, young people participated in religious life in new, important ways. The robust role of children and youth in the sect’s early history was due in part to the Quaker belief in the inward light of Christ, a spark of the divine that existed equally within all people: man, woman, and child. Simultaneously, to some, their religious activities demonstrated the existence and efficacy of that inner light. Pious, innocent, and youthful preachers were very effective in convincing new Quakers. Friends saw the actions of young people – who were so often mistrusted for their age, and commonly associated with disorder in English society – as evidence of the transformative power of the inner light. Young Quakers, then, could participate in public religious life in the way they did because of the sect’s belief in the inner light, and other Quakers viewed their activities as evidence for this belief.

### **I: Youth and the Early Quaker Movement**

The individual most associated with the formation of the Quaker movement began his religious mission at a young age. George Fox was engaging in public theological debates by 19. He did not complete his apprenticeship, and though his relations urged marriage, Fox protested that he was “but a lad, and must get wisdom.”<sup>1</sup> He departed on the spiritual perambulations that led him to Quakerism without attaining any markers of adult authority; he was unmarried, untrained, and lacked the resources to support himself.

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<sup>1</sup> George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. Rufus M. Jones (New York: Capricorn Books, 1963), 70.

As the Quaker movement took hold, the so-called “Valiant Sixty” spread across England to further the mission.<sup>2</sup> A number of these individuals, too, were younger than the university trained priests whose services the Quakers so often interrupted. Leo Damrosch noted in his study of James Nayler and radical Quakerism that many of the early Quaker preachers were very young. Fox began his public mission at 23, John Audland at 22, and Edward Burrough at 19.<sup>3</sup> George Whitehead was born in 1636, began preaching in his meeting at age 14, and was a member of the Valiant Sixty by age 17.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most noted for his youth among the Friends, however, was James Parnell.

The religious missions of young Quakers were all the more remarkable, coming as they did in a time when age itself correlated with moral authority. As Keith Thomas put it, “the prevailing ideal was gerontocratic: the young were to serve and the old were to rule.”<sup>5</sup> Many, if not most, early modern English institutions were hierarchically organized around age. Apprentices needed to serve a set term of years before they could enjoy professional independence; progress through the legal profession was organized around temporal terms of service; and the university system burdened potential priests with a long series of degrees.<sup>6</sup>

Far from being a period of religious wisdom, a person’s youth was thought to be an especially dangerous and trying time. Youth, for early modern English people, was not merely an age designation. Youth came after childhood, to be sure, but it did not end when a person reached a predetermined age. Rather, it was thought to persist until certain

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<sup>2</sup> The Valiant Sixty were an important group of traveling evangelists in the early Quaker movement. See Ernest E. Taylor, *The Valiant Sixty* (London: Bannisdale Press, 1947).

<sup>3</sup> Leopold Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 30.

<sup>4</sup> George Whitehead, *Some Account of the Gospel Labours of George Whitehead...* (London, 1725), 10; 21.

<sup>5</sup> Keith Thomas, “Age and Authority in Early Modern England” Raleigh Lecture on History, 1976. (London and Oxford: The British Academy, Oxford University Press, 1976), 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

social milestones were reached: for men, economic independence, marriage, and head-of-household status were the most commonly recognized.<sup>7</sup> A modern analogue is adolescence – a word not employed in early modern England – a liminal period that signifies growth.

Contemporaries recognized that youth was a critical and fraught developmental stage; Paul Griffiths has called this “contested territory.”<sup>8</sup> As he wrote, “youth was a tempestuous age which required careful taming ... order depended upon the smooth succession of the generations.” In short, education, both secular and spiritual, should flow downward from the aged to the callow, and not in the other direction.

Quaker theology ran contrary to the position of youth in early modern political models of the time. As Holly Brewer has noted, “questions about children and authority permeated the political and religious debates of early modern Britain and its colonies. During the late sixteenth century, children became a metaphor for obedience and submission to church and kingdom, wherein subjects were commanded to obey their religious and temporal superiors just as children should obey their parents.”<sup>9</sup> Quakers still believed in parental authority, to be sure. However, belief that the inward light was the one, irrefutable individual guide contradicted the vision of the world in which, as Brewer puts it, “children should revere and obey not only their parents but all social superiors, as a duty enjoined by God.”<sup>10</sup> It seems that children’s inward light and their parents’ wishes often coincided, at least in later, homogenous Quaker families, but at the beginning of the

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 19.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>9</sup> Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

movement the inward light could tear families apart. However, no Quaker parents would teach their children to obey social superiors as if it were a duty ordained by God. In fact, children were often taught to resist the strictures of the social world outside of their movement.

Brewer noted that Fox himself tended to play down the Fifth Commandment.<sup>11</sup> She offered two potential reasons for this fact: that Fox was reacting against the practice of using the Fifth Commandment to evoke loyalty to a symbolic father figure, such as a king; or, conversely, because he was suspicious of paternal authority even within the traditional family.<sup>12</sup> The latter may seem unlikely, but it should be noted that Fox became a Quaker, and embarked on his religious mission, against the wishes of his own family – as did many other young Quakers, including James Parnell. While both of these explanations likely contain some measure of the truth, there was also another factor at play. A committed believer in the power of the inward light, Fox resisted any doctrine that would place any external authority above that granted to each individual by Jesus Christ.

The emerging Quaker attitude towards youth ran contrary to other social and religious developments of the Interregnum. On the religious front, Quaker ideals contradicted those of sects identified by their insistence upon adult rather than infant baptism, collectively known as Anabaptists. Anabaptism arose earlier than Quakerism, and the Anabaptists were amongst the most reviled and feared of the radical Protestants, partly because of their antinomian theology and partly because of the disastrous rule of

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 85. In the Catholic tradition, this is numbered as the Fourth Commandment.

<sup>12</sup> An example from a catechism Fox would have memorized in his boyhood demonstrates exactly how far fatherly authority could be stretched. Fathers were “rich men using their estates aright,” masters of apprentices, and all ministers. Obeying, similarly, included giving reverence and respect to every social superior, following a master’s instruction, no matter how unjust, and paying tithes. See H. Larry Ingle, *First Among Friends: George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8.



one Anabaptist group over the German city of Munster in 1534-35.<sup>13</sup> While the Quakers pushed religious life into the younger years, Anabaptists moved in the opposite direction. Quakers believed that as soon as children were able to grasp the difference between right and wrong, they were capable of making the correct, orthodox choice. No baptism was needed for full membership in the Society of Friends; the important thing was that Friends should be convinced of the Truth, and subsequently let the inward light guide their words and deeds. Anabaptists, on the other hand, still placed fundamental importance on the baptismal rite. Believing that baptism should be a choice, and not an imposition, the Anabaptists delayed the rite, often to the age of 30, Christ's age at his baptism.<sup>14</sup> As Thomas put it, Anabaptists believed that "the full Christian life was not for adolescents."<sup>15</sup> Baptism – and thus full membership in the faith – should only be entered into in adulthood.

The Quaker belief in the inner light of Christ, which existed within all people, young and old, undermined the pre-existing age dynamic. If an individual was sufficiently "tender" – a word used to describe a person's receptiveness to the spirit – they could commune with the inward light, and be moved by the power of God to speak or act. There was no real age restriction on this process, though Quakers believed that until around the age of eight, children were not fully responsible for their actions.<sup>16</sup> Thus, a tender child or youth could be moved to speak out against the established church, or break social mores in the enactment of a religious sign. Quakers took seriously the words and deeds of young

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<sup>13</sup> Peter Marshall has compared the significance of this event to the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 terrorist attacks. See Peter Marshall, *The Reformation: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 114. See also Andrew Bradstock, *Radical Religion in Cromwell's England: A Concise History from the English Civil War to the End of the Commonwealth* (London: I.B. Taurus & Co., 2011), 1-27.

<sup>14</sup> Modern Baptists, an outgrowth of the Anabaptist sect, continue to practice adult baptism. Bradstock, *Radical Religion*, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas, "Age and Authority," 23.

<sup>16</sup> Frost, *The Quaker Family*, 66.

people, like Margaret Fell's eight-year-old daughter and some-time prophet Mary; Elizabeth Fletcher, a sixteen year old who walked naked through the streets of Oxford as a sign; and James Parnell, whose conversion efforts in Cambridge, and especially in Essex, brought many new people to the Quaker sect.<sup>17</sup>

The Quaker attitude towards chronological age is also revealed by their naming conventions. George Fox, widely recognized as the founder of the Society of Friends, shared his name with another early Quaker. This second George Fox was called "George Fox the Younger" for being younger in the truth, or in the faith.<sup>18</sup> Even if he was born after Fox, the fact that he derived his appellation from the date of his conversion rather than the date of his birth is significant. Here, it is evident that Quakers placed more value on the conversion experience, and communicating with the inner light, than they did on chronological age.

The Quaker habit of prioritizing tenderness, innocence, and other virtues traditionally associated with young people was significant in another respect. A Quaker's conviction was to be born again; the inward and outward aligned, without need for the traditional "forms" of belief. Through plainness of speech and dress, honesty, and openness, Friends demonstrated that, in effect, they had nothing to hide; they strove for the kind of guilelessness traditionally associated with children. One of the sect's earliest names is especially relevant here: the Children of the Light. Quakers believed, in the traditional sense, that they were children in relation God and Christ their father. It seems,

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<sup>17</sup> Damrosch, *Sorrows*, 163.

<sup>18</sup> Richard L. Greaves, "Fox, George, the younger (d. 1661)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2013 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/10030>, accessed 31 July 2015]; See also William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism, Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 188.

however, that they also wished to be *as* children, together, living an open and honest life, their inward spirituality guiding their outward acts. Mack argued such a Quaker viewed herself as a “metaphoric child,” divorced from her individual identity and enjoying a kind of “infantilized bliss.”<sup>19</sup>

Young people’s participation in religious movements was not, of course, a new phenomenon. As Susan Brigden has shown, the participation of young people shaped the early English Reformation. In fact, many social movements involve some kind of conflict between “radical youth and elderly conservatism.”<sup>20</sup> Young Quakers, like the youthful religious enthusiasts of the previous century, “had an impact quite out of proportion to the influence they otherwise had in society,” as Brigden writes of her sixteenth-century subjects. In some other ways, however, the nature of their participation was quite different.

Brigden’s short study of youth in the English Reformation was full of examples of riotous, violent youth. In the 1540s, as anticlericalism took hold of English society, most of the attacks on priests were perpetrated by young people.<sup>21</sup> Quakers were also disruptive, but eschewed violence; James Parnell, for example, was far more famous for blows he received than any he doled out.<sup>22</sup> Brigden wrote that young people often attended public sermons by evangelists; while young Quakers certainly did so as well,

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<sup>19</sup> Mack, *Visionary Women*, 402.

<sup>20</sup> Susan Brigden, “Youth in the English Reformation” *Past and Present*, No. 95 (May, 1982), 57.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>22</sup> In fact, one of the episodes in Parnell’s life that was most retold involved violence. A bystander in Colchester struck Parnell with a staff as he exited a “steeple house” – the Quaker term for a church – saying “There, take that for Christ’s sake.” Parnell simply replied “Friend, I do take it for Jesus Christ’s sake.” See, for example, Henry Callaway, *A Memoir of James Parnell, with Extracts from his Writings* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1846), 76; Charlotte Fell Smith, *James Parnell: Quaker Martyr* (London: Headley Brothers, 1907), 57; Besse, *Sufferings Vol. 1*, 190; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 190; John Tompkins, *Piety Promoted, in Brief Memorials, of the Virtuous Lives, Services, and Dying Sayings, of Some of the People Called Quakers...* (London: James Phillips, 1789), 2.

they also gave well-attended lectures and sermons, and wrote lengthy and important treatises on theology. It seems the difference can be summed up thusly: while young people have also been active agents of change during times of social upheaval, belief in the inward light of Christ led Quaker elders to encourage and accept youthful religious activity in a new way.

Youthful religious activity did not always take the form of public preaching. Young Friends prophesied, fasted, enacted various public signs that they felt testified to the truth of their faith, suffered persecution from both authorities and the commons, and maintained Quaker meetings when their elders were imprisoned. These activities were evidence of the general societal unrest and upheaval of the English Civil War and Interregnum, but they also demonstrated, to Quakers, the strength of their faith. While these actions offered young Friends an important role in their new sect, adults too took heed, and publicized the deeds of their younger coreligionists. Children and youths, innocent and humble, were a perfect vehicle for Quaker ideals of equality, anti-clericalism, action, and the prioritization of inner faith over the outward forms of traditional Christianity.

The most famous prophecy spoken by a young Friend during the English Revolution came from within the movement's first family. The Fells of Swarthmore Hall were early converts to Quakerism, most of the household having been convinced after Fox visited in 1652.<sup>23</sup> Fox's preaching moved Margaret Fell, her daughters, and many of the

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<sup>23</sup> Like many of the early convincements, Margaret Fell's was a dramatic affair. After the local minister, William Lampitt, had delivered his sermon, Fox arose and delivered a speech on the inward light of Christ, and the importance of inward, rather than outward, displays of faith. Fell was moved, and stood up in her pew to listen as Fox continued. Fell later recorded that "this opened me so, that it cut me to the heart, and then I saw clearly we were all wrong. So I sat me down in my pew again, and cried bitterly: and I cried in my spirit to the Lord, 'We are all thieves, we are all thieves, we have taken the scriptures in words, and

household servants to become Quakers, though her husband, a judge, and her young son never became Friends.<sup>24</sup> One of the Valiant Sixty, Margaret Fell had an integral role in Quakerism's early period. Her gentry home became a base of operations, and she circulated epistles, provided aid to persecuted Quakers, and adjudicated disputes; she was one of the most important leaders of the early movement.<sup>25</sup> Although she was older than George Fox by over ten years, when her husband Judge Fell died, she married the Quaker leader in 1669.

One of the Fell children, Mary by name, uttered a startling prophecy some time in 1655, when she was eight years old. The provenance of this prophecy is somewhat muddled; though it was recorded in the manuscript copy of Fox's *Journal*, it absent in the first printed edition of Fox's complete works.<sup>26</sup> The prophecy was also found in the Friends Reference Library, on a scrap of paper dated 1655.<sup>27</sup> The prophecy existed in several forms, but Leo Damrosch supplied a good example with modernized spelling: "Lampitt, the plagues of God shall fall upon thee and crush thee as dust under the Lord's feet how can thou escape the damnation of hell. This the Lord did give me as I lay in bed.

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know nothing of them in ourselves." See Margaret Fell, quoted in William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism, Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 101.

<sup>24</sup> William C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism, Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 263.

<sup>25</sup> Bonnelyn Young Kunze, *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 2-8.

<sup>26</sup> Hugh Doncaster, "Quaker Children in the Seventeenth Century" *Friends Quarterly*, Vol. 3, 1949, 50. It seems likely that Fox's editor Thomas Ellwood excised this example of magical thinking, as was the case with some of Fox's own miraculous exploits. On the problematic nature of Fox's *Journal*, see Thomas N. Corns, "'No Man's Copy': The Critical Problem of Fox's *Journal*" in *The Emergence of Quaker Writing: Dissenting Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* ed. Thomas N. Corns and David Loewenstein (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1995), 99-111.

<sup>27</sup> The original from the Friends Library provides a good illustration of the stream of consciousness style in which these prophecies were uttered: "Lampitt, the plaiges of God shal fall upon thee, & the seven viols shall be powerd upon thee, & the milstone shall fall upon thee, & crush thee as dost under the lords feete how Can thou escape the damnaton of hell, This did the Lord give mee as I lay in bed Mary ffell." See Doncaster, "Quaker Children," 50-51.

Mary Fell.”<sup>28</sup> Other families might have ignored a seemingly childish outburst such as this one, aimed as it was at a family antagonist. However, in the egalitarian Quaker movement, a child’s words could indeed be inspired by the inward light, and so flow from God himself. Not only did Fox record the prophecy, but when Lampitt later lost his living, he felt it had been fulfilled.<sup>2930</sup>

Young Quakers also participated in the reenactment of religious signs. The most notable of these reenactments in general was James Nayler’s imitation of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. In 1656, Nayler entered into Bristol on horseback, while his followers sang hosannas and bowed before him.<sup>31</sup> This sign was meant to symbolize the Quaker idea of the return of Christ: that is, the power of the inward light meant that once a Friend had been convinced, Christ had returned, and was present within the believer.<sup>32</sup> Nayler was arrested for blasphemy, and tried and convicted in Parliament. He was given three hundred lashes, his forehead was branded with a “B” for blasphemer, and his tongue was bored through with a red-hot iron.

Other Friends were moved to appear naked in public. For Quakers, this act symbolized the abnegation of the self. Leo Damrosch argued that the enactment of a sign brought Quakers “a conviction of fulfilling a divine mandate in opposition to personal self-interest.”<sup>33</sup> The stronger a believer’s inclination against appearing in public in such a shameful way, the more the power of the inward light was demonstrated.

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<sup>28</sup> Damrosch, *Sorrows*, 44.

<sup>29</sup> Doncaster, “Quaker Children,” 51.

<sup>30</sup> On the problematic nature of Fox’s *Journal*, see Thomas N. Corns, “‘No Man’s Copy’: The Critical Problem of Fox’s *Journal*” in *The Emergence of Quaker Writing: Dissenting Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* ed. Thomas N. Corns and David Loewenstein (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1995), 99-111.

<sup>31</sup> Damrosch, *Sorrows*, 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

Such was the case with depictions of the sign enacted by Elizabeth Fletcher at Oxford in 1654.<sup>34</sup> Fletcher was sixteen years old at the time, and traveling with Elizabeth Levens, who was described as an “Inocent, Comely, younge maid.”<sup>35</sup> The pair traveled to Oxford, where they were met with public violence and abuse. They were dragged through a “dirty pond,” had their mouths held to a pump and inundated, and finally Fletcher was thrown down onto a gravestone, causing an injury that may have contributed to her death in 1658.<sup>36</sup> Before departing, Fletcher walked naked through the streets of Oxford:

And although the sd Elizabeth Fletcher was a very modest, grave, yong woman, yet Contrary to her owne will or Inclination, in obedience to ye Lord, went naked through ye Streets of that Citty, as a sign against that Hippocreticall profession they then made there, being then Presbeterians and Independants, wch profession she told them the Lord would strip them of, so that their Nakedness should Appear[.]<sup>37</sup>

For this, the magistrates of the town ordered Fletcher to be whipped.<sup>38</sup> Fletcher’s sign demonstrated the inward light’s control over her behaviour, and her actions were subsequently publicized as evidence of the power of Quaker beliefs.

Young Quakers took an active role in their faith in another way: by continuing meetings after their elders had been imprisoned for their religious gatherings, acts of constancy that Quaker apologists were quick to catalogue and praise. At Reading, in 1664, and in Bristol, in 1682, Quaker children continued to gather in their houses for worship after their parents were arrested.<sup>39</sup> In Reading, the Friends had to contend with Sir William Armorer, a local Justice of the Peace notorious for his cruel treatment of

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<sup>34</sup> An account of Fletcher’s sign is contained in *The First Publishers of the Truth*, a manuscript account of the deeds of early Friends that was later edited and printed in the early-twentieth century. Anon., *The First Publishers of the Truth* ed. Norman Penney (London: Headley Brothers, 1907).

