**Discipline and Divinity: Colonial Quakerism, Christianity, and “Heathenism” in the Seventeenth Century**

**Abstract:** Quakers began arriving in the Caribbean and North America when their religious society was still new and struggling to define its core beliefs and institutional structure. There were tensions within the Society of Friends stemming from the Quakers’ validation of individual inspiration and their communal commitment to the Christian message as contained in the Bible. A bitter debate over scriptural authority wracked Quaker meetings for the remainder of the seventeenth century, and the controversy included arguments over the Quakers’ relations with Native Americans, Africans, and others outside of Europe beyond the reach of formal Christian teaching. On both sides of the Atlantic opponents of Quaker discipline challenged long-standing assumptions about the source and content of the Christian message and the social hierarchies that resulted when some groups claimed privileged access to truth. The ensuing argument influenced the Quakers’ plans for their colonies in North America, and their debate over slavery.

In 1652, the founder of Quakerism George Fox was traveling through the north of England when he passed a peak called Pendle Hill. As he described the event in his journal, “I was moved by the Lord to go up to the top of it, which I did with much ado, it was so very steep and high. When I was come to the top, I saw the sea bordering on Lancashire. From the top of this hill the Lord let me see in what places he had a great people to be gathered.”[[1]](#endnote-1) Looking into the distance, Fox gazed into the future. He and his associates expected to play a role in “gathering” the people the Lord had revealed to him. Fox’s vision was a call to evangelize, and his peculiar outlook from the summit of Pendle Hill bathed those distant, unidentified people with value and power. God was already watching over them, and for this reason Fox and other Quakers often approached the unconverted, the non-Christian people of the world, with a sense of awe.

It is not clear how far Fox was looking in 1652. At that moment he may not have seen beyond the docks of Lancashire, but very soon Quakers began to cross the sea. Within four years, Quaker missionaries had landed in Ireland and Holland, and traversed the Mediterranean as far as Turkey. These early evangelical efforts relied on the initiative and enthusiasm of individual missionaries, and a large portion of them were women. The prominence of female emissaries in this early wave of Quaker evangelization signalled the radical implications of Fox’s message that everyone could receive inspiration from God.[[2]](#endnote-2) In 1655 two Quaker missionaries, Ann Austin and Mary Fisher, landed in Barbados, and Quakerism came to North America only a few months later, when Elizabeth Harris arrived in Maryland.

These Quakers crossed the ocean at a time when their religious society was new and still struggling to define its core beliefs and organizational structure. Successive controversies roiled Quaker meetings on both sides of the Atlantic from the 1650s through the end of the seventeenth century. In the 1650s the Quaker James Naylor was convicted of blasphemy after riding a horse into Bristol surrounded by followers casting garments in his path chanting “Holy, Holy, Holy.” Fox had disowned him.[[3]](#endnote-3) In the 1660s the most outspoken Quaker dissenter was John Perrot, a missionary whose deep-seated antagonism toward ecclesiastical authority inspired him to travel to Rome in order to convince the pontiff of the error of his ways. Like Naylor, Perrot offended Fox and others by refusing to show formal respect by taking his hat off at Quaker worship. [[4]](#endnote-4) In the 1670s the eccentric mystic Francis Mercurius van Helmont collaborated with several Quaker leaders. Van Helmont questioned whether a just God would condemn those who lived out their lives without access to the Christian message contained in the Bible.[[5]](#endnote-5) George Keith, the Quaker schismatic of the 1690s, was sympathetic to Van Helmont, but eventually came to believe that the Quakers needed to adhere more closely to scriptural authority.[[6]](#endnote-6)

There were tensions controversies within the Society of Friends stemming from the Quakers’ validation of individual inspiration and their communal commitment to the Christian message contained in the Bible.[[7]](#endnote-7) The questions that troubled the Quakers in this period had special resonance in the English colonies where Quaker itinerants and colonists encountered people without any apparent knowledge of Christian teaching. In the Caribbean and North America, Quakers asked whether unconverted Africans and Native Americans might have their own direct access to divine wisdom and grace. The Quakers’ various answers to that question helped shape their understanding of their relations with Native Americans and their response to the problem of slavery. This essay begins with the debate over slavery that followed the success of the early Quaker mission to Barbados, and proceeds to trace Quaker debates over the spiritual condition of non-Christian peoples through the second half of the seventeenth century. Maryland was the site of the Quakers’ first sustained interactions with American Indians. Developments in Barbados and Maryland precipitated Fox’s voyage to the Caribbean and North America in the early 1670s, which in turn encouraged the expansion of Quaker colonization, first into New Jersey and subsequently into Pennsylvania. Throughout this period the Quakers’ encounters with peoples they called “heathen” challenged them to reconsider their status as Christians, not only with regard to their treatment of others, but also with respect to the traditional claim that Christians enjoyed special access to divine truth.

Ann Austin’s and Mary Fisher’s evangelical project in Barbados met with immediate success. Other missionaries followed them, and several of the newly convinced Barbadian Quakers began recruiting others into the meetings. White planters were among the first to join the Quakers, including wealthy slaveholders and members of the elite. When John Rous and his father Thomas joined the Quakers in 1656 their family fortune was expanding rapidly, and by the 1670s the Rouses owned hundreds of acres of land and more than 300 slaves.[[8]](#endnote-8) John Rous became the most articulate of the new Quakers on Barbados, and he initiated the Quaker debate over slavery.

Shortly after joining the Society of Friends Rous published a pamphlet entitled *A Warning to the Inhabitants of Barbadoes*, and arranged to have 600 copies printed for distribution among the islanders. Addressing himself to the wealthy and powerful, he called on them to “remember the portion of those who saw Christ naked, and clothed him not; saw him hungry, and fed him not. a stranger, and took him not in.” Rous identified all the island’s “strangers” - the hungry and the naked - with Christ himself, and he asked, “how many have been murdered by many of you, by detaining of that which was necessary for them, from them?”[[9]](#endnote-9) Lest anyone miss his meaning, in a second pamphlet addressed to the people of Barbados published in 1659, he wrote, “I speak concerning you, who like unnatural beasts have been the death of many of your servants, by withholding from them convenient food, for want of which many have perished under you.” Rous recited all the islanders’ sins, and warned the slaveholders of the possible consequences of their bad behaviour. “O horrible wickedness! Was ever any like this? Is it not a shame that such a thing should be named, much less practiced, by those who call themselves Christians? Will not the Heathen who have not heard of God rise up in judgement with this generation, and condemn them for their filthiness?”[[10]](#endnote-10)

Fox was paying attention. In 1657, one year after Rous published his *Warning to the Inhabitants of Barbados,* Fox expressed similar views, and added a call to evangelize among African and Native American slaves. In an epistle to “Friends beyond the Sea, that have black and Indian slaves,” Fox told Quaker slaveholders to be merciful, because the people they owned and employed had their own capacity for wisdom and inspiration. God was “no respecter of persons,” he reminded them. “Whosever feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.” While the declaration that God accepted any righteous person might have seemed to make evangelization superfluous, Fox went on to make it clear that the ultimate truth, the one that all people should receive, was specifically the Christian one contained in the Bible. Around the world God “doth enlighten every man, that they might believe in the Son,” he wrote. It was the role of Christians generally, and Quaker slaveholders specifically, to be “a light to the Gentiles,” and help the slaves recognize the full truth of the gospel.[[11]](#endnote-11)

Like many new Quakers of this generation, Rous was eager to proselytize, but he chose not to concentrate his efforts on Barbados. Instead this impulse led him to travel. He joined Fisher on a mission to Nevis, and followed in her footsteps to New England where he preached as he had in the Caribbean against “pride, gluttony, envy, deceitful dealings… bloodshed, lust,” and “hypocrisy.”[[12]](#endnote-12) Rous’s efforts earned him a flogging in Connecticut and the authorities in Massachusetts ordered his right ear cut off. One of the magistrates who passed this sentence asked Rous why he had abandoned his life as a gentleman’s son in Barbados “to run about here as a vagabond, with a company of deceivers.” Surely, the magistrate suggested, Rous must have been seeking “the halter.” Significantly Rous denied that he desired martyrdom, or indeed that he wanted to give up the privileges he enjoyed in the West Indies. On the contrary, he told his judges he intended to go back to his former life on Barbados once his work in New England was done.[[13]](#endnote-13) His father wanted him back at the plantation, and so upon his release Rous returned to the island.[[14]](#endnote-14)

Rous was not content, however, to stay on Barbados. Since joining the Quakers he had corresponded frequently with Margaret Fell, the English Quaker who kept the closest contact with many of the far-flung Friends. Rous wanted to meet Fell and work more closely with her alongside Fox and other Quakers in England.[[15]](#endnote-15) Therefore he moved to London and became a merchant trading to the West Indies. First he lived in Mile End to the east of London, but eventually he built a spacious, Elizabethan-style house on the banks of the Thames near Hampton Court Palace, in Kingston. He also established a close relationship with both Fell and Fox. The two of them wrote postscripts for his 1659 pamphlet addressed to the people of Barbados.[[16]](#endnote-16) In 1662 Rous married Fell’s daughter (also named Margaret), and in 1669, when the elder Fell married Fox, Rous became, in effect, the son-in-law of the founder of Quakerism. From that date forward, Rous referred to Fox as his father.[[17]](#endnote-17) Rous spent a considerable amount of time with Fox, and over the years he participated in several of the most difficult debates affecting the Quakers including controversies surrounding hierarchical authority within Quaker meetings, and the Quakers’ stance on slavery. Rous saw no contradiction between slaveholding and righteousness. On the contrary, he advocated self-consciously moral behaviour within a severely hierarchical society.