<sup>35</sup> *First Publishers*, 258.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 258-260.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Doncaster, “Quaker Children,” 48.

Quakers. Armorer repeatedly arrested the adults who attended Meeting at Thomas Curtis' house, over a period of months.<sup>40</sup> In November and December, when Armorer disrupted meetings, he pulled children out of them, threatening to whip them, and poking some with a sharp piece of iron on the end of his staff, "so that their flesh was very sore and black."<sup>41</sup> Armorer assaulted another child, called under-age by the Joseph Besse – an eighteenth-century compiler of Quaker sufferings – by beating him with a cane and pulling his nose.<sup>42</sup> Armorer's antagonism continued for years, and in fact in 1666 he arrested three girls under sixteen; Besse noted that "they lay a long Time" in jail.<sup>43</sup> Later still, Armorer arrived early to disrupt a meeting; finding only "four young Maids" he had his servant fetch water, which "he threw with great Violence in their Faces, till one of them was almost suffocated." He then forced the young women out into the January air.<sup>44</sup> These young people continued to gather, with their elders or without, acts depicted by Besse as laudable examples of bravery in the face of persecution.

A similar episode occurred in Bristol, in 1682. The sequence of events was comparable to that in Reading. Sir John Knight, the Sheriff of Bristol, worked with legal authorities to disrupt the Quaker meetings held in the town. Over a period of months, the adult Friends were imprisoned, until only children remained "For the Faith of their

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<sup>40</sup> William Sewel, *The History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of the Christian People Called Quakers, Volume Two* (London: Baker & Crane, 1844), 146. The new Oath of Loyalty to Charles II that all Englishmen had to swear complicated the release of these prisoners. Quakers, following a Biblical injunction, refused to swear oaths of any kind, and since the Judge at Reading ordered them to take the Oath as a condition of their release, they could not but refuse. See *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>41</sup> Besse, *Sufferings, Vol. 1*, 19.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.



Fathers,” in the words of one early twentieth-century painter.<sup>45</sup> Arriving to disperse a meeting in July, Bristol’s Sheriff found that, in Besse’s words:

The meeting consisted chiefly of Children; for the Men and Women being generally in Prison, the Children kept up their Meetings regularly, and with a remarkable Gravity and Composure: It was surprising to see the manly Courage and constancy with which some of the Boys behaved on this Occasion, keeping close to Meetings in the Absence of their Parents, and undergoing on that Account many Abuses with Patience.<sup>46</sup>

These children’s courage continued to be tested. Some young people in Bristol were sent to Bridewell or Newgate, there to be threatened with whippings should they persist in gathering together.<sup>47</sup>

Besse contends that these youths were also subject to physical violence. For example, Helliard, one of the Friends’ chief antagonists, beat many of the 55 children gathered together for the Meeting, “striking them violent Blows on their Heads, Necks, and Faces, few of them escaping without some Marks of his Fury.”<sup>48</sup> An informer named Tilly set five boys in the stocks, and later in August beat many children with a stick, “but they bore it patiently and cheerfully.”<sup>49</sup> At every stage, the persecutors used coercion and threats to convince the children to cease attending meetings, but they were, to use Besse’s word, “unmovable.” He goes on to note that the children were mostly between the ages of ten and twelve, and lists sixteen of them by name. Doncaster may have been correct in attributing this long-term resistance to the children’s “religious maturity.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> George Edmund Butler, “For the Faith of Their Fathers.” Oil on Canvas, 118.5 cm x 177 cm, 1917. Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 66; Trim, “Awe Upon My Heart,” 252.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Doncaster, “Quaker Children,” 49.

## II: The Life and Death of James Parnell

It was as writers and preachers that young Quakers achieved the most prominence, and the most prominent among these individuals was James Parnell. Parnell was born in 1636, the son of a labourer in the north of England.<sup>51</sup> At age 15, in search of spiritual wisdom, he left home and walked 150 miles to meet George Fox, then imprisoned in Carlisle Castle gaol.<sup>52</sup> Moved by Fox's message of the inward light of Christ, Parnell was convinced as a Quaker, and embarked on his own mission. This took him to Cambridge, where he was imprisoned for a time, and thence to Essex, which no friend had yet visited. He was arrested for disrupting a church service in Great Coggeshall, and though a jury acquitted him, the presiding judge – hostile to Parnell, according to Besse – issued a fine of £40 that the young man was unable to pay.<sup>53</sup> His mission, and his life, ended in Colchester Castle Jail in 1656, when he was 19 years old. He was one of the most successful early Quaker missionaries. According to Charlotte Fell Smith, who wrote a biography of Parnell in the early twentieth century, the number of Friends in Colchester in 1692 was 1000 out of a total population of 6852. Smith attributed this high percentage to the “seed sown by one earnest young minister aged only 18 years.”<sup>54</sup>

Friends cited Biblical precedent for their belief that young people could be the agents of religious change. For example, Quaker writers compared James Parnell to King David, another youth who exerted an outsized influence on adult events. Parnell, too,

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<sup>51</sup> Adrian Davies, “Parnell, James (*hap.* 1636, *d.* 1656)” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/21387>, accessed 22 Aug 2015].

<sup>52</sup> Mary Trim, “‘Awe Upon My Heart:’ Children of dissent, 1660 – 1688” in *Cross, Crown, and Community: Religion, Government and Culture in Early Modern England, 1400-1800*, ed. David Trim and Peter Balderstone (Oxford, Bern & New York: Peter Lang, 2004).

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers, for the Testimony of a Good Conscience...* (London: Luke Hinde, 1753), 191.

<sup>54</sup> Smith, *James Parnell*, 12. Smith later adds that Parnell's early death also contributed to the expansion of the Society of Friends in Colchester. *Ibid.*, 91.

seems to have courted this comparison; he titled one of his books *Goliah's Head Cut Off*.<sup>55</sup> Responding to the common association of youth with rashness, Thomas Bayle in his *Testimony* to Parnell's life alluded to Corinthians 1:27: "God hath chosen the foolish things to confound the wise."<sup>56</sup> For the Quakers, not only did the actions of a young man like Parnell support the existence of the light of Christ within, they also had important Biblical precedents.

Parnell addressed his age in his own writing, during a pamphlet war with Thomas Drayton. Parnell had sent Drayton thirty-six questions, which Drayton answered in a public pamphlet.<sup>57</sup> He wrote that he answered questions from this "Young Quaker" "lest the Boy should be highly conceited of himself, and falsely boast, That he understandeth more than the Ancients."<sup>58</sup> Drayton goes on to suggest that more mature Quakers likely developed Parnell's ideas, and then "put them under the Boys name for the credit of their Cause."<sup>59</sup> Evidently, it was clear to Drayton, too, that a young Quaker's actions could in some sense prove the validity of the movement.

Parnell answered Drayton's pamphlet with one of his own. The title, *Goliah's Head Cut Off With his Own Sword*, indicates Parnell's idea of his place in the Quaker movement. Drayton is cast as "the Proud Boaster," who "despise[es] Little David because of his Youth."<sup>60</sup> Noting Drayton's "scorn against me, because of my Youth," Parnell invoked the wisdom of Solomon, "that a poor and wise Child is better than an old foolish

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<sup>55</sup> Samuel Cater's Testimony, in James Parnell, *A Collection of the Several Writings Given Forth from the Spirit of the Lord Through that Meek, Patient, and Suffering Servant of God, James Parnel...* (London: n.p. 1675), n.p.

<sup>56</sup> *King James Bible*, 1 Corinthians 1:27.

<sup>57</sup> Kate Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 162.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Drayton, *An Answer According to Truth...* (London: 1655), 1.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>60</sup> James Parnell, *A Collection*, 295.

King.”<sup>61</sup> Parnell employed reason against Drayton as well, writing that he had the original copy of his queries to the priest, written in his own hand, which would testify to his authorship.<sup>62</sup>

Parnell’s life and death served as an example for other Quakers. Parnell was not technically the first Quaker to die in jail, though this is often claimed, but he was the first high-profile Friend who suffered that fate. The circumstances of Parnell’s death were immediately hotly disputed; the authorities in question maintained that the young man starved himself to death, while Quakers contended that Parnell died due to complications from a fall, which was caused by the conditions of his captivity.

These conditions were, by all accounts, deplorable. Many Quakers suffered in prison before William and Mary’s Act of Toleration in 1689; some died from disease, or emerged broken by the experience. Fox described his captivity at Doomesdale, “a nasty stinking place where they said few people came out alive.”<sup>63</sup> He continued:

the prisoners’ excrements had not been carried out for scores of years, as it was said. It was all like mire, and in some places at the top of the shoes in water and piss, and never a house of office in the place, nor chimney... The gaoler was in such a rage that he stamped with his foot and stick and took the pots of excrements of the prisoners and poured it down a hole a-top of our heads in Doomesdale, so that we were so bespattered with the excrements that we could not touch ourselves nor one another, that our stink increased upon us.<sup>64</sup>

That disease was rampant in such conditions is unsurprising.

Besse’s *Sufferings* gave a full account of Parnell’s imprisonment and death, which was also detailed in pamphlets as well as in Fox’s *Journal*. Besse wrote that Parnell’s

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 299-300.

<sup>63</sup> George Fox, quoted in Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus*, 140.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* “House of Office” was a colloquial term for a privy.

jailor's wife often commanded her servant to beat the youth, and also struck him herself, sent his food to other prisoners, and refused to let his friends bring him a bed. He was soon placed in a hole in the castle wall, "not so wide as some baker's ovens," which could only be accessed by climbing a ladder, and then a rope.<sup>65</sup> Although Parnell's friends wished to send food up to him using a cord and basket, his jailors insisted the prisoner make the ascent and descent himself. Besse notes that lying in the cold, damp hole numbed Parnell's limbs, and once, while trying to move between the ladder and rope, holding food in one hand, Parnell missed his mark and fell to the stones below, "so wounded in his Head, and bruised in his Body, that he was taken up for dead." Parnell was placed in another airless hole lower down in the castle wall, and though Friends offered to take his place in prison while he recovered from his injuries, the jailor denied their request. Battered and weakened, he took sick and died after ten or eleven months in Colchester Castle gaol. Besse wrote that he "died a Youth ... but approved himself a strong Man in Christ."<sup>66</sup>

The official narrative of Parnell's death suggests suicide by starvation. Parnell had apparently been fasting, or, according to Quaker sources, was too ill to eat.<sup>67</sup> Competing pamphlets quickly emerged. Henry Glisson's *True and Lamentable Relation* conveys the official inquest findings: "we do find that Ja. Parnel, through his wilful rejecting of his natural food for ten daies together, and his wilful exposing of his limbs to the cold, to be the cause of the hastening of his own end; and by no other meanes that we can learn or

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<sup>65</sup> Besse, *Sufferings Vol. 1*, 190-192.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Anon., *The Lambs Defence Against Lyes* (London: Giles Calvert, 1656), 2-3.

know of.”<sup>68</sup> The inquest interviewed two Friends who had spent time with Parnell at the end of his life, Thomas and Anne Shortland. Although their testimony, printed in Glisson’s *Relation*, seemed to indicate that Parnell was not ill, and fasting of his own volition, *The Lamb’s Defence Against Lyes* disputed this, re-printing letters written by Thomas Shortland himself. A fellow-prisoner also attested to Parnell’s “wilful exposing” of his limbs, telling the inquest that Parnell had complained of a burning heat in his leg, and spent one night with his stocking down, his leg pressed against a cold metal door.<sup>69</sup> It is possible that Parnell had some kind of infection and was trying to assuage his discomfort; in fact, the only blemish the inquest found on his body was “a swelling in one of his Toes.”<sup>70</sup> The officials at Colchester seemed to have acted quickly to undermine Parnell’s status as a young martyr for the Quaker faith.

Parnell’s death at Colchester was also the subject of a printed ballad, *The Quakers Fear*. The ballad, set to the tune of Summer Time, accused Parnell of starving himself to death, and also alleged that the young man believed himself to be Jesus Christ; the song implies that Parnell’s fast was an attempt to recreate Christ’s forty days without food or water.<sup>71</sup> This last charge was leveled at other Friends, most notably James Nayler,<sup>72</sup> Damrosch has argued, convincingly, that the attendant charge of blasphemy was based on a misunderstanding of Quaker theology; Nayler, and by extension Parnell, enacted Christ, and performed signs that echoed Biblical scenes, but these were only ever intended as

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<sup>68</sup> Henry Glisson, *A True and Lamentable Relation of the Most Desperate Death of James Parnel, Quaker...* (London: William Gilbertson, 1656), 6.

<sup>69</sup> Glisson, *Relation*, 6. Even though Parnell’s cellmate helpfully warned that this course of action was “enough to procure his death.” *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>71</sup> Anon., *The Quakers Fear* (London: n.p. 1656). “So will I do James Parnel said/Because you all shall know and see/That I am a Prophet of the Lord/And them that will believe in me.”

<sup>72</sup> Damrosch, *Sorrows*, 1.

signs of Christ's presence within,, and were not to be taken literally as claims to be Christ himself.<sup>73</sup>

The Quakers presented their version of events in *The Lambs Defence Against Lyes*, a pamphlet printed in 1656 that offered "A true testimony given concerning the sufferings and death of James Parnell."<sup>74</sup> The pamphlet argued that Parnell's initial arrest in Coggeshall was unjust, and that he was carried to the Assizes at Chelmsford chained to felons and murderers "as a sport or gazing-stock."<sup>75</sup> Besse likely used the pamphlet as a source for his later work, and it too detailed the abuses Parnell suffered at the hands of the jailor's wife, his fall while climbing to his cell, and his confinement to the airless "Oven."<sup>76</sup> The pamphlet reproduced a letter from William Talcott, who offered to pay a bond for Parnell's security after his fall, so that he "might have liberty to come to my house till such time as he was recovered of his wounds and sickness." Talcott promised to return Parnell to Colchester Castle on his recovery, or failing that, to return his corpse if he should perish. This request was denied.<sup>77</sup>

*The Lambs Defence Against Lyes* included another letter by a Friend, written by Thomas Shortland and delivered to a judge after Parnell's fall. Shortland's letter compares the young Quaker's plight to the Romans' imprisonment of Paul. He wrote that "Christ hath commanded me" to offer his own body to jail in Parnell's place, a request made in vain. After a letter from Parnell himself, which detailed the verbal and physical abuse he suffered at the hands of the jailor's wife, another of Shortland's is reprinted. It disputes the inquest's findings; Shortland was particularly angered by the jury's about face on

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 163-173.

<sup>74</sup> Anon., *The Lambs Defence Against Lyes* (London: Giles Calvert, 1656), 1.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-5.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Parnell's cause of death. The first verdict was that Parnell had abstained from food for ten days, before "eating up a quart of milk thick crumb'd with white bred," a feast that led to his death. Shortland disputed this finding, and told the jury that he had brought the milk in question, that it amounted to no more than a pint and a half, and that he and Parnell had only eaten a small amount – Shortland took the rest home with him. The jury, apparently, was convinced. However, they returned a short time later with a new verdict: Parnell died due to his "willful abstaining from food when he might have had it."<sup>78</sup>

Interestingly, the pamphlet makes no mention of what might appear to be one of Parnell's most sympathetic qualities: his age. This is likely due to several factors. Parnell's critics targeted him for his youth – he was often called "the Quaking Boy."<sup>79</sup> The authors of the pamphlet may have wished to downplay Parnell's youth, since his critics used that to discredit his message. Given the prevailing attitudes towards youth at the time, the authors may also have omitted mention of Parnell's age, since they wished to present his ideas and activities in the best possible light to a broad audience. In other, slightly later Quaker sources, like Fox's *Journal*, and the testimonies included in Parnell's *Collected Works*, his youth is foregrounded. The pamphlet seems to have been aimed at non-Quakers, as it was "set forth for no other end, but to clear the Innocent from the Back-biters, and to undeceive the simple."<sup>80</sup> Friends surely already believed in Parnell's innocence, and were not swayed by the inquest's findings.

Other Quaker tracts made abundant mention of Parnell's youth. The title page of his collected works, published in 1675, calls Parnell "that Meek, Patient and Suffering Servant of God" and notes that he "(though a Young Man) bore a Faithful Testimony for

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>79</sup> Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society, 1655-1725* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 12.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.



God.”<sup>81</sup> The book opens with personal testimony to Parnell’s life from other Friends, Steven Crisp, Samuel Cater, and Thomas Bayles. Crisp wrote that God worked in a way “which the Wise and Prudent of this World were not nor are yet aware of; but Babes have been his Messengers, and Children have been his Ministers.” He went on to describe Parnell himself: “among these babes, who thus came to receive the Knowledge of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God, by the working of his divine power, was this Noble Child, JAMES PARNEL.”<sup>82</sup> Crisp wrote that by age fifteen or sixteen, the power of God worked within Parnell; he obeyed this power through trial and tribulation until his death.<sup>83</sup> Crisp also provides a brief account of just one of Parnell’s days preaching in Colchester:

on the day following [he] preached the Gospel unto many Thousands of people, first in his Lodging; then in a Steeple-house there, after the Sermon; and after that disputed with the Town-Lecturer and another Priest in the French-School, all in One Day: in all which the Wisdom, Power and Patience of Christ appeared very gloriously, to the Convincing of my self and many more.<sup>84</sup>

Crisp, then, was a first hand witness to Parnell’s charismatic power, and became a Quaker via the experience.

Samuel Cater also became a Friend after witnessing Parnell. Cater was a Baptist and served as an elder in his church in Littleport, until he encountered Parnell and was convinced by his ministry.<sup>85</sup> He went on to attend some of Parnell’s other public speeches, and so was “both Eye and Ear Witness of the Mighty Power and Wisdom of God, that attended him, by the which He was prepared for every Work and Service which

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<sup>81</sup> James Parnell, *A Collection*, 1.

<sup>82</sup> Steven Crisp’s Testimony, in James Parnell, *A Collection*, n.p.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Richard Greaves, *John Bunyan and English Nonconformity* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1992), 93.

he was called unto.”<sup>86</sup> Cater also wrote about Parnell’s youth and frailty, noting that “he was but Young in Years, and of a little Stature ... by them in a scornful Mind called, The Quaking Boy.”<sup>87</sup> The testimony also makes a Biblical comparison, writing that Parnell had “the Name and Power of the Living God, which was with the little Stripling, David ... whereby the saying is fulfilled, *That by Weak things the Lord would confound the Mighty.*”<sup>88</sup> This phrase was echoed in Thomas Bayles’ testimony: Parnell was “a youth, and mean in his Outward Presence and Appearance; *but God hath chosen the Foolish Things of the World to confound the wise.*”<sup>89</sup> Cater closes his testimony by suggesting that Parnell had been sent by God himself, to declare the way and the truth.