Not just among Quakers, but more generally in England and the colonies, the debate over the morality of chattel slavery began earlier than many historians have recognized. [[18]](#endnote-18) Among Quakers the argument started in the first decade of the religious society’s existence, and became an important feature of a set of wide-ranging controversies over discipline, the Christian content of Quaker teaching, and the spiritual state of non-Christians. In those arguments Rous sided with disciplinarians such as Fox, William Edmundson and William Penn. In addition to espousing order within Quaker meetings, these leaders also addressed the Quakers’ relations with African slaves, and indeed Fox and Edmundson have dominated historical discussions of the early Quaker position on slavery. [[19]](#endnote-19) Fox and Edmundson advocated ameliorationist, gradualist policies. Quaker dissenters eventually denounced such moderation and called for an unambiguous rejection of slavery. To understand how the dissenters came to this position it is necessary to consider more broadly the Quakers’ debates over the meaning of their own Christianity and their relationship with peoples they called “heathens,” not just in the Caribbean but around the world. For many years after 1655, Barbados was home to the largest community of Quakers in the western hemisphere. This circumstance, combined with Fox’s personal association with the island through Rous, assured that enslaved Africans would figure prominently in Quaker discussions of “heathen” peoples. But American Indians also played an important role in the Quakers’ discussions, beginning with the arrival of their first missionaries to Maryland.

In contrast to New England, where the early Quaker missionaries met a violently hostile reception, many colonists in Maryland welcomed the Quakers.[[20]](#endnote-20) The colony was in turmoil in 1656 when Elizabeth Harris, the first missionary, arrived. Interregnum politics and religious friction had erupted into a brief, local civil war pitting Protestant settlers against the supporters of the Catholic Proprietor, Cecil Calvert, Baron Baltimore.[[21]](#endnote-21) Colonist Charles Bayly remembered this period as a time when he became disillusioned with all of Maryland’s religious groups. Looking around him, Baily prayed to be shown “a people in whom one might put confidence.” God responded “by sending one of his dear servants into those parts, whose name was *Elizabeth Harris*, who soon answered that which was breathing after God in me; by which means I came with many more to be informed in the way and truth of God.”[[22]](#endnote-22) Harris’s energy, initiative and charisma appealed to colonists in distress. Like Austin and Fisher before her in Barbados, Harris had notable, early success. Along with Bayly and “many more,” she convinced powerful Protestant military leaders to join the Quakers, including William Fuller, who was serving at that time as “in effect, the acting governor of Maryland.”[[23]](#endnote-23)

Harris accomplished a great deal during her year in Maryland, but by 1658 the fortunes of Quakerism in the colony had turned. Fuller stayed in the colonial assembly but he lost his political prominence, and the Quakers in general faced a period of persecution as Baltimore and his supporters reasserted their authority.[[24]](#endnote-24) After Harris had left, two new itinerant Quaker missionaries arrived from England, Josiah Coale and Thomas Thurston. Almost immediately they faced criminal charges for failing to swear allegiance to the Proprietor. Local Quakers were fined and whipped for hosting them.[[25]](#endnote-25) Eventually, with a third Quaker companion, they fled Maryland northward into the land that in later years would become Pennsylvania. Their travels became a legend among the Quakers, and affected Quaker plans for colonization.

According to Coale, “after about 100 miles travel,” he and his companions “came amongst the Indians, who courteously received us and entertained us in their huts, with much respect, and from that place, after two or three days being there with diet free several of them accompanied us about 200 miles farther through the wilderness or woods” nearly as far as New Amsterdam.[[26]](#endnote-26) Coale’s party evaded the Swedish and Dutch colonists who had already established settlements in the Delaware Valley. According to one report they walked for seven weeks and along the way saw “no habitations but *Indians*.”[[27]](#endnote-27) While accurate, the oft-repeated accounts of Coale’s and Thurston’s travels helped initiate an enduring habit among Quaker commentators and others of suggesting that the region of Pennsylvania was inhabited only by American Indians before the Quakers arrived.