These texts hint at one reason for Parnell’s success, and his attractiveness to later Quakers. This was partially revealed by references to Biblical paradoxes, like Cater’s reference to the weak confounding the mighty. There was also another factor, more a facet of Quakerism than Christianity more generally: the power of the inward light. The inward light, as we have seen, was thought to be the presence of the divine in every human being that enters into the world. A Quaker’s conviction was, at least in part, the process of opening oneself up to this light, and learning to let it guide one’s words and actions. This would appear to be the power of God that Cater suggested resided within James Parnell. In this case, then, the success of Parnell’s mission, undertaken by one so young and frail, is attributable to the power of the light within. The younger and more unlikely the messenger, the more evidence that the inward light was at work, guiding the deeds of Friends. Thus, the same rationale applied to youthful and female preachers; since they had

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<sup>86</sup> Samuel Cater’s Testimony, in Parnell, *A Collection*, n.p.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Thomas Bayles’ Testimony, in Parnell, *A Collection*, n.p.

low social status, and no power from their age or gender, their success in converting English people was still more evidence of the power of the inward light.

### III: A Contrasting Career: Jonathan Burnyeat

Youthful participation in the Quaker movement did not abate over time, but it changed, much like the activities of the female visionaries in Mack's study. These women no longer had public authority strictly because of their religious convictions, and their spiritual experiences took place within the confines of formal Meetings, rather than in the large public gatherings of the 1650s. They based their activities on their integrity and status as mothers; like Friends as a whole, they became more respectable and less disruptive.<sup>90</sup> Mack attributes these changes in the Quaker movement to the decades of persecution after the Restoration, internal controversies, and the decline and death of the first generation of Friends.<sup>91</sup> This process also changed how Quakers interpreted the inward light:

During the millennial excitement of the Interregnum, that light had seemed to make all things clear: the working of the body, the colors of nature, the right and proper action required at any given moment. Now, in quieter times, it had become evident that all these things were *not* clear. While Friends still trusted in the light's spontaneous appearance to those who waited with pure hearts, they now emphasized the ease with which the individual's inborn goodness might be squandered.<sup>92</sup>

The journal of Jonathan Burnyeat, born in 1688, demonstrates that the activities of young Quakers, too, were impacted and circumscribed by changes both in English society and the Quaker movement.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Mack, *Visionary Women*, 10.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> A quotation from Proverbs on the title page of Burnyeat's journal may be a sly tribute to Parnell. Like the title page of *Goliath's Head Cut Off*, it reads: "Honorable age is not that which standeth in length of time,

Burnyeat was the son of John Burnyeat senior, a member of the Valiant Sixty who preached in Ireland.<sup>94</sup> Both of young Burnyeat's parents died when he was very young, and other relations, with the help of local Friends, raised him.<sup>95</sup> He began his public ministry at age twelve, far younger even than Parnell, the youngest of the Valiant Sixty. However, an experienced, older Quaker, James Dickinson, almost always accompanied Burnyeat, acting as a sort of master to his religious apprentice.<sup>96</sup> For example, when Burnyeat was moved to write a letter to a Friends meeting in Axholme, Dickinson and another older Quaker acted as proofreaders, and moderated some of Burnyeat's more inflammatory language.<sup>97</sup> In contrast to Parnell's self-assuredness, Burnyeat took this correction very hard: "Oh! the reasonings, fears, and dejection of mind that took place in me for a time! Methought I could willingly have languished away; my heart within me trembled for fear; me knees were ready to smite one against another, and I had like to have despaired altogether."<sup>98</sup> Burnyeat rewrote the letter, but sought his elders' approval before sending it. James Parnell never operated under this level of adult control.

Another difference in the activities of the two young ministers was who, exactly, their ministries targeted. Since Parnell was active in the heady, early days, there were not as many committed Quakers as there were during Burnyeat's time, nor did Burnyeat suffer anywhere near the same level of persecution. In addition, the early Friends were more interested in conversion than anything else, hence Parnell's journey to Essex, where no Quaker had previously preached. Burnyeat, on the other hand, spoke before Quaker

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nor that is measured by number of years: but wisdom is the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age." See Jonathan Burnyeat, *Some Account of the Gospel Labours of Jonathan Burnyeat* (London: William and Frederick G. Cash, 1857), 1.

<sup>94</sup> Braithwaite, *Beginnings, Second Edition*, 222-223.

<sup>95</sup> Burnyeat, *Some Account*, 1.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

meetings. His audiences already accepted the basic tenets of his preaching, and so were not hostile like Parnell's. Burnyeat's diary did not mention physical violence, or the threat thereof. This was in stark contrast to Parnell, who was beaten, abused, and jailed. In short, the inward light guided Parnell through turbulent times, while Burnyeat heeded his elders while ministering to sympathetic audiences.

Interestingly, Burnyeat's diary does not use the term inward light. Difficulties overcome, and successful meetings were attributed to "the truth." While this term was sometimes used synonymously with the inward light, Burnyeat's use of it was subtly different from earlier accounts. For example, when Burnyeat preached alone for the first time, he wrote that "truly truth helped me through." Writing about Meetings on three consecutive days, Burnyeat noted "at last truth came up," "the wisdom of truth was with us," and "truth's testimony was sounded clearly." Language that suggested Burnyeat felt moved from within to act was absent from his diary. He did not attribute his successes to the presence of Christ within himself, but to a more abstract force, or, perhaps, to the veracity of the doctrines he espoused.<sup>99</sup>

The earliest Quakers were radical, disruptive, and, to a point, successful. Their theology of social and religious egalitarianism was attractive to many segments of society, and it ultimately led the Society of Friends to its position as a force for social justice. The belief in the inward light offered many marginalized individuals and groups a new and exciting role in communities both local and national, including young people, whose activities provided some of the dynamism of the Quaker movement. The words of children like Mary Fell were taken seriously, signifying that young Friends had a degree

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 20; 14.

of agency beyond that enjoyed by Anglican children, or those in some other dissenting sects. The children who maintained Quaker meetings demonstrated the strength of their beliefs, and served as a powerful example of the workings of the inward light. James Parnell was the foremost example of how Quakerism could empower youths. Inspired to break away from his family, Parnell embarked on a successful mission of conversion, and challenged the traditional age hierarchy in England by convincing many individuals, most of whom were older than himself, to join the Quaker movement.

During his life, and especially after his death, Quakers viewed Parnell's activities, like those of other young Friends, as concrete examples of how the inward light could empower an unlikely vessel. Parnell's energetic efforts at conversion, and his patient suffering for the truth, inspired later Friends both young and old. After the Act of Toleration, young Quakers' roles were circumscribed, but the radical principles of equality continued to exist. Thus, the experiences of Quaker children and youth may also demonstrate that it is in times of social upheaval that young people can claim the most active roles in society. Young Friends, and depictions of their deeds, played an important role in the early history of the Quaker faith.

### **Coda: Benjamin Furly**

There was a connection, tentative but intriguing, between Parnell's activities in Essex and the intellectual history of Europe. During his time in Colchester, Parnell spoke in the yard of a man named John Furly, who, along with his family, was convinced and joined the Quaker movement.<sup>100</sup> Furly had a son, Benjamin, born the same year as James Parnell. This young man may have in fact witnessed Parnell's speech first hand; he would have been 18 or 19 at the time, and likely took an interest in the actions of his

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<sup>100</sup> Davies, *The Quakers in English Society*, 13.

contemporary. Benjamin Furly went on to become a successful merchant, and helped George Fox and John Stubbs write *A Battle-door*, a strange work that attempted to prove, through a study of the world's languages, that thee and thou were the proper singular forms of address.<sup>101</sup> He later moved to Holland, and worked to spread Quakerism on the continent, translating important works into German. He married twice, and had a large family.<sup>102</sup>

Furly later crossed paths with one of the greatest intellectual figures of his time: John Locke. Locke and Furly shared common friends, and engaged in a lengthy personal correspondence. When Locke fled England after the botched Rye House Plot, he lived with Furly and his family in Amsterdam. His interactions with the Furly family were important in developing his theories of childhood education; Locke actually wrote the letter to the Clarke family that became the basis for *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* from the Furly family home.<sup>103</sup> It is likely that Benjamin Furly's Quakerism influenced his own childrearing, and his children seem to have grown up in a different atmosphere than many of their contemporaries. It is speculation to be sure, but it is certainly possible that Furly's encounter with Parnell contributed to his Quaker beliefs and his attitudes concerning young people. So, through a circuitous route, the life of

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<sup>101</sup> George Fox, Benjamin Furly, and John Stubbs, *A Battle-door for Teachers & Professors to Learn Singular & Plural You to Many, and Thou to One, Singular One, Thou, Plural Many, You...* (London: Robert Wilson, 1660).

<sup>102</sup> Furly's household was not only a bastion of Quakerism; Richard Greaves argues that Furly "helped set the stage for the Enlightenment." See Richard L. Greaves, 'Furly, Benjamin (1636–1714)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10248>, accessed 12 Oct 2015]

<sup>103</sup> Adriana Benzaquen, "Locke's Children" *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Volume 4, Number 3, Fall 2011, 386.

James Parnell influenced a man some call the father of the scientific study of childhood.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.



### Chapter Three: Education without Worldly Contamination: Growing up Quaker, 1660-1762

As Quakerism transformed from a radical, outlawed movement to a respectable, organized sect, children's roles shifted dramatically.<sup>1</sup> No longer the active participants of the Interregnum, young Friends represented the future of the faith. In the tumultuous decade of the 1650s, and afterwards during the period of persecution that ended with the Toleration Act of 1689, Quaker children and youths wrote religious tracts, preached, and publically reenacted Biblical signs. They also suffered financial hardship, abuse, and even imprisonment and death alongside their parents and elders. Throughout this period, however, the nature of Quakerism was changing. Eventually, the flow of converts to the new sect slowed to a trickle, and Quaker families turned inwards to ensure their children, at the very least, would grow up as adherents of the Truth.<sup>2</sup> A new body of literature also emerged, typified by books like Robert Barclay's *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*. Barclay attempted a thorough compilation of Quaker theology, and provided a uniform set of beliefs that would have been out of place in the movement's chaotic early period. These changes led to a reduction in the activity of young people, whom Quaker parents and elders thought needed to be protected from the corrupting influence of the world beyond their sect. While their activities were reduced, Quaker children were also subject

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Vann argues that Quakerism's early period is best described as a movement, a word that conveys the fluidity and mobility of early Quaker belief. By 1670, and especially after 1689, Quakerism is best described as a sect, due to members' separation from mainstream culture. See Richard T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 199-201.

<sup>2</sup> Vann wrote that by the middle of the eighteenth century, concern for the nurture and education of children was expressed so frequently as to seem a corporate preoccupation. Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost argue that, with the flow of converts drying up, Quakers concentrated their efforts on "those already within the fold [to] ensure that a rising generation of Quaker children retained their commitments to the faith." Rosemary Moore states the argument bluntly: "In the course of a few years, the Quaker movement changed from being one of the most radical of the sects that were looking for the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, and became an introverted body, primarily concerned with its own internal life." See Vann, *English Quakerism*, 167; Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 96; Rosemary Moore, *The Light in their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain, 1646-1666* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 214.

to increased supervision, as well as other structures that were meant to guide them through their sinful and dangerous early years into communion with the light within, and full participation in Quaker meetings.

Several recurring problems plagued the Quakers in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. With violent persecution subsiding, there was no longer an external force that bound Quakers together and kept them apart from wider English society.<sup>3</sup> Many abandoned the distinctive Quaker features of speech and dress, or otherwise fell into dissolute lifestyles. Quaker elders and leaders were especially preoccupied with the progress of children. Young people risked losing their faith and distinctiveness when they left their parents' home for apprenticeships or service, when orphaned, or, later, when they married.

Friends attempted to prevent the loss of belief and believers with several methods, to varying degrees of success. They instituted family supervision, when Quakers from a local meeting would visit Friends' homes to ensure parents were raising the next generation properly. Friends founded schools especially for Quaker youths, and parents often went to great lengths to send their children to learn from trusted Quaker schoolmasters and mistresses. Experienced Friends stressed supervision and control of children and youths, in order to prevent misconduct, inappropriate romantic choices, or the slackening of religious belief and practice. Above all, Quakers strove to keep their

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<sup>3</sup> Many scholars have linked the period of persecution with the centralization of Quaker beliefs and practices. For example, see Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 90; Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 66; Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society, 1655-1725* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 155. Contemporaries also made note of this phenomenon, including David Hall, who observed that disagreeable things spread during "this time of Liberty and Rest from Persecution." See David Hall, *Some Brief Memoirs of the Life of David Hall*, (London: Luke Hinde, 1758), 42.

offspring separate from the world outside their faith.<sup>4</sup> While the earliest Friends forged their faith in strident, persistent interactions with the world and the worldly, their descendants attempted to preserve the sect by protecting their children from these very same forces.<sup>5</sup>

The particular tenets of the Quaker faith were also challenging for young people. Friends eschewed games, idle and frivolous conversation, and other forms of merriment in favour of sober reflection and prayer.<sup>6</sup> Children were not to play thoughtlessly, or with other, non-Quaker youths, as this might impart bad habits or impure thoughts.<sup>7</sup> Young Friends were also to avoid the carefree, jocular conversation that is often typical of children and youth.<sup>8</sup> Constant care, vigilance, and direction were required to ensure children grew up to join their elders in the Truth.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter explores Quaker elders' attempts to keep their children in the faith. Schooling, institutional control, and discourse and literature that invoked the example of the other Quakers were some of the most common methods.<sup>10</sup> It then details the experience of the Hall family of Skipton, Yorkshire. John Hall, a Skipton tailor, became a Quaker during the persecution after the Interregnum, and was a local leader in the movement. His son David was also an important Skipton Friend, who wrote many letters to Quakers concerning education, mixed marriages, and problems facing those rearing the next generation. Despite his efforts, his daughter Elizabeth married a non-Quaker. Her letters to her local Meeting, and to her husband and children, demonstrate that the

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<sup>4</sup> Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 97.

<sup>5</sup> Jerry Frost, "As the Twig is Bent: Quaker Ideas of Childhood" *Quaker History*, Vol. 60, No. 2, Autumn 1971, 76.

<sup>6</sup> Frost, "As the Twig is Bent," 80.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>10</sup> Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 96-97, 115.

scholarly narrative of exodus and decline may have been more complicated than has been sometimes argued. The nature of the Society of Friends changed, and many young people were cast out or left behind. For some, however, the influence of Quakerism, and the example of early Friends, continued to be an important facet of social and religious identity.

### **I: From Movement to Sect**

Many historians have charted Quakerism's progress from a diffuse social movement to an inwardly focused, established religious sect. Hugh Barbour, for example, placed the Quakers in the English Puritan context, tracing the links between these two religious traditions. Though his study focused on the years 1650-1665, Barbour also sketched the subsequent developments in Quaker life. He asserted that while acts such as going naked as a sign continued during the years of persecution, this period also saw "gradual and uneven" changes in Quaker attitudes.<sup>11</sup> This was a time of tension; though men like Fox still believed that the inward light was the true, infallible guide, as the eighteenth century began, other Friends thought that inspired prophecies and re-enactments were rather odd.<sup>12</sup> As it became clear that Quakerism would not conquer the world, and that the millennium was not imminent, Quaker customs of gesture, speech, and dress, once an open attack on the nature of religion and society, became merely a statement of the uniqueness of Friends.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), 234, 241. Even the academic Robert Barclay went naked as a sign, in 1672. *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 234-236.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 234-250

Quaker perseverance under persecution could be used as a tool to provoke the consciences of non-believers.<sup>14</sup> Richard Vann has also argued that the persecutions of Charles II's reign had long-term consequences. Persecution created "an impulse towards uniformity of behaviour" that persisted past 1689.<sup>15</sup> Vann also makes the important point that while state-directed persecution ended with the Toleration Act of 1689, "petty persecution" by neighbors did not end by legislative fiat; it continued into the eighteenth century and gave Friends' manners an importance similar to that of their morals.<sup>16</sup> According to Barbour, the end of the English state's persecution of the Quakers weakened the sect in other ways. Once government acceptance was won, for example, Friends thought they should behave in a respectable fashion in order to preserve their liberty.<sup>17</sup>

Other changes also influenced the nature of the Society of Friends. Although their refusal to take oaths barred them from public office, the practice of affirmation offered a compromise position. Barbour argued that this had internal consequences for the sect as well; although Quakers were split in half over the issue of affirmations, there were no denunciations or internal struggle over the practice, as was common in the earlier years of the movement.<sup>18</sup> Friends also turned to commerce, and some became very wealthy indeed, which led to a decline in the radical social egalitarianism that was common in the 1650s.<sup>19</sup> "Centralizing forces," like the Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Suffering

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>15</sup> Vann, *English Quakerism*, 201.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 201-202.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>18</sup> Barbour, *Quakers*, 241. On how a seemingly trivial issue (to a modern mind) could fracture the Quaker movement, see Krista Kesselring, "Gender, the Hat, and Quaker Universalism in the Wake of the English Revolution," *The Seventeenth Century* 26.2 (2011), 299-322.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 248. For a good example of the socialist tendencies of the early Quakers, see "The Trumpet of the Lord Blown" in James Parnell, *A Collection of the Several Writings Given Forth from the Spirit of the Lord Through that Meek, Patient, and Suffering Servant of God, James Parnel...* (London: n.p. 1675), 28-55.

changed the organizational structure of the movement.<sup>20</sup> Friends also learned that they could improve their lot by appealing to the consciences of their fellows. Appealing to the consciences of individual magistrates, for example, was often effective, and also bypassed the need for the magistrate to have a conversion experience and heed his own inward light.<sup>21</sup> No longer seeking to convert the whole world, Friends instead worked for positive social change in areas that did not concern their forebears, like prison reform, education, and abolition of the slave trade and slavery.<sup>22</sup>

While Vann and Barbour argue that, in sum, these changes served to turn the Quakers' focus inward, Adrian Davies cautioned that this process did not proceed uniformly through all of England. In Essex, the site of Davies' study of Quakers in English society, "Friends increasingly became integrated into the parish community."<sup>23</sup> That said, Friends in general seemed more preoccupied with their own behaviour, and spreading their beliefs generationally rather than through society as a whole. Barbour's summation of this process was especially apt: "the first generation of Quakers had needed to fight the inner Adam and the world as well. The second generation faced daily outward danger, and inherited self-sacrifice with little choice. The third generation inherited the Quaker life without a struggle."<sup>24</sup> Without the formative experiences of interaction with wider society and the crucible of persecution as a centripetal force, the Society of Friends searched for new ways of insuring their children would follow in their footsteps. Davies may be correct in suggesting that local studies undermine the historical narrative of retreat into sectarianism, but for one group of Quakers in particular, the "world" was dangerous,

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<sup>20</sup> Davies, *The Quakers in English Society*, 222.

<sup>21</sup> Barbour, *Quakers*, 240

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>23</sup> Davies, *The Quakers in English Society*, 210.

<sup>24</sup> Barbour, *Quakers*, 250.

deleterious, and to be avoided. These were, of course, the children of Friends. While the earliest Quakers disrupted their families in pursuit of religious belief, disruption in later Quaker families often came when elders expelled transgressive youths.