The Quakers’ response to Coale’s adventure expressed an ambivalence toward the Indians which would animate Quaker discussions for the rest of the colonial period. There was an impulse to declare that the three Quakers had faced danger and suffered, and this led not only to exaggerated claims about their discomfort, but also to suggestions that their survival was miraculous. According to the Quakers’ Book of Sufferings, the men “travelled several hundred miles on foot through vast wildernesses and woods.” They had “not only hunger and cold to encounter with, in the winter season, but were often in danger of being devoured by wild beasts, or of perishing in unknown waters, marshes and bogs.” The overland route from Maryland to New Amsterdam was generally considered “unpassable for any but the *Indians*, many of whom are hardy men and warriors.”[[28]](#endnote-28) Another Quaker report indicated that they had had traversed a “desolate wilderness,” and a third, later quoted by the Fox, suggested that the missionaries had survived “the danger of the men-eaters,” “wild beasts,” and “venomous creatures.”[[29]](#endnote-29)

The three men’s survival seemed to speak volumes about the Quakers’ relationship with American Indians, and more broadly about their position within the Christian and non-Christian world. In 1662 during a return visit to what he called the American “wilderness,” Coale provided some detail about the process through which God had intervened to protect him, not only among the Indians, but among strangers generally around the world. First, God fortified him.

He hath carried me through many countries in which I was a stranger, and from one nation to another people he hath led me; and sometimes through many people of divers and strange languages; and his good presence never departed from me since I left the land of my nativity; but he is a constant companion unto me, and his almighty power is with me, through which *I* am able to do all things, and no thing is hard unto me.

After strengthening Coale, God used him as his agent and transformed the people around him, for “*the hearts of kings are in his hand, and he can turn them as the rivers of waters; who turns a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein*.*”[[30]](#endnote-30)*

Fox again was paying attention. In his discussion of Coale’s and Thurston’s travels, he repeatedly called the Indians “men-eaters,” but he acknowledged that they had shown courtesy to the Quakers. Quaker writers reported that the Indians had treated the travellers with noteworthy “civility,” and had “behaved well towards them,” indeed better than the non-Quaker colonists of Virginia, Maryland or New England they met during other stages of their mission. One of the Indian men hoisted Thurston onto his back and carried him when he was too weak to continue. The Quakers insisted that only the intervention of “a more than human power” could explain the Indians’ good behaviour on this occasion. Did these accounts suggest that the interior of the mid-Atlantic region would be a good place to establish a Quaker colony? The land may have been “uncultivated,” and “very hard,” but it was already the scene of a remarkable display of God’s favour to the Quakers.[[31]](#endnote-31) Fox was intrigued, and in 1660 he sent Coale back with instructions to inquire among the Susquehanna Indians whether they might be willing to sell the Quakers land. Coale obligingly returned to the lower Susquehanna Valley and delivered Fox’s overture to the local people. They succinctly rebuffed him, telling him that there was “no land that is habitable, or fit for situation” in the region. Exasperated by this answer, Coale complained that the Susquehanna had not shown the Quakers adequate respect. He speculated that he might have received a better response if Fuller had remained in power in Maryland.[[32]](#endnote-32)

Several factors contributed to the collapse of this colonization scheme. Fox’s project to establish a Quaker settlement north of Maryland died not only because of the resistance of the Susquehanna Indians, but also as a consequence of yet another shift in the political situation of the Quakers in Maryland, which reflected a fundamental change within Quakerism itself. After 1661 the Quakers in Maryland found common ground with Baltimore, and generally lost interest in migrating north out of the colony. Baltimore needed political stability, and to ward off the territorial claims of Virginia he wanted settlers, especially on the eastern shore of the Chesapeake. For their part, many Quakers were willing to acknowledge Baltimore’s authority and serve him in government. A tacit, brittle partnership between Catholics, Quakers, Baptists and others helped maintain civil peace and allowed Maryland to extend and secure its boundaries with relatively little violence.[[33]](#endnote-33)

The Quakers’ acceptance of the proprietary government coincided with a dramatic change in their behaviour. Harris, Coale, and Thurston had belonged to the first generation of Quaker missionaries, and they exhibited a kind of confrontational enthusiasm and initiative that later generations would not match. Preaching to Quakers in Barbados in 1661, Coale told them “as valiant soldiers” to confront “the nations of the Earth,” confident that it would be “in vain for them to contend with the Almighty, who is on our side.”[[34]](#endnote-34) Penn would later meet Coale, and as Penn described him, “his declaration was to the ungodly world *like an Ax, an Hammer, or a Sword, sharp and piercing,* being mostly attended with an eminent appearance of the dreadful power of the Lord.”[[35]](#endnote-35) The early Quaker missionaries challenged other Christians so insistently that four of them in New England were hanged.[[36]](#endnote-36) The Quakers would subsequently celebrate those four as martyrs, but under a new disciplinary regime established in the years following the Naylor controversy, elders within the religious society generally disapproved of overly confrontational evangelical efforts. As early as 1660, Harris faced criticism for joining non-Quaker congregations in the church buildings the Friends derisively called “steeple houses” wearing sackcloth.[[37]](#endnote-37) Virtually no one like Harris would appear in Maryland again. A writer in the mid-1660s, in the course of praising the accommodation that had been reached between the colony’s various religious groups, declared that Maryland was free from such “Adamitical Sisters.”[[38]](#endnote-38)