The number of Quakers in England stagnated or declined during the eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Vann calculated the change over time in Buckinghamshire and Norfolk, and found that though numbers increased in the period immediately following the Act of Toleration, during the period of 1720-1740 the number of Friends in Buckinghamshire declined by 23.6% and in Norfolk, 17%. Within Norfolk, however, Norwich saw a slight increase of 3.9%.<sup>26</sup> Some of these changes were due to Quakers moving from the countryside into towns, and out-migration to Pennsylvania.<sup>27</sup> Vann also found that new converts were especially rare in cities, so the urbanization of Quakerism came at some cost. In Surrey, an extreme example to be sure, “the conversion of one person in 1732 was their greatest success” in a thirty year period.<sup>28</sup> Although there was some geographical variation – Quakerism still attracted converts in the North of England - by the end of Quakerism’s first century, “as many as 90 per cent of Quakers were children of Quakers.”<sup>29</sup> Due to this change, Friends paid increasing attention to the institution of the family.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The number of Quakers in early modern England is a matter of some scholarly debate. By the Restoration, estimates put the number of Quakers between forty and sixty thousand, the latter number amounting to less than one percent of England’s population. Vann provides a good overview of scholarly perspectives. See Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (London: Temple Smith, 1985), 26 - 29, and Vann, *English Quakerism*, 159-160, 166.

<sup>26</sup> Vann, *English Quakerism*, 162.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 163. Vann notes that while migration to urban centres was a broad English phenomenon in this period, Friends were concentrated in in towns and cities at a higher rate than the general population. See *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 167. There were geographic patterns in Quaker migration to America. Friends in the Northwest of England, often poor, moved to Pennsylvania where abundant land offered a way of keeping their children in the faith. See Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*.

<sup>30</sup> Vann, *English Quakerism*. 167.

Some traditional practices posed particular problems in the context of the Quaker family. In the northwest of England, for example, livestock farmers could no longer send their children to live in service in the homes of non-Quakers, which proved to be a significant financial burden.<sup>31</sup> Apprenticeship, too, posed problems. Since non-Quakers could not be trusted with the practical, moral, or religious education of young Friends, the Society sought to place young people within its own ranks. Some monthly meetings recorded and monitored apprenticeship arrangements, and all counties were expected to raise an “apprentices’ stock” to fund the apprenticeships of poor Quaker children.<sup>32</sup>

Another part of the social transformation of a youth into an adult, marriage also posed problems. Since the Quakers rejected the established church and its customs, and disdained marital contracts and formal financial settlements, they developed their own marriage system.<sup>33</sup> Friends desired marriage for love, but a love that derived from spiritual compatibility. Once partners selected each other, and all parties, including parents, consented, the potential union was put before Women’s and Men’s Meetings for approval.<sup>34</sup> These Meetings selected a committee to investigate the potential union, ensuring that there were no prior romantic entanglements and that the couple’s parents gave consent.<sup>35</sup> God technically presided over Quaker ceremonies, though the Society submitted marriage certificates to the relevant English authorities.<sup>36</sup> Marrying non-Quakers was strongly discouraged from the beginning; George Fox believed that such a

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<sup>31</sup> Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 13.

<sup>32</sup> Arnold Lloyd, *Quaker Social History, 1669-1738* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950), 171.

<sup>33</sup> Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 112.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* Interestingly, if parents did not consent, they had to convince the Meeting that their refusal was not grounded in monetary concerns. *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, 51, 60.



union actually quenched the inward light.<sup>37</sup> Although marrying a non-Quaker was grounds for disownment, the practice persisted, “notwithstanding endeavors [that] have been made to prevent it.”<sup>38</sup> In fact, despite repeated efforts by the Society of Friends to adapt to changing circumstances, and control aspects of young members’ lives, all of these problems persisted.

One of the earliest and most intrusive methods of control and supervision was the Quaker system of family visitation. In 1692, concerns over increasing wealth and worldliness among Friends led the Half-year’s Meeting to institute a system of oversight. Local Friends visited other Quakers’ homes, and submitted written reports on what they observed there to the local Meeting.<sup>39</sup> The visitors were concerned with displays of material excess, Quakers seeking to own large farms, “airiness in deportment,” and “superfluities” in word and apparel.<sup>40</sup> To remedy these offenses, they “gave advice and counsel” and also “read sundry rules of superior meetings” to their hosts.<sup>41</sup> Ideally, this ensured that Friends were conducting themselves in proper, respectable ways; the visits also sought to ensure that proper manners and beliefs were being passed on to the next generation of Friends.

The Meeting system of organization that grew up around the Quaker movement also sought to exert control over family life and childrearing through circular epistles. These were sent from the London Yearly Meeting to meetings in more remote parts of England, Ireland, and the Atlantic World. Since young Friends could be present in

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 112; Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, 61.

<sup>39</sup> Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism, Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 505.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 505.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 505.

meetings from a young age, they may have been exposed to the content of epistles. However, they were written in a way that suggests an adult audience. Epistles issued during the period of intense persecution did not often mention children in the context of childrearing; taken up with weighty matters of life and death, these early messages mostly used the term children when applying it to all members of the Religious Society of Friends.<sup>42</sup> By 1688, however, the epistles began offering specific, religious advice on childrearing and the education of Quaker youths.<sup>43</sup>

The epistle of 1688 advised parents to educate their children and servants in “modesty, sobriety, and in the fear of God.”<sup>44</sup> It warns against the “libertine, wanton spirit,” but suggests parents should “look to yourselves” and, with the aid of God, “help them over their temptations.”<sup>45</sup> In 1690, the yearly epistle emphasized the importance of selecting Friends as schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, which ensured that children’s education took place in a controlled setting, apart from the “Heathen” world. The epistle also stressed the importance of parents setting a good example for youths, using the proper, plain forms of speech.<sup>46</sup>

This advice was repeated, more or less exactly, in the epistles of the early eighteenth century, though later communication also stressed the importance of children’s attendance at weekly meetings. In fact, the authors of the epistles recognized this, in 1745:

Though frequent and repeated advices have been given from this meeting, respecting the education of our youth in sobriety, godliness, and all Christian virtues; yet this being a matter of very great moment for the welfare of the present and future

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<sup>42</sup> *Epistles from the Yearly Meetings of the People Called Quakers...*, (London: Samuel Clark, 1760), 24, 32.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

generations, we think it our incumbent duty again to recommend an especial care therein.<sup>47</sup>

The standard advice on setting a good example, Quaker schooling, plain speech and dress, and the vanity and danger of the world followed.<sup>48</sup> The exasperated tone continued in 1747: “notwithstanding the repeated and earnest advices of this meeting, in respect to the education of our children, we again see cause to remind you of this important and necessary duty.”<sup>49</sup> The epistles also offered advice to the parents and guardians of Quaker youths. Repeated warnings were issued about the dangers of the “fashions and customs” of the world outside the Quaker sect.<sup>50</sup> The epistles cautioned parents about the corrosive influence of worldly books as well. For example, the epistle of 1720 declared that no Friend should “suffer romances, playbooks, or other vain and idle pamphlets in their houses or families, which tend to corrupt the minds of youth.”<sup>51</sup>

The issue of marriage was prominent in several epistles from the London Yearly Meeting, though, unlike the advice on childrearing, the Meeting’s instructions changed over time.<sup>52</sup> The epistle issued in 1710 encouraged parents to teach children and youth that marriage was a weighty affair, and that they should seek the Lord and wait upon His

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 221-222.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>52</sup> Several scholars have remarked on the unchanging nature of Quaker advice on childrearing. For example, Jerry Frost noted “from the 1660’s until the 1760’s one can discuss Quaker ideas of children and not give much consideration to chronology because the contents of yearly meeting advices, pamphlets, and journals rarely varied.” Walter Joseph Homan advanced the same argument a half-century earlier, asserting “there has been little significant change in the theories, and even to a large degree in the practices of Friends in regard to children.” Broadly speaking, this was true, though the advice to young people concerning marriage changed significantly. See Jerry Frost, “As the Twig is Bent: Quaker Ideas of Childhood,” *Quaker History*, Volume 60, Number 2, Autumn 1971, 75; Walter Joseph Homan, *Children and Quakerism: A Study of the Place of Children in the Theory and Practice of the Society of Friends, Commonly Called Quakers* (Berkeley: The Gillick Press, 1939), 2.

counsel.<sup>53</sup> By 1723, however, that advice had changed, possibly because young Friends were continuing to marry outside their faith in numbers. The epistle of 1723 did not suggest young people should heed the inward light in the matter of marriage, but rather “that Friends children would consult and advise with their parents and guardians in that great and weighty point, so essential to their happiness and comfort, before they let out their minds, or do entangle their affections.”<sup>54</sup> It seems that marriage was too important a matter to trust to children and youth alone, whether they heeded the Lord or not.

Friends founded educational institutions to ensure their children were taught in a safe, moral environment, and were not exposed to mainstream English society during their formative years. As Quakerism became a well-defined sect, Friends realized that to maintain a ministry and priesthood of all believers, internal seeking and discipline must be combined with external education.<sup>55</sup> Early modern Quaker educational institutions should not be confused with later American colleges like Swarthmore or Earlham; in England, Quaker schools were often locally based and small in scale.

Although, as Vann wrote, “Quaker schools had only a feeble development during the first century of Quakerism,” this did not mean Friends were totally unconcerned with children’s education.<sup>56</sup> George Fox, for example, wrote his first letter on childrearing in 1655, well before Quakerism’s inward turn.<sup>57</sup> Fox also founded two Quaker schools during his lifetime, and wrote works concerning schoolmasters and education.<sup>58</sup> However,

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<sup>53</sup> *Epistles from the Yearly Meetings*, 115.

<sup>54</sup> *Epistles from the Yearly Meetings*, 149.

<sup>55</sup> Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 525.

<sup>56</sup> Vann, *English Quakerism*, 179.

<sup>57</sup> George Fox, *A Collection of the Many Select and Christian Epistles, Letters, and Testimonies* (Philadelphia: Marcus T.C. Gould, 1831), 104. The short letter advised Friends to warn their wives and children about the carnality of the world. He suggested they avoid “the world’s honour, and friendship, and words, and ways, and fellowships, and preferments, customs, and fashions.” *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 525; and Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, 123.

his *A Warning to all Teachers of Children*, published in 1657, demonstrates that his concern in this instance was directed at society at large, and not simply Quaker children.

Fox wrote that all teachers should, first and foremost, cultivate a fear of God in their charges.<sup>59</sup> Far too often, children were hardened by their education, and lost the tenderness Fox thought enabled communication with the inward light. Fox's critique of teachers was really a critique of English society; teachers all too often taught children the same things that Quakers railed against in adults:

them which you teach being found in lying, and cursed speaking, and oaths, and mocking, and scofting, and reproaching, and disdain, and ha-ing, and railing, and reviling, and slandering, and corrupt speeches, and backbiting, and malicousness, and envy, and pride, and disdain, and in evil words, this shews that their manners is corrupt, though you may teach them all the Scriptures, and they may learn all Books by rote.<sup>60</sup>

Fox's last point is key. Formalized school could teach rote learning, but this often came with corruptions of speech, dress, and morals. Moreover, what children really needed to learn was not something they could simply memorize. Schooling needed to make youths tender, and amenable to the crucial religious experiences that would open their hearts to the Truth of Quakerism.

Fox wrote a catechism that attempted, at least in part, to remedy this failure. Although it adhered to the question-and-answer format of the genre, it was necessarily complex, and, because it could only be a guide to the real, internal spiritual work, incomplete. *A Catechism for Children* dealt extensively with the inward light, but simple

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<sup>59</sup> George Fox, *A Warning to all Teachers of Children ...*, (London: Thomas Simmons, 1657), 1.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. Fox's criticisms of teachers were gendered. Schoolmistresses, in contrast to schoolmasters, taught children to "to play of Instruments and musick of all kinds, and severall tunes, and teaching them to Dance, and Catches, Songs, and Jests, which makes them lose modestety, and shamefastness, but enlarges brazen facedness, and boldness, and impudence." *Ibid.*

belief in this tenet did not make a child a Friend; for this a believer needed to undergo an inner conversion. The tension is evident in the *Catechism*'s reply to the child's question "Father, wilt thou teach me?"

Yea Child, If thou learn of him which hath enlighten thee with the light he will let thee see when sin doth appear in thy thoughts and Motions, before it comes into actions, and to abstain from it when it appears, and to shun all appearances of evil; for the Light doth discover it, and make it manifest, and is that which doth reprove.<sup>61</sup>

The *Catechism* also displayed some hostile attitudes towards higher education held by early Quakers. The child asked: if he learned Latin and Greek and the Bible, could he be a teacher of Christ? No, said Fox; teachers needed to experience the inward light if they could be trusted to communicate Quaker theology.<sup>62</sup>

The mistrust of what some Quakers called "brain knowledge" did not prevent Friends from educating children altogether.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, as Adrian Davies argued, by the 1690s the Society's interest in education increased.<sup>64</sup> Their initiatives favoured practical knowledge, as outlined by William Penn in a letter to his wife and children. Penn recommended "the useful parts of mathematics" involved in surveying, navigation and similar trades, but also agriculture, the practice of which pleased God and diverted the mind from vain pursuits.<sup>65</sup> Related to the idea of practical knowledge was the emphasis Quakers placed on apprenticeships. Since Quakers believed, like members of other Protestant sects, that the family was the most important religious institution, Friends believed placing children in suitable homes to learn suitable trades was extremely

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<sup>61</sup> George Fox, *A Catechisme for Children ...*, (London: Thomas Simmons, 1658), 7.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 20

<sup>63</sup> Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, 123.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>65</sup> William Penn, quoted in Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 529.

important.<sup>66</sup> An upright, moral family would ensure that the apprenticed child followed the correct path. It also ensured, ideally, that young people's material successes would not lead them away from the Quaker testimonies of plain speech, plain dress, and holy conversation.

Some Quaker families went to great lengths to provide their children with basic schooling. Friends founded many small schoolhouses, often at some personal risk; schoolteachers needed a license, and since Quakerism was a disqualification, Friends who taught school were subject to fines.<sup>67</sup> Parents also exposed their children to risks and ill-treatment in sending them to far-off Quaker schools. This was the case for Thomas Chalkley, who attended a day school run by Richard Scoryer between the ages of eight and ten. As Chalkley often walked the two miles to Scoryer's house alone, his "badge of plainness" made him a target. He suffered "beatings and stonings along the streets," and was told "it was no more a sin to kill me than it was to kill a dog."<sup>68</sup> It is telling that Chalkley's father thought a Quaker teacher was important enough to risk the distance and abuse.

A body of Quaker literature also emerged during the persecution and in its aftermath. Catechisms continued to be important educational tools; Robert Barclay improved on Fox in 1673 with a *Catechism and Confession of Faith*, a work approved by a general council of Quaker elders.<sup>69</sup> Mary Trim has noted that there were no books for Quaker children meant to entertain, or to educate about the natural world, but scriptural

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<sup>66</sup> Vann, *English Quakerism*, 179-180.

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers, for the Testimony of a Good Conscience...* (London: Luke Hinde, 1753), 204. While Besse was a tailor by trade, he also taught Quaker children. See Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, 125.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Chalkley, quoted in Homan, *Children and Quakerism*, 44.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Barclay, *A Catechism and Confession of Faith* (London: A. Sowle, 1690).

reading was naturally encouraged.<sup>70</sup> Instead, parents and elders encouraged young people to read weighty theological treatises.

Robert Barclay wrote one such text, which provided a comprehensive description of Quaker theology. *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* was a dense treatise, full of Biblical citations and Greek and Latin quotations.<sup>71</sup> It is organized around Barclay's fifteen propositions, which are briefly outlined at the beginning of the book and more fully developed throughout. Barclay provides comprehensive arguments against the practices and beliefs of both magisterial Protestants and Catholics. The book addressed the fundamentals of Quakers' beliefs, including their attitude towards scripture; the theological basis for belief in the inward light; their rejection of predestination; and the reinterpretation of Adam's fall and Christ's sacrifice that led Friends to believe that human perfection was attainable in their own time and place.

Barclay was perhaps uniquely suited for this work, as his education and upbringing took place in varied religious contexts. A Protestant in his youth, Barclay later studied in a Catholic school abroad, before returning to Scotland and becoming a Quaker, as his father had a few years earlier.<sup>72</sup> Although Barclay aimed his *Apology* at a wide audience in an effort to explain Quakerism to the hostile public, the text was extremely

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<sup>70</sup> Mary Trim, "Awe Upon My Heart: Children of dissent, 1660 – 1688" in *Cross, Crown, and Community: Religion, Government and Culture in Early Modern England, 1400-1800*, ed. David Trim and Peter Balderstone (Oxford, Bern & New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 426. While Trim is correct in her assertion concerning printed texts, the matter may be more complex when assessing manuscript sources. For example, David Hall's poems for his children touched on the Biblical account of the natural world: "God made the Beasts, the Fish, the Fowls/The rivers and the fountains/The roaring Sea, & both the Poles/The little Hills & Mountains." See "Advice to Children from D.H.," n.d., TEMP MSS 12/8/10, David Hall Papers, Library of the Society of Friends.

<sup>71</sup> Barclay actually wrote his *Apology* in Latin, before translating it into English himself two years later. See Gordon DesBrisay, "Barclay, Robert, of Ury (1648–1690)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1347>, accessed 12 Oct 2015]

<sup>72</sup> Dean Freiday, "Introduction" in *Barclay's Apology in Modern English* ed. Dean Freiday (Newburg: Barclay Press, 1991), xiv-xv.



popular with Quakers as well; for example, it was one of the few books that Meetings had printed and distributed throughout Europe.<sup>73</sup>

Interestingly, in discussing the failures of primitive Christianity, Barclay outlined some of the problems that confronted second- and third-generation Friends. The earliest Christians joined that faith despite the fact that doing so brought only social opprobrium, and no worldly benefits. The decay in Christianity began when it became an acceptable religion, and by joining, an individual could reap social and political rewards. These Christians joined the growing religion “by birth and education, and not by conversion, and renovation of spirit.”<sup>74</sup> Similarly, later Quakers, turning inward away from the world and toward their own community, no longer fought for their faith as did the first Friends, whose convictions were formed in the crucible of the Interregnum and the period of persecution that followed the Restoration. Their parents, seeking to protect them from the world, needed to find alternate ways of fostering the religious tenderness that enabled them to seek, find, and heed the inward light. As we shall see, some of them turned to Barclay’s *Apology* for just that purpose.

Quakers also issued some texts aimed specifically at children. An early example was Dorcas Dole’s *Solicitation to Children*, written in 1682 from a Bristol prison; it was later re-printed as an “Encouragement to [children] to live in Faithfulness, and in the Fear of God.”<sup>75</sup> Dole attended the Bristol meeting that had been disrupted by the actions of the city magistrates. As seen in chapter one, the children of this meeting continued to gather despite being subject to verbal and physical attacks over a period of months.