According to disciplinary strictures adopted by London Yearly Meeting in the 1660s and 1670s, Quakers were meant to seek meeting approval for their outreach efforts, for their published writings, and for many other aspects of their private and public lives. The purpose of this effort was to instil discipline and restraint, and it grew out of a longstanding, widespread discomfort with apparently self-aggrandizing displays of enthusiasm from some early Quakers. The drive to rein in Quaker evangelists gained additional impetus from the restoration of Charles II in 1660, which required the Quakers to redefine their relationship with other Christian groups in Britain, Ireland and the colonies. Many Quakers in America sought refuge from persecution and tried to coexist peacefully with members of other threatened denominations. Partly for their own safety, several diverse religious communities in the colonies placed new emphasis on maintaining an atmosphere of mutual toleration.

The early Quaker missionaries differed widely in their response to these developments. Coale initially expressed ambivalence about the call for restraint. Maryland’s Quakers had difficulty accepting disciplinary oversight, and in 1661 Coale wrote to Fox from Maryland’s Quaker meetings, reporting “great confusion, and distraction was amongst the people, chiefly occasioned by their judging one another… them that sought to rule amongst them was lifted up in pride, and many who were simple hearted could not bow to that spirit.”[[39]](#endnote-39) The divisions Coale observed continued for years, as some Maryland Quakers, including Fuller and Thurston, rallied in support of John Perrot, who emerged as the leading opponent of the Quakers’ disciplinary regime. [[40]](#endnote-40)

Perrot is best remembered among Quakers for arguing that no man should take his hat off at a Quaker meeting unless he “could say by the words of the living God, that he was moved to take off his hat in prayer.”[[41]](#endnote-41) Naylor had once insulted Fox by keeping his hat on during a meeting for worship, but Perrot went further by arguing that wearing hats should be the general practice.[[42]](#endnote-42) This was one component of Perrot’s sweeping critique of the Quakers’ increasingly rule-bound institutional formality. Perrot insisted that Quakers should always wait upon the spirit and respond only to inspiration when deciding how to behave. Another like-minded Quaker, William Salt, applied Perrot’s logic to critique the tradition of holding worship on the first day of every week, and questioned whether Quakers should rigidly schedule their meetings. Salt suggested that organizing meetings regularly turned worship into a “custom, tradition or formal thing,” in other words an artificial, insincere ritual.[[43]](#endnote-43)

Perrot’s followers were prone to eccentricity, obstinacy, and confrontation. As Perrot’s mission to Rome made clear, he and his supporters were ready, almost eager, to dispute the official claims of other religious groups, and as a result they may have appeared intolerant. But even if they showed little respect for religious leaders, their readiness to engage with them stemmed from their conviction that there was only one divine truth, and this belief had, paradoxically, profoundly egalitarian implications. Perrot’s message attracted female preachers, who were derided by one proponent of Quaker discipline as “bawling women” standing in defiance against “the army of the living God.”[[44]](#endnote-44) Perrot also reached out to members of other Protestant groups including Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists, declaring that he felt unity with “the seed of God in you all, under what terms of names, descriptions or denominations sowever, which seek the God of Jacob in the uprightness and sincerity of your hearts.”[[45]](#endnote-45) Perhaps most significantly, in an episode highlighted by historian John Donaghue, Perrot pleaded against a sentence of transportation and bound labour in Barbados imposed on 120 Irish Catholics in the 1650s. Perrot described these Catholics as a “bleeding people,” and as Donaghue suggests, his protest against their transportation foreshadowed later pleas – issued by others - against the enslavement of Africans.[[46]](#endnote-46)

By the time Perrot reached Maryland in 1663, however, he was much more preoccupied with the problem of Quaker discipline than he was with the issue of bound labour. Upon his arrival, much to his dismay, most of the Quakers in Maryland rebuffed him because they recognized the value of maintaining a harmless appearance and preserving discipline within their meetings. He received a warmer reception in Virginia’s smaller and less well established Quaker community. In the 1660s Virginia’s Quaker meetings nearly lost their ability to gather because so many of the Virginians refused to schedule worship in advance.[[47]](#endnote-47) Coale had anticipated this problem, and it is likely that he had Perrot in mind, as well as the devil, when in 1664 he vaguely warned Maryland’s Quakers that some in their midst had fallen under the influence of the “Evil One.”[[48]](#endnote-48) Perrot died in 1665, but his ideas outlived him, and they had special resonance for Quaker colonists in Barbados, Virginia and New Jersey. His message also lived on in England.