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<sup>73</sup> DesBrisay, ‘Barclay, Robert, of Ury,’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity ...* (London: n.p., 1678), 194.

<sup>75</sup> Dorcas Dole, *Salutation and Seasonable Exhortation to Children* (London: John Bringhurst, 1683), 14.

Dole's pamphlet was not an excessively laudatory text. Although she addressed the children as "Dear and Tender," she also called them "the Seed and Off-spring of the Righteous," placing an emphasis on their parentage rather than their own deeds.<sup>76</sup> This is in contrast with earlier Quaker testimonies, which emphasized the personal and interior qualities of believers, rather than their parentage or bloodline.<sup>77</sup> The pamphlet stressed parental care for and duty to children, the spiritual inheritance of Quakerism, which was superior to any worldly portion, and the transitory nature of human life.<sup>78</sup> Dole also displayed some of the anxiety about the coming generation that characterized early eighteenth-century Quaker attitudes toward youth. She expressed some trepidation about children's interactions with the world, writing "whilst you are in the World, you may know the preserving Power, that keeps his Children from the Evil of the World."<sup>79</sup> Dole then shifted to address "you Disobedient Children."<sup>80</sup> It is unclear if these are the same youths, or other Friends' children in Bristol who did not live up to their peers' high standard. She suggests that these children should live in "heavenly Subjection to the Lord, and to your Parents" else they follow in the footsteps of Absalom, who "died in Disobedience against the Lord," to his father's great distress.<sup>81</sup>

In the absence of established institutions, and in the face of declining membership, Friends also turned to the elites within their own ranks to provide for their children's future. Successful merchants such as William Stout were pillars of Quaker communities. Stout, who lived from 1665 to 1752, spent £1200 on the education and apprenticing of

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, the Testimonies to James Parnell included in his compiled *Works*.

<sup>78</sup> Dole, *Salutation*, 3-5.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

young people.<sup>82</sup> In his autobiography, he wrote extensively about his business transactions and ventures, as well as some of the political events of his time. Much of the rest of the autobiography dealt with Stout's young charges, their successes and failures, and his concern at their worldly interactions.<sup>83</sup> Unfortunately, Stout's efforts did not always bear fruit; according to Barry Levy's analysis, 42% of the youths Stout aided "literally went broke and died penniless."<sup>84</sup> Stout was obviously concerned about the moral failure implied in going bankrupt in the eighteenth century, but he also paid a great deal of attention to matrimony. When his niece married a man "contrary to my advice and without my consent," Stout decided not to make any monetary contributions to the new household.<sup>85</sup> Twelve years after their wedding, the groom died; Stout attributed his demise to loose living, writing "he fell to drinking brandy or sprirrits, which shortened his days."<sup>86</sup> Helpful as individuals such as Stout, and others such as Anthony Sharp and David Hall were, however, their efforts could not retain all young Quakers within the Society of Friends.<sup>87</sup>

## **II: The Hall Family of Skipton, Yorkshire**

Examining these broader trends in the context of one family's history both illustrates and complicates the changes in Quaker attitudes towards childhood and youth.

Records of four generations of the Hall family of Skipton, Yorkshire, provide insight into

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<sup>82</sup> Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 103

<sup>83</sup> Barry Levy contends that half of Stout's journal concerns his relations with young people. See *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 105

<sup>85</sup> William Stout, *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster, 1665-1752* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), 178.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>87</sup> Anthony Sharp, a Dublin merchant, played a similar role in his community as did Stout, while Hall, as we shall see, was a prominent Quaker writer and educator in Skipton. See Richard L. Greaves, *Dublin's Merchant-Quaker: Anthony Sharp and the Community of Friends, 1643-1707* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). A nineteenth-century history of Skipton asserted that David Hall was "the chief support of the Skipton society during the first half of" the eighteenth century. By the time of the book's publication in 1882, Quakerism was "nearly extinct in Skipton." See William Harbutt Dawson, *History of Skipton*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1882), 302-303.

the individuals involved in the broader trends of eighteenth-century Quakerism. The first Friend in the family, John Hall, grew up in the Church of England, but converted to Quakerism after an encounter with one of the Valiant Sixty.<sup>88</sup> His son, David, was a schoolmaster and prominent Friend in his community. David wrote extensively on the issues plaguing the second and third generations of Quakerism, but that did not stop his daughter, Elizabeth, from marrying a non-Quaker and being expelled from her Meeting. Elizabeth wrote moving letters to her husband and children, providing a glimpse into a Quaker family that was cut off from the Society of Friends.

John Hall was born in 1637, and so was near in age to James Parnell and the other young radical Quakers of the Interregnum.<sup>89</sup> He was apprenticed to a tailor, served his seven years, and was successful in his trade.<sup>90</sup> Like many others of his time, John Hall felt dissatisfied with the established church; as David Hall put it, he did not find “true Satisfaction of Soul under the dry Ministry, either of the hireling Priests he mostly used to hear, or in the Notions of high professors of other Denominations.”<sup>91</sup> Around this time, John met Gervase Benson, one of the valiant sixty traveling Quaker preachers.<sup>92</sup>

John Hall’s conversion was incremental, and then dramatic. Moved by a silent meeting, he began to seek the inward light in himself. As he proceeded with his worldly dealings, “the Light shone brighter and brighter, and discover’d Things further and further.”<sup>93</sup> Finally, in another silent meeting, John experienced the physical conversion

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<sup>88</sup> Hall, *Some Brief Memoirs*, 2. It is unclear when, exactly, John Hall became a Quaker. His encounter with Gervase Benson occurred after his term as an apprentice, which ended around 1658. He was certainly a Friend by the time he moved to Skipton in 1682. David Hall wrote that his information about his father was “received from his own mouth and manuscript.” *Ibid.*, 19-24, 19.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

that gave the Quakers their name: “he was remarkably affected in Body, so that his Hands were drawn together, the Use of his Limbs was taken from him, and he fell down on the Floor, where he laid for some time, to the Admiration of the Spectators.”<sup>94</sup> This experience led him to renounce his former business dealings as a tailor; he had often worked for wealthy individuals, making superfluous, showy clothes that Friends rejected. He continued to use his connections, but now, when he visited “great Men’s houses,” the topic of conversation was religion.<sup>95</sup>

John Hall was moved by the inward light to interact with the world in other ways. Once, he quietly entered a “steeple-house” and stared down a priest giving a sermon. The priest called in wardens to remove Hall, but was so nonplussed that when the wardens hesitated, he cried out that if they would not remove the man, he would do it himself. Hall was not dissuaded, however. Once outside the church, he returned via a back door, and silently stared at the priest again, until he was removed.<sup>96</sup> In the 1680’s, Hall was arrested several times for speaking at meetings in Skipton, and had much of his property seized.

In Skipton, Hall kept an inn and started a family. The inn was a particularly Friendly one, in that there was no “Drunkenness, Singing, Dancing, Music, or Excess” permitted.<sup>97</sup> He was a diligent, Quaker father, “strict and conscientious in the Nurture and Education of his Children, not suffering them to associate themselves with others in their vain Games or Pastimes.”<sup>98</sup> Hall diligently attended meetings, and helped Friends in his community in times of need, before dying, “like a lamb,” in 1719, aged 82. His life and

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

activities bridged the gap between the active, radical Quakers of the Interregnum and Restoration, and the inward-facing, respectable Quakerism of the eighteenth century.

His son David was more firmly rooted in the later period. The only surviving child of five, David Hall was a sickly youth, and suffered lasting effects from the smallpox outbreak that killed his two sisters.<sup>99</sup> David attended a non-Quaker school, but wrote that he only went there because he was too sickly to learn a trade. His father wished to send him to be educated by other Friends, but such a school was too distant for a weak child like David and moreover, his father was too poor to send his son to a boarding school.

David's time in Skipton's Free-School was evidently formative. Like other authors of spiritual autobiographies, Hall was tempted to misbehave in his youth, but declared that he was "mercifully preserv'd" from mischief.<sup>100</sup> That said, he recognized the difficulties a Quaker child faced in a worldly school:

I must, from real Experience of a Case of this Kind, say, (considering the many bad Examples, undue Liberties, Difficulties and Dangers that Friends Children may expect to meet with, that are imprudently and unadvisedly put to such Schools) all Friends, who have their Childrens [sic] welfare at Heart, should be very careful not to expose them to those Dangers.<sup>101</sup>

It was perhaps due to these experiences that Hall chose to set up a school in his father's house in 1703.

David Hall's role as a Quaker schoolteacher won him the attention of Roger Mitton, the local priest. Mitton called Hall's school "the Quaker Seminary," and tried for

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. Hall compared the symptoms of his disability to palsy, noting that he had trouble walking and talking, and appeared to some an "idiot." *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

years to shut it down.<sup>102</sup> Hall was brought to the Quarter Sessions on the charge of teaching without a license, but apparently escaped without conviction. While he was targeted for prosecution, it does not seem that he experienced significant persecution in his community.

David Hall's religious conversion differed from his father's. It also seems to have proceeded slowly, without too much adult control or supervision, in contrast to the system suggested by Quaker leaders in the eighteenth century. In his memoirs, Hall wrote that his first testimony before a Quaker meeting occurred in 1711, when he would have been near thirty years of age.<sup>103</sup> It is striking that his parents would allow such a slow and incremental conversion – Hall was already teaching as a Quaker, before being fully convinced in the faith. Once he had opened himself to the inward light, David Hall spoke before the Skipton Meeting, urging Friends to “open your Hearts to the Lord!”<sup>104</sup> He also felt compelled to go before the people of Skipton and urge repentance, but did not take this step until he had discussed the action with his parents. When he laid the matter before them, all three wept with joy; Hall's parents encouraged his proposed action, and so he followed through. He soon visited the dancing school in Skipton, to tell its master that he was being secretly judged for his ungodly practice.<sup>105</sup>

This appears to be a transitory stage in Quaker theology and family philosophy. Though the inward light was supposedly an infallible guide, Hall first consulted with his parents before taking action. This is in stark contrast to the Friends of his father's generation, who often went against their parents' wishes in their active promotion of

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

Quakerism. The targets of Quaker action had also shifted. While John Hall directly confronted an Anglican priest – a representative of the state – David Hall spoke to fellow Friends and his own neighbors. His words concerned not a dramatic reformation of all English society, but respectable personal behavior.<sup>106</sup> Lastly, Hall’s parents seem to have been relaxed, to a degree, about their son’s spiritual journey; rather than controlling his religious seeking, they allowed him to come to his own, powerful conclusions.

This is in some contrast to some of the parenting techniques Hall espoused in his own writings. In fact, much of Hall’s *Memoirs* concerned the proper rearing of Quaker children.<sup>107</sup> Hall repeatedly urged that parents set a good example, and take care to instill in their children (and servants) the proper fear of the Lord.<sup>108</sup> Children should be taken to meetings from an early age, to “prudently and gradually to train them towards ... the real Performance of this so important a Duty.”<sup>109</sup> In contrast to George Fox, Hall was a firm believer in the Fifth Commandment, writing that children bore a great obligation to their parents because of “that express Command of the Almighty, written by his own Finger, -- Honour thy Father.”<sup>110</sup> Hall went even further in his appeal to Biblical authority. He wrote that though the Biblical law permitting the communal stoning to death of disobedient children was no longer enforced, that punishment “is adequate to the Transgression of the

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<sup>106</sup> Which, of course, does not preclude the eventual total reformation of society.

<sup>107</sup> Many of Hall’s letters to Quaker Meetings are included in his memoirs, and these letters dealt with personal comportment and parenting. There is a significant degree of repetition in Hall’s epistles.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32; 39; 60; 62; 68; 78; 118; 195.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 195. Hall seems to share some ideas with other educational thinkers of his time. While it was important that children attended meetings, Hall cautioned against “over-driving the little Lambs” and suggested that parents should take action “in due Consideration of their tender Age, Capacities and Circumstances.” *Ibid.* John Locke, the leading educational theorist of the late-seventeenth century, decried educators who were “apt to think Beating the safe and universal Remedy, to be applied at random, on all occasions.” He also recommended that an educational program be tailored to an individual child, as opposed to uniform schooling. See John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. J.W. Yolton and J.S. Yolton, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 139; Adriana S. Benzaquen, “Locke’s children,” *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Volume 4, Number 3 (Fall 2011), 390.

<sup>110</sup> Hall, *Memoirs*, 99. Hall also notes that this Commandment does not lose effect when a child has grown. *Ibid.*, 100.



spiritual Law we now are under.”<sup>111</sup> It seems that later Quakers were much more ambivalent towards the Second Commandment – rather than loving their neighbors, children, especially, should fear and avoid them if they did not share the Quaker faith.

Hall repeatedly cautioned young people about the dangers of interacting with worldly society. His experience at school in Skipton impressed upon him the need for Quaker schools and schoolmasters. He warned of the dangers of “unsuitable company” and the evils of drink – surely not concerns exclusive to Quaker parents. Hall included examples of religious youth for the rising generation to emulate. Some of these models were biblical; Jacob, David, and Josiah are mentioned approvingly.<sup>112</sup> He also included deathbed testimonies from young Quakers, such as William Fennell. Fennell’s dying words were a call for separation from worldly society; he “cried out, saying, *Oh! the Lord loves Solitariness; he doth not love laughing and joaking; I never read that Christ smil’d, but often pray’d and wept.*”<sup>113</sup> It is clear that young people in the Religious Society of Friends bore a rather heavy burden, discouraged from fun, games, and interaction with other children. Interestingly, Hall drew no examples from the earliest period of Quakerism, when young men and women were exceptionally active in the Quaker movement. These youths were perhaps too radical and uncontrolled for his purposes.

One kind of interaction was especially problematic for David Hall - romantic relationships. Hall inveighed against what he termed “mixt-marriages,” which brought:

Trouble into Society; Sorrow upon good Parents; Anguish upon  
the Party immediately concern’d; much Confusion, manifold  
Perplexities and Inconveniencies into Families; and lastly, an

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 144-147.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 150. The deathbed speeches of Quaker children will be further explored in chapter three. Hall was ahead of his time; later Quaker authors would assemble whole books consisting of the deathbed trials of young men and women.

almost irreparable Loss to their Offspring, in relation to their religious Education.<sup>114</sup>

He also called these unions an “afflicting sorrowful Disorder ... a growing evil,” almost capable of “breaking the Hearts of good Parents.”<sup>115</sup> He employed a think-of-the-children argument against mixed marriages, noting that “the poor Children of such Parents labour under their respective Difficulties, being many Times hard put to it, how to please both Father and Mother in their Addresses, Deportment and Proceedings in divers Respects.”<sup>116</sup> For Hall, these were not mere human failings; rather, they were snares laid by “our common Adversary for the Feet of the Youth.”<sup>117</sup> Although rebellious youths were expelled from their Quaker meetings for marrying people who followed another faith, Hall also expressed some hope for conciliation, and sympathy for all involved. He wrote that prodigal sons and daughters may yet return penitent, to be “re-instated and re-admitted into the Father’s house.”<sup>118</sup> Hall did not blame parents for their children’s failings, but wrote, “in much Compassion, to say, *Be not too much cast down, thou art under the tender Regard and merciful Notice of the Lord.*”<sup>119</sup> It is no wonder that David Hall sympathized with families that were disrupted by mixed marriages; despite his efforts and extensive exhortations, his own daughter Elizabeth married a non-Quaker.

The Hall family papers, held in the Religious Society of Friends Library in London, include letters written by Elizabeth Dale, David Hall’s daughter. Hall’s three surviving children also wrote a testimony in praise of his life and deeds. They wrote that he worked as a schoolmaster until late in his life, even when his eyesight failed and he

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 165

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

needed to be escorted to his own schoolhouse.<sup>120</sup> This was not due to avarice or need for money on Hall's part, but from "a desire of discharging his Duty to those under his Care."<sup>121</sup> They wrote that his mind and manner were particularly suited to his vocation:

Being a man particularly favoured with talents for that very useful, tho difficult profession of Schoolmaster, being of a Patient, meek, sweet disposition, not easily provoked to anger, and had a way almost peculiar to himself of winning by the most mild and gentle measure upon the minds of his Pupils, being averse almost to abhorrence, to all harsh correction.<sup>122</sup>

The testimony gives an impression of a kindly, caring father and teacher; the very model of a respectable and influential Friend.

Despite all his laudable qualities as a parent, David Hall failed in one important respect: his daughter married outside of her faith, and was expelled from the family's meeting. This failure illustrates that no matter what techniques Quakers employed to keep their children apart from the world, and firmly ensconced within their own sect, even the most well-raised and educated young Friends could err. Elizabeth Dale wrote an apologetic letter to the Quakers of the Skipton Meeting in 1761, after her father's death, begging to be readmitted into their community. Dale wrote that it was "a long time since I unhappily forfeited my Unity with you, by taking a step so contrary to the Rules of the Society, the advice of my best friends, and the Dictates of my own Conscience."<sup>123</sup> While she was aware of the magnitude of her transgression, which she called "the greatest error of my Life," she also desired to be received "into some degree of Unity with you

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<sup>120</sup> Testimony to the Memory of David Hall by his Children, 1756, TEMP MSS 12/8/12, David Hall Papers, Library of the Society of Friends.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Letter to the Friends of the Skipton Meeting from Elizabeth Dale, February 26, 1761, TEMP MSS 12/8/15, David Hall Papers, Library of the Society of Friends.

again.”<sup>124</sup> Dale also wrote that she is particularly culpable because she had so “careful & religious an Education” and her father’s frequent warnings of the danger of mixed marriages.<sup>125</sup>

It seems that, no matter her reasons for marriage in the first place, Dale was deeply unhappy about her situation. She told the Friends of her meeting that she had “never known true Peace of Mind” since her rash decision, and that her anguish was heightened by the fact “that I brought all upon my self.”<sup>126</sup> Dale was aware that she would “never be perfectly restor’d to Unity again with you” but hoped that “if my Case and Situation in every Respect was known to you it might perhaps raise Sentiments of Compassion in the Hearts of those amongst you who are the least like to err on the Charitable side.”<sup>127</sup>

Despite her regret and unhappiness, the decision of the Meeting was final; Dale, though still obviously a Quaker at heart, remained separated from her community of Friends.

Elizabeth Dale wrote other letters that demonstrated both her separation from Friends and continued espousal of Quaker ideals and beliefs. Late in 1762, Dale wrote letters to her husband and children that communicated her desires in case of her early death. In her letter to her husband William, religion is the first subject mentioned. Elizabeth wrote that she desired her children be “educated & as much as possible conversant amongst the People called Quakers.”<sup>128</sup> Her other wishes for their upbringing conformed to Quaker practices. She desired that they learn “a strict observance of moral Justice,” “detest lying cheating & frauds of all kinds tho in the most minute trifles,” and

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Letter to William Dale from Elizabeth Dale, September 12, 1762, TEMP MSS 12/8/13, David Hall Papers, Library of the Society of Friends. Dale parenthetically notes that her wishes were “(agreeable to previous contract).” It is possible that she felt so strongly about her children’s religion that she insisted on a formal document stipulating they be educated by Quakers. *Ibid.*

that they “appear in a plain and homely garb both Boy & Girls.”<sup>129</sup> She also appealed to her husband to follow the example of her “tender & religious father” and “harden not their hearts by servile and passionate correction but win upon them by loving treatment and kind and gentle means.”<sup>130</sup> Of course, she also asked her husband to “endeavor with all possible Care to screen ‘em from the dreadful Danger attending bad Company.”<sup>131</sup> It is clear that, though she was no longer a member of the Society of Friends, she desired that her children at least share the values of Quakers, if not their society.