In 1669 Rous participated in a campaign across England “for the gathering of those who are gone astray.” After securing recantations from several Quakers who had favoured Perrot’s message, Rous happily observed that “the power and glory so irresistibly broke in upon them, that many of them were very much broken, and gave open testimonies against that spirit which had seduced them from the unity of Friends.”[[49]](#endnote-49) Rous believed that fundamental issues were at stake in the argument over hats. Quaker meetings needed the power to impose discipline and expel those who disobeyed. “Deny this,” Penn warned, “and Farewell to all Christian Church Order and Discipline, yea, and Truth itself.”[[50]](#endnote-50) Nonetheless the controversy would not go away. The opponents of Quaker discipline complained that Penn and his associates were denying them “liberty of conscience.”[[51]](#endnote-51)

The “Truth” that Fox, Rous and Penn believed they were protecting was the Christian message contained in the Bible. Nonetheless, even as they issued warnings that Perrot’s emphasis on immediate inspiration undermined respect for scripture, the Quaker leaders themselves were uncertain about the Bible’s importance. In 1671 Fox issued a pamphlet entitled *The Heathen’s Divinity* directed against all those “that say, that there had not been a God, or a Christ, unless the scripture had declared it to them.” This was not so, Fox insisted, and he cited several instances from the Old and New Testaments recounting the inspired righteousness of good Gentiles who had never been exposed to Judaic or Christian teachings. Fox also drew evidence from Biblical accounts of unregenerate “heathens” who were chastised and punished by God for failing to heed his warnings. According to Fox, these stories proved that God could reach the hearts of people directly without the aid of formally Christian teaching or written scripture.[[52]](#endnote-52)

There was an irony embedded within Fox’s persuasive strategy, however. Fox relied solely on scriptural authority to assert that there were other possible avenues to truth. Within months of the appearance of *The Heathen’s Divinity*, and perhaps in response to it, Benjamin Furly and George Keith jointly wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Universal Free Grace of the Gospell Asserted*, which answered some of the deficiencies in Fox’s method of argumentation. Furly was a leading Quaker who had supported Perrot until Fox personally convinced him to recant.[[53]](#endnote-53) Keith was equally prominent. Both men would assume active roles in the debate over colonization. Keith wrote the body of the pamphlet, and he began, as Fox had done, by citing scriptural passages in support of the idea that God could inspire people directly even if they were unaware of the formal teachings of Judaism or Christianity. Keith added, however, a new set of more abstract arguments grounded on what he called “sound reason.” Keith argued, among other things, that since God was just he must have made salvation available to all people. Only under these circumstances could all people be subject to divine judgment. Echoing Fox, Coale, and others, Keith also insisted that God had given light to everyone as a way of preparing them for the millenarian evangelical project that the Quakers were engaged in, “the gathering of people.” Perhaps most significantly, in a jointly authored postscript, Furly and Keith cited specific, historical evidence of inspired people who lived geographically remote from the Christian world. They mentioned “Lieu-Pang Emperor of China,” a “certain Indian monk” who encountered the Portuguese, and “Bertrie Herrou an Indian Brahmin,” each of whom preached forgiveness of sins and lived in a way that (at least from the perspective of Furly and Keith) demonstrated that they were following the guidance of divine light. The exotic origins of these men, and their distance from the stale book-learning and ritualized utterances of Christian churches, suggested that they had been inspired directly by God.[[54]](#endnote-54)

Furly and Keith were excited by the implications of this, but Keith in particular remained wary that some might conclude from the examples they cited that the story of the Gospel, as relayed in the Bible, had no necessary connection to salvation. Not so, he insisted. Using the term “light“ as Quakers did, to denote direct, unmediated divine inspiration, Keith wrote, “As concerning *the sufficiency of this light unto salvation*, we do not understand it in opposition to either the *necessity* or *usefulness* of the *outward coming of Christ*, and his sufferings and death for our sins.” Keith insisted that the light was Christian even if the people who followed it were unaware of the Bible and formal Christianity.[[55]](#endnote-55) In a later pamphlet, he reaffirmed this position and applied it to the salvation of Native Americans by asserting, “even the *Americans*, and consequently all men, have a divine law in their hearts.”[[56]](#endnote-56)