In her letter to her husband, Elizabeth Dale mentions her plan to write some “lines of advice” to her children, which William Dale was to keep until they were able to read it themselves.<sup>132</sup> Her disunity with the Quakers presented Dale with a problem: she wanted her children to be educated by Friends, and work as servants or apprentices in their homes, but she had no means of ensuring her children would follow this course, separated as she was from the system of meetings and supervision that must have governed her own youth. In the letter, she encouraged her children to be pious, honest, humble, and to “avoid as deadly poison the Conversation of those who make light of Religion & a self denying life.”<sup>133</sup> With no meetings for support, and her own future uncertain, Dale turned to literature to instill Quakerism in her children.

Once her children were capable of judgment, Dale hoped they would “seriously, attentively and without prejudice peruse a Book called Barclay’s Apology for the Quakers

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* This statement also provides a clue regarding the provenance of Elizabeth Dale’s letters. The letters held at the Friends Library had been re-written. This, combined with the fact that the letters were preserved at all, indicates that Dale may have in fact died early, and that her children read and valued her words.

<sup>133</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Dale to her Children, September 12, 1762, TEMP MSS 12/8/14, David Hall Papers, Library of the Society of Friends.

(or the People in scorn called so).”<sup>134</sup> Barclay was the foremost Quaker theologian of his time, and his *Apology* was the most comprehensive and clear description of Quaker theology.<sup>135</sup> Dale thought this book would both prove the tenets of Quakerism and reveal the “dry barren Forms and mercenary tricks of Priestcraft.”<sup>136</sup> In addition to Barclay, she recommends the work of their grandfather, David Hall. Dale was effusive in praise of her father. She wrote “a sincerer or better Christian never lived” and exhorted her children to good behaviour for his memory’s sake: “Oh my dear Children let it never be said that a Grandchild of so valuable & honorable a man can stoop to a dishonest or dirty action but ever bear in Mind that as Descendants from him you ought to behave yourselves in a manner becoming his posterity.”<sup>137</sup> On the outside of the sect looking in, Dale’s children needed to learn to experience the inward light of Christ from books, not from a period of spiritual seeking like the one their grandfather experienced.

The experiences of four generations of Quakers demonstrate the changes in the Society of Friends. John Hall’s conversion was dramatic, and his activities as a Quaker leader were public and disruptive. His son was clearly a more respectable Friend; a schoolteacher and writer, David Hall was a pillar of his community, like William Stout and Anthony Sharp. Despite his best efforts, he could not prevent his daughter from marrying a non-Quaker and being expelled from her religious community. John Hall’s great-grandchildren, barred from the institutions and systems the Friends had created as they progressed from a movement to a sect, had to resort to books, or the kindness of other sympathetic Quakers.

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Frost, “As the Twig is Bent,” 69.

<sup>136</sup> Elizabeth Dale to her Children, September 12, 1762, TEMP MSS 12/8/14.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

Elizabeth Dale's wish that her children remain tied to the Quaker faith complicates the usual narrative of the stagnating membership in the Society of Friends. While Dale was technically no longer a Quaker, she never rejected the sect's ideals and theology; she still viewed a Quaker upbringing as the best choice for her children, despite the fact that – due to love, youthful impulsivity, or some other reason – her upbringing was in one sense a failure. It is, of course, impossible to say what were the lasting effects of Quakerism on the Hall family and Skipton itself. Perhaps there were none. That said, it is evident that even if an individual was removed from communion with the Quakers, that did not entail the removal of Quakerism from that individual. Ideas and ideals could persist, and linger generationally.

One example of this phenomenon is the life of Thomas Paine. Like Elizabeth Dale, his contemporary, Paine's father was a Quaker who had been ostracized by his meeting after marrying a non-Quaker.<sup>138</sup> Paine grew up in a mixed home, and in his early years, his mother's Anglican faith dominated; he may have experienced some of the conflict that David Hall thought would arise from this situation.<sup>139</sup> Later, Paine was apprenticed to his father, which exposed the young man to Quaker beliefs and ideals. According to Jack Fruchtman, in addition to imparting distrust for authority, Joseph Paine “transmitted to the boy the sense of inner-light spiritualism that was part of the Quaker doctrine,” that would later manifest itself in Paine's Deism.<sup>140</sup> Elizabeth Dale's children did not go on to become transformative and revolutionary political thinkers. However, they were likely influenced by their mother's faith, her efforts to educate her children

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<sup>138</sup> Harvey Kaye, *Thomas Paine and the Promise of America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 21.

<sup>139</sup> Jack Fruchtman, *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Paine* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 23.

<sup>140</sup> Jack Fruchtman, *Thomas Paine: Apostle of Freedom* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1994), 20.

about its most important tenets, and her attempts to place them in Quaker homes as apprentices or servants. Though they were not technically members of the Society of Friends, it is certainly possible that they left home with some of the same ideals that motivated Quakers' campaigns for social justice and equality.

It seems evident that the Society of Friends faced a serious challenge in rearing successive generations of the faithful. Since they disdained and feared many things traditionally associated with youthfulness, for example play, idle conversation, and improper company, only total separation from these temptations could ensure a successful upbringing. It is possible that this strategy was counter-productive; some modern religious sects approach the same problem very differently. For example, the Amish in North America typically pass through a period in adolescence termed "rumspringa," which literally translates to "running around." Since they adhere to a strict religious code, and reject modern technology, the Amish are perhaps even more apart from the world than were early-modern Quakers. Still, they allow their teen-aged children a period of exploration, in which they can experiment without being expelled from their faith. As Tom Shachtman wrote of a group of young Amish women on rumspringa, each "performs at least one of many actions that have been forbidden to her throughout her childhood: lights up a cigarette, grabs a beer, switches on the rock and rap music on the car radio or CD player, converses loudly and in a flirtatious manner with members of the opposite sex."<sup>141</sup> Moreover, Amish elders expect young people to choose their mates during this

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<sup>141</sup> Tom Shachtman, *Rumspringa: To be or not to be Amish* (New York: North Point Press, 2006), 6. Some of Shachtman's other informants went even further, engaging in premarital sex and illegal drug use. One pair of young men were arrested for running a cocaine distribution ring while on rumspringa. See *Ibid.*, 8-10; Steven V. Mazie, "Consenting Adults? Amish Rumspringa and the Quandary of Exit in Liberalism" *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Dec., 2005), 749.



unsupervised time.<sup>142</sup> After this period of experimentation and exploration, they can freely choose to be baptized as an adult, and rejoin their Amish brethren. As Shachtman notes, at stake in this process is “nothing less than the survival of their sect and way of life.”<sup>143</sup> Despite the risk, over 80% of young Amish people return to their church.<sup>144</sup> Without the rumspringa to “inoculate youth against the strong pull of the forbidden,” Amish leaders believe the losses would be even greater.<sup>145</sup> It is possible that the Quakers, so insistent on total separation, hindered their own efforts at generational transmission of their faith.

Quakerism’s transformation from a radical, disruptive movement to a respectable religious sect impacted Friends’ ideas of childhood and childrearing. Young Friends once ministered promiscuously; interactions with the wider world were instrumental in their conversion experiences and search for the inward light. Their descendants’ activities and social lives were curtailed, at least ideally. Quaker children needed to be educated and raised among other Quakers, for fear that any worldly interaction would prove corrosive to their humbleness and spirituality. Denied the formative experiences of their elders, second, third, and fourth generation Quakers needed to seek and find the inward light in different ways. Friends developed textual traditions that could provide “brain knowledge” but these could not accomplish the real work involved in becoming a Quaker: they could not teach individuals to find and heed the inward light of Christ in themselves. Despite their efforts, Quakers could not wholly solve these problems. This is perhaps because

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> For modern Mormons, too, interaction with the wider world is an expected part of the transition between youth and adulthood. Young Mormons, both men and women, typically work as missionaries away from their homes for eighteen months to two years.

Quaker ideals of sobriety, self-denial, and plainness were at odds with the traditional activities of young people. Youthful Friends continued to fall away from their Society, and were expelled for dissolute behaviour and improper marriages. As the experience of Elizabeth Dale demonstrates, banishment from Quaker fellowship did not necessarily mean the rejection of Quaker ideals and theology.

#### **Chapter Four: “We are all but as clay, and must die:” The Deathbed Performances of Quaker Children and Youth**

As we have seen, children and young people expressed a degree of agency in the early years of the Quaker movement. Friends believed that young people were able to transform themselves by discovering and heeding the inward light of Christ, and take up active roles in the new, growing faith. Later, as persecution ebbed, and the flow of new converts dwindled, children and young people occupied a different place as Friends. They were the future, not the present, of the movement. Though their parents still educated them in the hopes of facilitating an internal conversion experience, youthful activities were circumscribed. In contrast to the Interregnum years, young people were secluded from their peers, and from the wider world in general. If they did take up positions as speakers or traveling ministers, it was under the supervision of older, respectable Friends.

There was one place, however, where children and youths were able to heed their inward light, to speak and preach, and to influence their elders and the faithful of their Church. Paradoxically, this place was their deathbed, as their short lives were ending. Because of the early modern ideas of death, their parents’ desire to have some sign of their children’s spiritual fate, and the child’s own religious desires and education, children and young people could speak authoritatively during their last weeks and days. They encouraged their siblings to be faithful, comforted their parents, and communicated powerful truths about their religious belief and ideology. The accounts of their deaths suggest that they often had something akin to the internal transformation Quakers believed accompanied the conviction experience. These young people expressed themselves in striking ways as their lives ended, and accounts of their final moments meant that death did not entirely nullify the radical and religious potential of these

children. Like other Protestant non-conformists, Quaker writers compiled reports of deathbed testimonies to offer assurance and comfort, and to serve as edifying examples. However, Quaker accounts of the deaths of young people differed from those of other non-conformists, as they were intended to edify young and old Friends alike.

### **I: The Deaths of Young Quakers**

Intriguingly, the social history of death was re-invigorated by the same scholar who spurred interest in the history of childhood, Philippe Aries. Aries' exploration of attitudes towards death and dying appeared in English as *The Hour of Our Death* in 1981.<sup>1</sup> Aries argued that death, like childhood, was a social construction, subject to material and cultural changes. He called the medieval ideal "the Tame Death," and argued it was characterized by personal acceptance, self-diagnosis of impending death, and public declarations to friends and family.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to many modern ends, a person's death was a public affair; Aries argued that this public nature of death persisted until the nineteenth century.

There were, however, other changes in the rituals of death and dying. A person's death became more individualized; as Aries put it, "individualism triumphed in an age of conversions, spectacular penances, and prodigious patronage, but also of profitable businesses; an age of unprecedented and immediate pleasures and immoderate love of life."<sup>3</sup> As rationalism and faith in progress grew, death also grew increasingly remote. No longer tame, or managed by a cultural schema of artwork and *memento mori*, death became more alien and fearsome.<sup>4</sup> Finally, Aries echoed his work on childhood, arguing

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<sup>1</sup> Philippe Aries, *The Hour of Our Death* (New York: Knopf, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 606.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 608.

that as the family came to replace more traditional and expansive notions of community, people focused on the deaths of important “others” instead of their own ends.<sup>5</sup>

In *Death, Burial, and the Individual in Early Modern England*, published in 1984, Claire Gittings retained Aries’ focus on individuality, while shifting to the English context. Gittings acknowledged her debt to Aries, but concentrated more on the survivors of the deceased, rather than a dying person’s perceptions of their own passing. Gittings relied on wills, probate accounts, epitaphs, and descriptions of funerals to demonstrate that it was personal notions of individuality that had the greatest effect on the changing culture of death and dying.<sup>6</sup> As Gittings put it, “it is not possible, it would seem, to hold both the philosophy of individualism and to have an easy acceptance of death.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Gittings downplays the influence of religious belief on death-related practices; an examination of the deathbed performances of young Quakers may challenge this conclusion.

Ralph Houlbrooke challenged the importance of individuality in *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750*, published in 1998. Noting that “Christianity offered the most comprehensive and coherent body of available guidance as to what to believe and do about death during the later Middle Ages and early modern times,” Houlbrooke specifically examined the impact of changing religious beliefs on the social history of death.<sup>8</sup> The book traced the impact of Puritanism on deathbed rituals, arguing that reduced emphasis on last rites and priestly intervention gave people “a more active

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 609-610.

<sup>6</sup> Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 59.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 1-2.

role in the drama of their own deathbeds.”<sup>9</sup> Houlbrooke noted that, among all Protestant groups, it was the Quakers who “moved farthest from reliance on sacramental help or priestly support.”<sup>10</sup> Quaker beliefs like the rejection of non-Biblical rituals, spiritual equality, and the priesthood of the faithful, shaped their culture of death and dying.

Houlbrooke also explored the Christian notion of a “good death.” Rather than wage a battle against mortality – often an aspect of modern “good” deaths – medieval and early modern Christians should have welcomed their impending demise.<sup>11</sup> Terminal illnesses that caused a slow death were desirable, for they allowed sufficient time for the dying person to make personal and spiritual amends before their demise.<sup>12</sup> He notes that deathbed performances gave women an opportunity to speak in ways that were not acceptable in other contexts.<sup>13</sup> For example, while women were forbidden from speaking in church, on their deathbeds they could preach to – and pray for – an attentive audience.<sup>14</sup> It is possible that children, too, could transcend the usual restrictions of age and education, and use their dying days to exhort their friends and families. Houlbrooke argued that children had the ability to die good deaths, depending on their developing mental capacities.<sup>15</sup> Good deaths, as Houlbrooke put it, “transformed the process of dying from tragedy to triumph”; they offered re-assurance that the departed were bound for a better place, and that the family would eventually be reunited in the afterlife.<sup>16</sup>

Friends’ ends had always been scrutinized for signs of God’s favour, or lack thereof. For example, James Parnell’s last words were recorded and recalled by Quakers

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 161, 160-174.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 183-184.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 186-188.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

in commemoration of his life and work.<sup>17</sup> Barbour and Frost argued that the focus on deathbed speech, while also a feature of early Quakerism, grew more intense after 1690.<sup>18</sup> This could be another aspect of the change from movement to respectable sect, which also influenced Quaker treatment of children. With persecution ebbing, Quakers no longer suffered for their faith as they once did. It seems that deathbed performances took the place of earlier stories of suffering and martyrdom. Quakers found these scenes to be extremely powerful. As Frost and Barbour note, since the dying friend was “neither part of this world nor yet joined to the next,” they could “speak to those around with an authority possessed by no ordinary person.”<sup>19</sup> This authority could also transcend traditional patriarchal structures. For example, Phyllis Mack has argued that dying Friends, no matter if they were men, women or children, took on the role of minister, counselling the family about their impending loss.<sup>20</sup>

Like many other early modern deaths, Friends’ were often a public affair. As Mack has noted, non-Quakers as well as Friends were present in the homes of the afflicted.<sup>21</sup> This process could even win new converts to the Quaker faith, as non-believers were witness to the powerful internal spirituality that was often evident as Friends expired.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that, in these circumstances, the deaths of children worked in a similar way to the preaching and prophesying of young people during the

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<sup>17</sup> Stephen Crisp’s Testimony, in James Parnell, *A Collection of the Several Writings Given Forth from the Spirit of the Lord Through that Meek, Patient, and Suffering Servant of God, James Parnel...* (London: n.p. 1675). Parnell’s was actually the very first entry in the first volume of *Piety Promoted*. See William and Thomas Evans, eds., *Piety Promoted, in a Collection of Dying Sayings of Many of the People Called Quakers...*, Volume One (Philadelphia: n.p., 1854), 29-31.

<sup>18</sup> Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 116.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>20</sup> Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-century England* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992), 400.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 400.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

movement's early years. Weighty and wise words from a dying child could have swayed adults in a way that the dying testimony of Quaker elders did not, if the child's wisdom and spirituality was attributed to their successful communication with their inward light of Christ.

John Tompkins compiled the dying words of Friends in the first volume of *Piety Promoted*, published in 1701.<sup>23</sup> It was an immediate success, and a second volume followed the next year.<sup>24</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, compilers had assembled nine volumes, many of which were reissued multiple times.<sup>25</sup> Other authors produced thematic collections culled from the existing material. William Rawes assembled one notable example of this phenomenon in 1797. Titled *Examples for Youth, in Remarkable Instances of Early Piety*, this text was a culmination of the growth in Quaker literature for children explored in chapter two.<sup>26</sup>

The nine seventeenth-century volumes of *Piety Promoted* contained a total of 376 entries. 246 of these concern the deaths of male Quakers, while only 130 recorded the dying words of female Quakers. Of the individuals whose ages are given, thirty-four were aged nineteen or under – nine percent of the total number of entries. Interestingly, among these younger subjects, the percentage of entries by gender was reversed: only ten of the deaths of young Quakers depicted in *Piety Promoted* were of male Friends. The distribution of young Quaker deaths over time was relatively uniform, aside from a cluster of entries from the early eighteenth century. From 1666 to 1688, *Piety Promoted*

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<sup>23</sup> Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 116.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> William Rawes, *Examples for Youth, in Remarkable Instances of Early Piety* (London: James Phillips & Son, 1797). In fact, David Hall had compiled examples of youthful deathbed performances nearly fifty years before Rawes. See David Hall, *Some Brief Memoirs of the Life of David Hall*, (London: Luke Hinde, 1758), 144-151.



contained entries concerning twelve young Friends, while from 1699 to 1715, there were sixteen such entries.<sup>27</sup> This slight uptick in entries may have been a result of the changes in the Quaker movement after Parliament passed the Act of Toleration in 1689.

The accounts of child and adult deaths in *Piety Promoted* are broadly similar. Young and old friends comforted their families, preached from their deathbeds, and spoke of the power of their spiritual experiences. Different qualities were emphasized; for example, William Wilson was “a true husband and a tender father,” while Thomas Hains was “a dutiful child,” “very sensible of the love and tender regard which his parents had towards him.”<sup>28</sup> While the entries concerning dying adults had more biographical details to relay, the words of each dying Friend were broadly similar.

A dying Quaker’s words were undoubtedly subject to some revision, and entirely negative ends would have likely been omitted from printed works like *Piety Promoted*. Despite this, death scenes are one of the few sources that even purport to contain children’s own words. Quaker scrupulousness, especially regarding honesty, increases the likelihood that the accounts in *Piety Promoted* depicted at the very least a version of the truth.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the Society of Friends’ focus on the written word – partly due to their geographical dispersion across England and the Atlantic World – meant that great care was taken to compile truthful testimony for the faithful. In fact, some entries in *Piety Promoted* were incomplete due to a lack of documentary evidence. Such was the case

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<sup>27</sup> James Parnell’s death was an outlier: his was the only account of the death of a young Quaker from before 1669. No deaths of young Friends were recorded in *Piety Promoted* from 1689 to 1698.