In 1671, just as these pamphlets appeared evidencing the Quakers’ preoccupation with the spiritual lives of the peoples they called “heathens,” Fox resolved “to go beyond the seas into America and Barbados.”[[57]](#endnote-57) He believed that God had led him to this decision, and as soon as he made it, he went to Kingston to stay with Rous, who could facilitate the voyage.[[58]](#endnote-58) Rous was in a good position to help, and the two men agreed to cross the ocean together. Since leaving the island in 1659 Rous had retained commercial ties to his father, using his own mercantile connections to keep the family plantation supplied.[[59]](#endnote-59) In 1671 Rous had business to conduct on the island, and indeed the urgency of his visit became more apparent after he arrived. He spent much of his time on the island at religious meetings with Quakers, but he also worked anxiously to confirm his hereditary right to his father’s land and slaves**.[[60]](#endnote-60)**

Fox arrived on Barbados on October 3, 1671, and left on the 8th of January, 1672. For much of that time he stayed at the Rous family plantation, and it was there that he made his most celebrated comments on slavery.[[61]](#endnote-61) Standing at the head of a Quaker meeting convened at Thomas Rous’s house, Fox reminded the planters of Barbados that Christ had died for “the Tawnes [American Indians] and for the blacks, as well as for you that are called whites.” He called on the Quakers “to preach Christ to the Ethiopians that are in your families,” and “answer that of God in their hearts.”[[62]](#endnote-62) This would require them to treat their slaves well, or at least as well as the planters would wish to be treated if they found themselves in such a “slavish condition.”[[63]](#endnote-63) In that address and throughout his stay on Barbados, Fox admonished the slaveholders and overseers to “deal mildly and gently” with slaves.[[64]](#endnote-64) He told masters to promote good morals within the slave quarters, and to bring slaves to Quaker meetings.[[65]](#endnote-65) For those blacks who remained “unconvinced,” that is, those who had not yet joined the Quaker fold, Fox promoted the convening of special, demonstrative and instructive meetings for worship.[[66]](#endnote-66) Fox also recommended that masters free any slaves who had served them faithfully for 30 years “more or less,” but when his comments were published four years later, this recommendation was edited out.[[67]](#endnote-67) He took care to emphasize that he did not intend to undermine the practice of slavery, at least not in the immediate term. The limited emancipations he favoured would have come only piecemeal, after individual slaves had performed extremely long terms of service. As for abrupt change, Fox was clearly against it. There is no reason to doubt his sincerity when he assured the governor of Barbados that he would never “teach the negroes to rebel.”[[68]](#endnote-68)

William Edmundson, who travelled with Fox to Barbados in 1671, and returned on his own in 1675, repeated that message. Like Fox, Edmundson faced charges of promoting rebellion, and in response he told the authorities that Quakerism promoted order and peace on the plantations, and made rebellion less likely.[[69]](#endnote-69) Fox, Edmundson and the other Quaker emissaries who visited Barbados in the 1670s adopted a self-consciously moderate stance, and said little that Rous and Fox together had not already declared more than a decade earlier. Nonetheless, Fox’s high profile attracted suspicion on the English-ruled Caribbean islands, and led to an official backlash against the religious society of Friends.[[70]](#endnote-70) Partly as a consequence, for a combination of political, pragmatic, and self-interested reasons, for the remainder of the seventeenth century Barbadian Quakers would not take the lead in advancing the argument over slavery. To understand how the Friends’ debate over race and slavery evolved in the next few decades, it is necessary to follow Fox in his onward journey in 1672, and pay particular attention to his passage through the land north of Maryland. In the coming decades, that would be the scene of the Quakers’ most ambitious debates about Christianity, discipline, hierarchy and colonization.

After leaving Barbados Fox first spent seven weeks in Jamaica before proceeding to Maryland, where he arrived in April, 1672. He spent four weeks in Maryland giving advice to the local Quaker meetings. When the time came to leave Maryland, some in Fox’s party sailed to New York, but Fox insisted on proceeding northward overland like Coale and his companions had done more than a decade earlier. Just like Coale, Fox recruited American Indian guides, and he stayed in several Indian settlements along the way. Fox took a more direct route than Coale. He stopped by the Dutch and Swedish settlements before cutting across New Jersey, and his whole journey required only ten days. Though he met the Dutch and the Swedes, it was the Native peoples who fascinated him.