<sup>28</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. One*, 159, 126-127.

<sup>29</sup> Some accounts, like that of the death of Jonah Lawson, aged 14, include text written by the dying child: “After his death, his father found the following verses of Jonah’s making, viz.

Humility the spring of virtue is;

Humbling thyself, virtue thou canst not miss.

Delight in virtue; vice be sure to shun:

He’s happy that a virtuous course does run.” See *Piety Promoted, Vol. One*, 92.

with the account of Sarah Stephenson's death. In addition to the dying words that were recorded, there was "much more of the same nature ... but they neglecting to write it down, it cannot be so perfectly remembered."<sup>30</sup> The success of *Piety Promoted* demonstrates the importance of deathbed performances in Quaker practice; absent an ordained and regular ministry, the last words and comportment of Friends were powerful testimonies for the faithful as well as some non-Quakers.

In some ways, the experiences of Quakers conformed to the dying rituals of other early-modern English people. As Houlbrooke has shown, late medieval and early modern people invested an individual's last moment on earth with great importance. Although the trial of the deathbed could be difficult and painful, perseverance and piety indicated the fate of the immortal soul. A "good death" often involved a lengthy illness, careful preparation, and religious rites and rituals. Dying Quakers conformed to some aspects of the traditional "good death," but their rejection of outward forms of worship shaped their deaths in particular ways.

One factor that set Quakers apart was their rejection of any kind of formalized ministry or priesthood. Catholics, and later, Church of England believers, often enjoyed the ministrations of a priest during their last days and hours. A priest would lead prayers, interrogate the beliefs of the dying individual, and correct any religious errors on their part, ensuring they went to meet God with a clean soul and easy mind.<sup>31</sup> Families of dying Friends often served in similar roles. For example, when fourteen-year-old Mary Dickinson lay dying in 1712, her father asked her if she would rather die or live. The

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<sup>30</sup> *Piety Promoted, in a Collection of Dying Sayings of many of the People Called Quakers, Volume Two* ed. William and Thomas Evans (Philadelphia, n.p., 1854), 330.

<sup>31</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death*, 148-153.

question was a formal one, and Mary answered in the expected manner, saying “she had rather die, because she hoped a better place was prepared for her.”<sup>32</sup>

Quakers also eschewed the religious rites and ceremonies that characterized other early-modern English death scenes. This presented some problems; traditionally, parents could be assured of their child’s salvation by the fact that the infant had been baptized, cleansed of original sin. Since Friends rejected both the persistence of original sin and necessity of baptism, the deathbed performances of young children could take the place of these rites, and provide some assurance of salvation.<sup>33</sup> This notion was even expressed literally, as was the case during the fatal illness of Joseph Briggins, a Quaker boy aged around thirteen, who died in 1675.<sup>34</sup> The ailing child told onlookers that ““There are many ways and baptisms in the world; but Oh! thou pure, holy, holy One, we have known thy spiritual baptism into Jesus Christ my Lord, by whom the living water we have known and felt; oh! it is indeed exceeding pure, by which we have been washed from all our sins.””<sup>35</sup> Briggins acknowledged the diversity of religious rituals surrounding birth, but praised the inward, spiritual baptism that Quakers thought accompanied the conviction experience. His audience was impressed by his wisdom; some, who “wondered to hear him speak as he did,” questioned his newfound fluency.<sup>36</sup> His response aligned completely with the Quaker ideas of inward revelation and the felt experience of the light within: ““the Lord hath fully made known that to my soul which I had some feeling of before.””<sup>37</sup> Hayes Hamilton, a twelve-year-old Irish Friend who died

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<sup>32</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. Two*, 133.

<sup>33</sup> Holly Brewer *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 70.

<sup>34</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. One*, 74-75.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

in 1697, also discussed baptism during his dying days.<sup>38</sup> Hamilton expressed some contempt at the popular view of the baptismal rite: ““Them that will be satisfied with that water, let them hold it; for my part, I depend nothing upon it, I depend only on the baptism of the spirit. I doubt there are many that talk about baptism, who know very little what it is.””<sup>39</sup> For these young Quakers, inward spirituality, and its expression, was far more important than any rite or confession of doctrine.

Joseph Briggins’ death was also the subject of a pamphlet, *The Living Words of a Dying Child*, published in 1675. While it resembles the account of the boy’s death in *Piety Promoted*, it also differs in some important respects.<sup>40</sup> Like those in *Piety Promoted*, the account was presented more as a historical text than a literary one. In fact, the title page bore the names of those who witnessed Briggins’ dying words, including his parents, a surgeon, a nurse, a maid, and two lodgers. Like *Piety Promoted*, the pamphlet appeared to be aimed at a wide audience: it is addressed “to the readers, whether children or others.”<sup>41</sup> The pamphlet described Briggins as a “dutiful child,” who managed to be “very bashful” as well as “very manly, meek, and sober.”<sup>42</sup>

The pamphlet included a fuller account of his death, however. Though Briggins’ spoken words are unchanged, the pamphlet contained physical details of his death as well. Briggins refused both food and water on his deathbed, and after he had uttered his testimony to such an extent that he could barely speak, he refused water once again, fearing that his acceptance after his initial refusal would amount to a lie.<sup>43</sup> He also

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>40</sup> Briggins’ death was contained in the first volume of *Piety Promoted*, published in 1701.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid. The Living Words of a Dying Child...* (London: n.p., 1675), preface.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 7.

adhered to the traditional notion of a “good death.” Some onlookers worried that the boy was becoming lightheaded, and “as though he should speak what he knew not,” but Briggins maintained that “I had rather be torn alive by Doggs, than that an impure or unholy Word should come out of my mouth.”<sup>44</sup> Briggins also had another experience, one common to many young, dying Quakers who appeared in published accounts. His words on his deathbed suggest that he had the kind of personal experience traditionally associated with a Friend’s conviction.

A Quaker’s conviction, the process that led to their experience of the inward light, was the most important event of a Friend’s life. This is borne out in many entries in *Piety Promoted*: one of the most frequently recurring pieces of information in all entries was the time and nature of an individual’s conviction. The entry for John Whiting, for example, noted that he was “convinced of the blessed truth” in 1654 after witnessing John Camm and John Audland preaching.<sup>45</sup> Robert Widders’ conviction took place slightly earlier, in 1652, when George Fox visited his village in Lancashire.<sup>46</sup> The entries for many other adults note that they were “convinced young.”<sup>47</sup> The fact that conviction was so frequently mentioned emphasizes the importance of an inward transformation to a Quaker’s identity.

This was problematic in the case of younger Quakers, as well as some mature Friends. Dying Quakers who had not yet had a conviction experience were not assured of their salvation. The accounts of the deaths of many young Friends described

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>47</sup> Quakers who were convinced young included Robert Sowle, a printer who died aged 67 in 1695, John Bowstead, who died at 57 in 1716, and Robert Barrow, who died aged 26 in 1697, among others. See *Ibid.*, 115, 122, and for Bowstead, *Piety Promoted, Vol. Two*, 160.

their experience of the inward light, though it is unclear if this was due to parental pressure, salvation anxiety on the part of the ailing young Friend, or in adherence with Quaker practice in general. For example, Grace Watson, who died aged nineteen in 1688, worried on her deathbed about the influence of the devil. Relief came via an inward spiritual experience, leading Watson to address God directly: “thou hast shone in upon me with thy marvelous light; thou hast showed me the glory of thy house.”<sup>48</sup> Thus reassured, Watson welcomed death.<sup>49</sup> Mary Samm was “troubled for want of a full assurance of my eternal salvation.” The next day, however, she requested time alone, and when her mother and grandfather returned, she told them she had “now received full satisfaction of my eternal salvation.”<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Wills, a twelve-year-old American Friend, felt that God had touched her heart, and assured her relatives that “what I speak, God gives me to speak.”<sup>51</sup> Joseph Briggins, too, appeared to have had something akin to conviction experience. Before his illness, he had heard of God, “but now I see thee in Glory.”<sup>52</sup> Briggins told his father that that saviour had appeared to him, “and hath taken me into his Kingdom: Oh! mine eye hath seen his glory.”<sup>53</sup> Clearly, a dying young Quaker could provide comfort to their family – or themselves – through an internal, spiritual experience.

Even an older Friend who had not yet had a conviction experience could strive for one on their deathbed. Such was the case with Elizabeth Harman, who died aged twenty-eight in 1698. Harman experienced some distress as she died, saying that “it is

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<sup>48</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. One*, 162.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 162-164.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>52</sup> *Living Words of a Dying Child*, 2.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

hard work to die without having a full assurance of the love of God.”<sup>54</sup> Later, her father spoke with her about his own struggle to feel the presence of the Lord, and just before her death, God, “by his living power drove away the clouds and darkness.”<sup>55</sup> Harman was ecstatic: ““Oh, now is the good time come! Now I feel the love of God towards me, in my soul! He hath opened my heart and brought me into liberty. How good a God have I!””<sup>56</sup> The assurance these people felt, and their experience of the inward light and God’s love, were an important part of Quaker deathbed performances for Friends young and old.

The Furly family, which as we have seen was prominent in the early Quaker movement, also featured in *Piety Promoted*. Elizabeth Furly, who died at age thirteen in 1669, was the daughter of John Furly of Colchester, whose home James Parnell used as a venue during his preaching tour of Essex.<sup>57</sup> Elizabeth preached extensively on her deathbed; her words were an interesting mix of Quaker theology and traditional notions of death and dying. She begged to be purged of all traces of worldliness:

Whatever is not of thyself, O Lord, purge out of me; yea, purge me thoroughly, leave no wicked word in me, thrust away the power of darkness: O Lord, make me able to praise thee; let me not come into that way which is evil, for if I do, I shall dishonor thee and thy truth: I hope I shall never rebel against thee more, but have full satisfaction in thee, and in thy ways, and not in the evil one and his ways. Wash me, O Lord, thoroughly, let not an unadvised word come out of my mouth.<sup>58</sup>

Here, the Quaker desire for internal purification and transformation was combined with the traditional English notion of a “good death.” Furly wished to experience a powerful, inward conversion before her death, and so die as a convinced Friend. Her desire not to

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<sup>54</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. One*, 139.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-69.

speak ill of the Lord during her final illness was also in keeping with the “good deaths” Houlbrooke has described; these individuals believed that their ends signified the state of their immortal soul, and that uttering a word against God, even in a moment of extreme pain or delirium, could mean damnation. John Aubrey perhaps best encapsulated this idea: “Lord grant, that my last howre may be my best howre.”<sup>59</sup>

Elizabeth Furly, like other dying young Friends, exhorted her family to religious fidelity. She told an unnamed brother that he should ““Improve thy time, for thou knowest not how soon thou mayest be taken away.””<sup>60</sup> She told other brothers to ““love good men: hate the devil; but oh! love the Lord, and then you will be a joy to your father and mother.””<sup>61</sup> She also consoled one of her sisters, who wept at her approaching death. Like other young and dying Friends, Furly seems to have taken on responsibilities beyond her thirteen years. Perhaps due to her impending death, she was able to speak authoritatively, and work to bind her family together despite the fact that she would soon leave it behind.

Many other Quaker children passed advice to their families as they lay dying. William Fennell, a twelve-year-old Friend who died in 1704, called his sisters and brother to his side, and “exhorted them to love and fear God,” to prepare for death, to “love truth,” and to attend meetings.<sup>62</sup> He also warned them to do as their parents bid, for such was God’s own command.<sup>63</sup> Mary Post, who died aged eight in 1711, counseled her

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<sup>59</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death*, 148.

<sup>60</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. One*, 69.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* Furly’s words suggest that she was speaking to the younger Furly children, though it is possible her brother, Benjamin Furly, was present. He was in his early thirties in 1669. See Richard L. Greaves, ‘Furly, Benjamin (1636–1714)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10248>, accessed 12 Oct 2015]

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*



brother to “be a good boy, and fear God, that he may go to God Almighty.”<sup>64</sup> Ruth Middleton, who died in 1701, aged eleven, called her brother to her side during her last few living hours; “feeling for her brother’s face, she stroked him and said ‘Farewell; be a good boy.’”<sup>65</sup> Priscilla Cuthbert, who died around age fourteen in 1697, blessed her brother and sisters, and advised her brother to obey their parents; Mary Bewley, who died aged fifteen in 1730, gave parting words of wisdom to her sister as well as a cousin.<sup>66</sup> During their illnesses, these children took on something resembling a parental role, seeking to ensure that moral and religious comportment would continue to govern the family’s affairs.

In contrast, some children were also wracked with guilt on their deathbeds. Their words revealed some of the problems that devout adherence to Quaker principles could cause children. For example, William Fennell desired that the Ten Commandments be read to him as he lay dying. After the reading, Fennell was asked how well he had kept to the dictates of the Decalogue. He answered that though he had never taken the Lord’s name in vain, and had loved his father and mother, once he had “[taken] some plums without asking leave, and hoped the Lord would pass it by, with what else he had done amiss.”<sup>67</sup> When he was if he was willing to die, he answered “if I thought I was fit.”<sup>68</sup> His guilt emerged again after a visit from two Friends, after which he cried out, trembling: “O Lord! Forgive all my faults, and have mercy and pity on my poor soul.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. Two*, 66.

<sup>65</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. One*, 194.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 309; *Piety Promoted, Vol. Two*, 311-312.

<sup>67</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. One*, 364.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

His parents, seeing that he was “under a concern of mind,” asked him what troubled him.

He answered with a torrent of guilt, mingled with reassurances to his parents:

I have cried unto him many a night since I have been ill; for I have been a wild boy, and loved play too well, and when you have sometimes corrected me, I took it a little hard; but now I am glad you did, and cannot express the love I now have to you, for taking that care of me; you did well; had you not done it, I might have been wilder; for, said he the Lord hath been following me, and striving with me, to bring me down these two years, and let me see when I have been running to play, if I continued running on to be wild, then weeping, wailing, and lamentation would be my portion; and sometimes I have turned back, and have gone into the garret, and wept bitterly, and have desired the Lord to help me: but after, when enticed by my comrades to go, I was not able to resist the temptations, which was my great trouble, and I have got into a secret place to endeavour to retire, and often prayed to the Lord in the night-season on my knees, when others have been asleep. Oh! he doth not love laughing and joking; I never read that Christ smiled, but often prayed and wept.<sup>70</sup>

Fennell’s monologue demonstrates some of the impulses that may have warred within young Quakers. Like many children, he had a desire to be with friends and enjoy thoughtless merriment. However, a good Quaker child should be sober and pious. Thus, Fennell was tempted to play, but combatted his temptations with solitary prayer. For young Quakers, the unsmiling Christ was a powerful role model.

Dying young Friends often expressed fatalism about their state. Ruth Middleton was pessimistic about her chances for recovery. Like other faithful Quakers, she put her fate in the hands of the Lord.<sup>71</sup> When her mother expressed concern at their imminent parting, young Middleton reminded her about Abraham’s willingness to give up his own son, and suggested that they may have more time together if her mother was willing to

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 364-365.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

give her up to the Lord.<sup>72</sup> Eleven-year-old Hannah Hill, who died in 1714, was even more fatalistic. “Seized with a violent fever and flux,” and in great pain, Hill told her father ““I shall die, and am now very willing.””<sup>73</sup> When a doctor was called to treat her, she rejected his services out of hand, saying ““All the town knows thou art a good doctor, but I knew from the beginning that I should die, and that all your endeavors would signify nothing; the Lord hath hitherto given me patience, and I still pray to him for more, that I may be enabled to hold out to the end, for my extremity of pain is very great.””<sup>74</sup> When some of those present tried to reassure her with talk of recovery, she demonstrated her total focus on the next world: ““Why is there so much to do about me, who am but poor dust and ashes? We are all but as clay, and must die; I am going now, another next day, and so one after another, the whole world passes away.””<sup>75</sup>

Dying Quaker children often inverted the traditional family structure by comforting their parents. Sarah Camm, who died at age nine in 1682, acknowledged both her father’s tender care and its futility as she lay in her sickbed: ““Oh! my dear father, thou art tender and careful over me, and hast taken great pains with me in my sickness, but it availeth not, there is no help nor succor for me in the earth; it is the Lord that is my health and physician, and he will give me ease and rest everlasting.””<sup>76</sup> Camm’s father was thus reassured both of his fulfillment of his fatherly duty, and his daughter’s religious devotion. Thomas Hains, who died around age ten in 1700, assured his parents of his - and their own - salvation: ““Glory, glory; joy, joy; come mother, come father, come all; it

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. Two*, 333.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 334.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. One*, 89.

is a brave place, there is no tears nor sorrow.”<sup>77</sup> Hains’ words also symbolized the transfer of power from a temporal to a spiritual father. He called out “’Father, Father’ (his father being present, asked what he desired; he said ‘I do not speak to thee, but to my heavenly Father) have mercy on me.”<sup>78</sup> As the fourteen-year-old Priscilla Cuthbert lay dying in 1701, she said “’Lord comfort my father and mother.”<sup>79</sup> Her last words, to her sister, were “’do not cry for me.”<sup>80</sup>

The children in *Piety Promoted* died peacefully, even happily. Some of this was due to a kind of salvation anxiety, as seemed to be the case with Sarah Stephenson, a thirteen year old from Westmoreland who died in 1736.<sup>81</sup> Stephenson’s mother thought that she seemed very willing to die, and so asked her why this was so. She replied, “in a solid weighty manner, ‘If I die now I shall go to heaven, but if I live longer, I know not how it may be with me.”<sup>82</sup> Priscilla Cuthbert “departed this life without sigh or groan,” while Mary Dickinson covered herself with a blanket before she “sweetly died, without either sigh or groan.”<sup>83</sup> Some, like Barbara Scaif, a fourteen-year-old Friend who died in 1686, “departed this life as if she had fallen asleep,” while Sarah Featherstone, who died aged fifteen in 1688, “fell asleep in the Lord.”<sup>84</sup> Comparisons with lambs were also common: Thomas Hains, Ruth Middleton, and Alexander Hopwood all died like lambs.<sup>85</sup> This peaceful acceptance conformed to Quaker behavioral ideals, but also signified salvation. Quaker children were eager to die in order to reach heaven, and their peaceful

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. Two*, 330.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. One*, 310; *Piety Promoted, Vol. Two*, 134.

<sup>84</sup> *Piety Promoted, Vol. One*, 102, 107.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 128, 194; *Piety Promoted, Vol. Two*, 315. Hopwood was eighteen years old at the time of his death in 1732. *Ibid.*

deaths indicated that they were bound for that joyous state. Their willingness and eagerness also signified that they had gone through the Quaker conversion experience, and so were guided by the inward light.

## **II: The Deaths of Young Dissenters**

Was anything distinctively “Quaker” about these deathbed performances or their narrations? *Piety Promoted* was not the only text that contained death narratives of Christian children. An earlier work, by the dissenting minister James Janeway, also contained purportedly true stories of youthful piety and acceptance of death. *A Token for Children* appeared in two parts, in 1671 and 1672, predating the first volume of *Piety Promoted* by almost thirty years.<sup>86</sup> Janeway was born in 1636, and studied at Oxford, though Harvey Darton has noted that he may not have been ordained.<sup>87</sup> He was affected by the Act of Uniformity, and preached as a non-conforming minister through the 1660s.<sup>88</sup> Janeway seems to have shared the common Puritan opinion of children and childhood; he viewed children as “Brands of Hell,” tainted by original sin and bound for damnation unless they could be saved.

*A Token for Children* was one of the first books written in English specifically for young people, and it proved to be extremely popular.<sup>89</sup> In fact, early copies of Janeway’s *Token* are exceedingly rare; Robert Miner argues that this is because “they were read to pieces ... by increasingly intense little children.”<sup>90</sup> *Token* was issued several times over the next centuries, with later editions bearing woodcuts as well as text.<sup>91</sup> Other, similar

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<sup>86</sup> Robert Miner, *Preface*, in James Janeway, *A Token for Children* (New York: Garland Pub., 1977), v.

<sup>87</sup> F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children’s Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life, Third Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 54.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>90</sup> Miner, *Preface*, viii.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

books were also published, such as Cotton Mather's *Token for the Children of New England* (1700).<sup>92</sup>

In contrast to the *Piety Promoted*, which contained deathbed stories of Friends young and old, Janeway's book contained only stories about children's deaths. This aligns with the Friends' desire to incorporate young people into the fullness of the faith as soon as it was possible. Another difference is the intended audience; while *Piety Promoted* was aimed at all Quakers, Janeway intended for *Token* children in particular. While the preface is addressed to "all Parents, School-masters and School-Mistresses or any that have any hand in the Education of Children," Mary Trim has suggested that the body of the text was meant for children to read.<sup>93</sup> Janeway's subjects also tended to be younger than the children in *Piety Promoted*: most of the children in *Token* died between the ages of eight and twelve – the oldest was fourteen, and the youngest five.<sup>94</sup> In contrast, the youngest children in *Piety Promoted* died at age eight, and most were well into their teen years or youths nearing twenty. Broadly speaking, both works existed within the tradition of spiritual autobiographies that were common at the time.

The deaths of Janeway's children, and the Quaker children documented in *Piety Promoted*, shared some similarities. The children found God early; they prayed, studied the Bible, and generally acted more adult than their ages would suggest. Janeway's second example, an unnamed child who died around age five or six, for example, found God between age two and three.<sup>95</sup> He learned to read so as to explore the Scriptures, "and

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<sup>92</sup> Cotton Mather, *A Token for the Children of New England* (Boston: Timothy Green, 1700).

<sup>93</sup> Janeway, *Token*, 3; Mary Trim, "'Awe Upon My Heart:' Children of dissent, 1660 – 1688" in *Cross, Crown, and Community: Religion, Government and Culture in Early Modern England, 1400-1800*, ed. David Trim and Peter Balderstone (Oxford, Bern & New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 254.

<sup>94</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death*, 186.

<sup>95</sup> Janeway, *Token*, 23.

would, with great Reverence, Tenderness and groans read, till tears and sobs were ready to hinder him.” Soon, “he had a vast understanding in the things of God, even next to a wonder, for one of his age.”<sup>96</sup> Like some Quaker youths, while “other children were playing, he would many a time and oft be a praying.”<sup>97</sup> All of Janeway’s subjects eventually favoured prayer and contemplation over laughter and play. When an unnamed girl, who died aged twelve, saw some “wicked” children laughing, she told them she “feared they had little reason to be merry. They asked, whether one might not laugh? She answered; no indeed, till you have grace! they who are wicked, have more need to cry than to laugh.”<sup>98</sup> John Sudlow, who died aged twelve years, three weeks, and one day, prayed while his peers played, while Anne Lane, who died before age ten, “could not endure the company of common children, nor play.”<sup>99</sup>

The children in *Token* also comforted their families, and encouraged them to be more pious and devout. Sarah Howley, who converted between age eight and nine, told a kinsman he should learn to know Christ, for “you are young, but you know not how soon you may die.”<sup>100</sup> Mary A., who died age twelve, confronted her brother about his hypocritical prayers. The boy boasted to others that he had been “by himself at prayer,” but she scolded him, saying, “it was but little to his praise, to pray like a hypocrite.”<sup>101</sup> John Harvey, who died near the age of twelve, spoke as well as a child twice his age by the time he was two and a half.<sup>102</sup> Though his parents thought him too young for school, when he was given liberty to play in the yard, he found a school on his own, and learned

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 28,

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 76, 79; 90-95.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 15. Janeway did not provide Howley’s age of death, only that she passed in 1670.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33, 43.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

from the schoolmistress there in secret.<sup>103</sup> When his mother expressed sadness at the death of the child's uncle, he consoled her:

Mother, though my uncle be dead, doth not the scripture say, he must rise again: yea, and I must die, and so must every body; and it will not be long before Christ will come to judge the world; and then we shall see one another again, I pray mother do no weep so much.<sup>104</sup>

The boy's fervor was so great, he later beat a playmate who took the Lord's name in vain.<sup>105</sup> As Harvey sickened, he again comforted his mother. As she broke down in tears, he told her that "did you but know what joy I feel, you would not weep, but rejoice."<sup>106</sup>

Like Quaker children, these young people took on a role typically beyond their years. They inverted the traditional family structure, educated their siblings, and comforted their parents.

Another similarity is the assurance with which these children died. This was made clear in the subtitle of Janeway's book: *An exact Account of the Conversion, holy and exemplary Lives and Joyful Death, of several Young Children.*<sup>107</sup> All of Janeway's examples died happily, sure in the knowledge of their own salvation. As was the case with Quaker children, witnesses questioned their willingness to die. A friend asked this question of the unnamed boy in Janeway's second example; at first, the child answered no, fearing for the state of his soul. Shortly thereafter, the friend asked again, and the child answered "now I am willing, for I shall go to Christ."<sup>108</sup> Mary A. "had a great conflict with Satan" before her death, and cried out, agitated.<sup>109</sup> When her mother asked

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.



what was the matter, she answered “Satan did trouble me, but now I thank God all is well, I know I am not his, but Christ’s.”<sup>110</sup> Like the children in *Piety Promoted*, the individual deaths were easy. One “slept sweetly in Jesus, and began an everlasting Sabbath;” another “gave up her soul” with “a great deal of cheerfulness;” a third “died punctually at that time which he had spoke of.”<sup>111</sup> The religious assurance with which these children died was surely a comfort to their families, as well as to the children themselves.

So what, then, were the differences between *A Token for Children* and the children’s narratives in *Piety Promoted*? Firstly, the works belonged to different genres. Janeway’s was a literary work; the children were sometimes unnamed, and there are fewer identifying details about their families and lives. *Piety Promoted*, on the other hand, was more a work of historical documentation. The Quaker compilers of the book included the full names of the individuals described, as well as information about their families and place of residence. Since *Piety Promoted* was intended to be a documentation of Quaker piety, the more the reliable information it contained, the better. The text of *Piety Promoted* indicated when the dying child was being quoted directly, in contrast to *Token*, giving the Quaker collections some verisimilitude.

Some of Janeway’s subjects also had profound spiritual experiences on their deathbeds, and these seemed to have brought the children some sense of their salvation. Mary A., for example, believed “the Lord hath told me that I am one of his dear Children.”<sup>112</sup> More often, however, the children acted as participants in catechismal exercises. One dying young girl was asked the traditional question, “whether she were

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 23, 46, 75.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

willing to die?” After she answered in the affirmative, she was asked how her sins were pardoned, she responded “through the blood of Christ.”<sup>113</sup> The children in *Token* were also more likely to read and discuss the Bible than dying young Quakers. While all the children Janeway described were noted for their diligent reading of the Scriptures, for dying young Quakers, internal experiences were prioritized over outward displays of faith.

These works were obviously intended for different audiences. Janeway wrote for children, in an attempt to mold their youthful behaviour and habits. The Quaker collections were for all Friends, and the stories of youthful piety were mixed with deathbed scenes of older Quakers. It was not until 1795 that a compilation focused solely on the deaths of young Friends appeared, more than a century after the first publication of *Token*. This suggests that the Quaker ideal was a more inclusive form of religious practice. Many of the dying young Friends had already begun attending Meetings, and likely would have enjoyed more educational support than the boy in *Token* who had to sneak away to further this learning while his parents thought he was at play.<sup>114</sup>

It is clear, however, that there were more similarities between these dying dissenting children than there were differences. Families within the religious establishment, and English and Continental Catholics could rely on the mediation of a priest and Christian rituals to ensure their children’s salvation. As well, Anglican and Catholic children may have participated in more of the activities typically associated with childhood, like play and idle chat. Since Quakers had abandoned these un-Biblical practices, and stressed youthful learning, prayer, and solitary contemplation, they instead

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>114</sup> Certainly, no Quaker child would beat a peer for taking the Lord’s name in vain, no matter how much they disapproved of the oath.

performed and recorded powerful deathbed scenes of their own. The most notable feature of the experiences of dying young Friends was the traditional Quaker prioritization of inward spiritual experiences, and the process of finding the inward light of Christ.

Dying Quaker children were potent symbols of their faith. As their strength weakened, they seemed to gain spiritual power, preaching from their beds and comforting their families. Since these children were not long for the material world, parental concerns about their education, exposure to the world, and place in the faith receded, and Quaker children were more able to express their own hopes, beliefs, and anxieties. Though their parents sought to help them in their transition from one world to the next, it is clear from the accounts in *Piety Promoted* that children had a degree of agency over their own words and deeds. They chose to discuss aspects of theology, comfort their parents and siblings, or pray for, and hopefully experience, an internal conversion. Ultimately, for Friends, these children offered powerful evidence of the strength of Quaker theology and of the inward light. The accounts of their deaths were important for the Society of Friends as a whole, and not merely for other Quaker children.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

This thesis has explored the role of children and youths in the early Quaker movement and, later, within the Society of Friends. Their roles shifted over time, and depending on the larger social context in which the Society of Friends existed. The Quaker belief in the inward light of Christ expanded the parts young people could play in the movement, and later, the methods of education and control parents employed to guide their children to adulthood. Generally, the inward light challenged the traditional distinctions made in English society based on gender, class, and age.

Exploring the historical constructs of childhood and youth in the Quaker context demonstrates the impact that religious beliefs could have on the lives of young people. Often, religion has been viewed as a controlling influence, and it certainly was for many young Friends, especially after 1689. At other times, however, especially during periods of social and religious upheaval, the religious beliefs of the Friends allowed young believers to enjoy active roles in the Quaker movement. While the inward light may have “pulled” these young Friends into the public sphere, Quaker writers “pushed” these young exemplars to the forefront of a body of literature that sought to publicize the persecution inflicted on Friends, in an attempt to gain sympathy for their plight.

Chapter one examines the role of young Friends in the movement’s earliest years. It argues that the Quaker conception of the inward light of Christ presented opportunities for children and youth. This enabled young people to adopt more active roles in the movement than was the case for other Christian denominations, or even young Quakers in the eighteenth century. Quaker writers were keen to publicize these actions, as they viewed the religious constancy and zeal of these young people as evidence of the veracity

of the Friends' faith. Later Quaker writers such as Joseph Besse lauded the young Friends who maintained their meetings in Bristol and Reading, depicting these actions in heroic terms. They were portrayed as brave, courageous, and even manly, descriptions that were at some odds with their young ages.

Adult Quakers took seriously the prophecies young Friends spoke, and the signs they enacted. George Fox believed that Mary Fell's prophecy came to pass, and the compilers of *The First Publishers of the Truth* used Elizabeth Fletcher's young age, innocent nature, and gender to condemn the actions of her persecutors. With Fletcher in particular, the link with the inward light is clear. Going naked through the streets of Oxford would be a shameful act for most English individuals, let alone a teenaged girl. Quaker writers thought that, since she was moved to act in spite of these factors, the power of the Lord must have been responsible.

James Parnell offers the best example of the deeds of young Quakers in the movement's early period. Parnell left his home at age fifteen, and had a successful career as a writer and preacher. His charismatic preaching brought many new converts to the Quaker movement, and he was the first Friend to venture into Essex, where he received a hostile reception that culminated in his death. When later Friends wrote about Parnell's life and deeds, they stressed his young age, meekness, and physical frailty. They compared him to Biblical figures such as King David, and wrote that the power of the Lord must have been responsible for Parnell's religious zeal and success as a Quaker minister.

Jonathan Burnyeat presents a glimpse of the activities of young Quaker ministers after the Act of Toleration lessened the persecution of Friends. Though Burnyeat was an

active minister from a young age, his activities were circumscribed. He relied on older Quakers to help compose his missives, and displayed none of the self-assuredness that characterized Parnell's conversion efforts and his public disputes. Burnyeat may demonstrate that, although the belief in the inward light continued, it was tempered by concerns about the right conduct of children and young people.

Chapter two explores exactly these concerns. As state persecution of Quakers diminished, the movement became an inward-facing sect. The Society of Friends was more concerned with ensuring that young Quakers stayed within the faith than it was with converting all of English society. Young people were more the future of Quakerism than its present. Persecution had had a unifying effect, however, and eighteenth-century Friends faced serious problems. Many young people left or were expelled from their Quaker meetings; some married non-Quakers, while others began to associate with people from outside the sect, jeopardizing some of their distinctive social characteristics.

The Society of Friends attempted to retain and control its young members with a variety of techniques, while guiding children towards the transformative experience of the inward light. Quakers founded schools, allowing their children to be educated alongside members of their own faith. The network of Meetings across the British Isles grew, and Friends circulated epistles that offered advice to parents and guardians. Meetings also implemented a system of family visitations. Quakers visited families of Friends to assess their piety and parenting techniques, ensuring that children were being reared in the proper manner. Above all, older Quakers sought to protect young Friends from the influence of the world outside their sect, which was seen as highly corrosive to Quaker values and religiosity.

Studying how these changes and systems impacted one English family complicates the narrative of increasing interiority and declining membership. The Halls of Skipton were a prominent family of Friends, and David Hall participated in many of the initiatives designed to keep children Quaker: he was a schoolmaster, he wrote about the issues confronting his coreligionists, and made copious suggestions as to the best methods of rearing godly children. Despite this, his daughter married a non-Quaker, and was barred from her meeting. This did not prevent Elizabeth Dale from trying to ensure her own children were, at the very least, educated about and sympathetic towards Quakers and their theology. One of the great paradoxes of all these trends was that the earliest Quakers had developed their beliefs through sustained interactions with the world outside their sect. Later Friends were expected to experience the same inner transformation as their forebears, allowing the inward light to guide their outward actions. To achieve this, however, they had to rely on their family's and meeting's instruction, school, or books.

Chapter three examines depictions of children in one Quaker source in particular: the volumes of Friends' deathbed testimonies called *Piety Promoted*, one of a few contemporary sources that even purport to contain the words of children and youths. Unlike other contemporary works that featured testimonies from very young believers, such as James Janeway's *A Token for Children*, *Piety Promoted* contained testimonies from Quakers young and old. This demonstrated that, in important ways, young and old Quakers were spiritual equals. The accounts of children's deaths in *Piety Promoted* offer insight into their thoughts and feelings as their lives ended. Some were wracked with guilt, while others felt assured of their salvation. Many young people spoke

authoritatively from their deathbeds, exhorting their neighbors and families to live good, godly lives.

While Janeway's books were intended for children in particular, *Piety Promoted* was meant for all Quakers. This suggests that Quaker authors believed that the deathbed performances of young people offered important moral and religious lessons for adult Quakers, as well as the traditional notion that children could learn from the example of their elders. While English authors such as Janeway were developing literature particularly for children, the Society of Friends continued to treat its members as one, united body. Quaker literature reflected Quaker practices, attempting to unify the young and old into one cohesive Society of Friends.

The spiritual equality of children is still at issue in the Society of Friends. Some modern Quakers have echoed their eighteenth-century forebears, noting that "the future of the Religious Society of Friends depends on children."<sup>1</sup> Others have looked to Quaker history, seeing in their collective past a missed opportunity for children's spiritual equality:

children are still not generally seen as spiritually equal, even among Quakers, because spiritual wisdom is seen as the product of 'years of seeking and experience' rather than as the divine seed of truth planted in us all. Thus we fail to live our faith to its full egalitarian conclusion. Can we begin to imagine how things might have developed for 18th Century Quakers if they had continued to trust their children's stubbornness and adventurousness rather than fearfully restrain them?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Crompton, "Spiritual Equality in the Experience of Quaker Children" *Friends Quarterly Essay Competition*, November, 2009, 1. Accessed online at: <http://www.thefriend.co.uk/fq/027.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Helen Bayes, quoted in Crompton, "Spiritual Equality," 1.



This tension reveals the difficulty in extending spiritual equality to young Friends. To reach a “full egalitarian conclusion,” modern Quakers will have to question to what extent they recognize the fundamental principles of their faith in young people.

Many historians of childhood have argued that it was during the early modern period that childhood came to be recognized as a separate state, characterized by innocence and viewed positively. This thesis reveals that, for the Society of Friends, the reality was very different. The spiritual equality afforded by the theology of the inward light of Christ certainly did not lead to romantic and innocent notions of childhood. Rather, this belief often led Friends to have more “adult” expectations of young people. Born sinless, by age eight young Quakers were thought to be capable of sin, and responsible for resisting that temptation. Ideally, they would participate in Quaker meetings and learn to let the inward light guide their outward actions from an early age. Quaker writers depicted young Friends alongside their elders in texts such as *Piety Promoted* and *The Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, obscuring some of the distinctions between the callow and the aged. Adult Friends also expected young Quakers to read the same texts as they did; for example, Elizabeth Dale desired that her children read Barclay’s *Apology*, a dense theological treatise, rather than books written specifically for Quaker children.

This thesis also provokes additional questions. What, for example, was the relationship between a Quaker upbringing and the Society of Friends’ tradition as an organization committed to social justice? Was it only their theological beliefs that motivated them, or did the experience of spiritual equality children enjoyed from a young age shape their opinions about issues such as slavery? Did the many people who left the

Society of Friends while maintaining some of its egalitarian principles impact English society? Historians who focus on other geographical regions may wonder if the same dynamics existed in Pennsylvania, to take one example, as they did in England.

Demography may reveal differences in child mortality within Quaker families that influenced parents' attitudes toward their children. The role that gendered identity played for young Quakers is also still unclear.

What is clear, however, is that the Quaker belief in the inward light of Christ shaped the lives of young Friends. This exploration of that phenomenon has revealed both the extent to which this spiritually egalitarian belief empowered young Quakers, and also the limits of this equality. Despite the consistency of Friends' beliefs, changing social contexts impacted Quaker's experience of their childhood and youth. The equality afforded by the inward light, and its limits, demonstrates that religious belief is an important variable in the study of childhood and youth.

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