According to Fox, he and his travelling companions rode through “bogs, rivers, and creeks, and wild woods where it was said never man was known to ride.” At night, “sometimes we lay in the woods by a fire and sometimes at Indians’ houses and cabins.” In central New Jersey Fox met an Indian leader he described as a “king” who spoke “some English.” This man, like the others Fox met, was “very loving,” and Fox took the opportunity to speak “much to him and his people.” [[71]](#endnote-71) This experience excited him, and after his return to England, drawing on his experience on that journey, he sent an epistle back across the Atlantic, calling on Quaker colonists throughout North America to “invite all the Indians and their kings, and have meetings with them.” Fox believed that Quakers should “answer the light, truth, and spirit of God in the Indians, their kings and people.” If they did so they could help convert the Indians and indeed make them missionaries. Using language that combined metaphysics with colonization, he told the Quakers that they could help transform the Indians by making “heavenly plantations in their hearts for the Lord, and so beget them to God, that they may serve and worship him, and spread his truth abroad.”[[72]](#endnote-72)

Fox knew that he was not the first Quaker to cross overland between Maryland and New York. He had commented enthusiastically about Coale’s travels. Nonetheless, for him this ride across New Jersey was a pioneering journey of discovery, and his description of the expedition – particularly his assertion that he was the first person to ever ride a horse through those woods – seemed to suggest that he might have been the first Quaker some of the Indians he encountered had ever met. That is unlikely, however. Fox’s Indian guides led him expeditiously to Middletown, a settlement near New York Harbour that had been home to some Quakers since the English formally acquired New Jersey from the Dutch in 1664.[[73]](#endnote-73) The original Quaker settlers in Middletown, like their counterparts in Maryland, lived alongside Baptists and others, and they were anxious to avoid religious persecution. Before they moved into the region they secured a contested guarantee from the Governor of New York (who at that time claimed jurisdiction over the area) that they would enjoy “free Liberty of conscience without any molestation or disturbance whatsoever in their way of worship.”[[74]](#endnote-74) The first Quakers in New Jersey did not establish good relations with the local Indians, but Fox’s host in Middletown, Richard Hartshorne, stood out from the others. He presented himself as the Quakers’ most effective emissary with Native Americans.

Hartshorne was a Quaker from Fox’s home county of Leicestershire. He had moved to Middletown in 1669, and almost immediately found himself trapped in a controversy that struck at the foundations of the local community’s existence. The Quakers had been careful to protect the free exercise of their religion, but they and their neighbours had been less conscientious concerning the claims and interests of the local Indians. Hartshorne reported that when he was building his new home a group of Indians came “and laid their hands on the post and frame of the house and said that house was theirs, they never had anything for it, and told me if I would not buy the land, I must be gone.” Hartshorne replied that he could not believe that the original settlers had failed to pay the Indians, but his visitors responded with more threats, warning him that “they would kill my cattle and burn my hay, if I would not buy the land nor be gone.” Hartshorne proceeded to investigate the matter, discovered that no purchase from the Indians had been made, and so arranged to make the purchase himself.[[75]](#endnote-75) He paid the local Native people for his land, and subsequently made additional purchases allowing him to establish “a plantation with a considerable quantity of land belonging to it” overlooking the Atlantic and with views of Long Island across the bay.[[76]](#endnote-76)

Hartshorne criticized his Quaker neighbours for failing to treat the Indians well, and his comments foreshadowed controversies that would wrack Quaker communities across New Jersey for the next decade. As a consequence of an extraordinary set of political and commercial manoeuvres, Quaker proprietors acquired land and political power, at different times in different places, in every part of New Jersey in the 1670s and early 1680s.[[77]](#endnote-77) After Fox’s visit in 1672, every group of Quaker settlers entering into a region of New Jersey took care to declare that they were concerned for the interests of the local Indians. The most ambitious and creative of these declarations was a provision within the *Concessions and Agreements* ratified by Quaker settlers in West Jersey which called for juries composed of six colonists and six Indians to resolve any dispute that might arise between a white settler and any member of a local tribe.[[78]](#endnote-78)

Though the Quakers may have wished to demonstrate through their conduct that they were a peaceful, equitable people, during this initial period in the settlement of New Jersey they were unable to maintain a united front. Quaker groups were competing with each other, and in the context of their disputes they accused each other of impoverishing Indians and unjustifiably confiscating land. Quakers hurled these accusations against each other in Middletown on the Atlantic Coast, farther north along the west bank of the Hudson, and on the other side of the colony at Salem, near the mouth of the Delaware.[[79]](#endnote-79) In the course of these controversies Hartshorne was accused of exploiting his ties to Indians. Another Quaker speculator accused of insensitivity to Indian land rights in eastern New Jersey was Penn.

In 1682 Penn proposed purchasing land near the future site of Perth Amboy, New Jersey. East Jersey’s surveyor Samuel Groom, a Quaker merchant with long-standing ties to the region, responded that Penn wanted far too much land. Indeed Groom complained that it would be impossible to locate such a large tract “except I take all swamps, mountains, &c all which cannot at present be purchased from the Natives, if I had money enough.” Groom described Penn’s proposal as “madness,” explaining that the Indians “must have land (and choice too) to plant on, they will not part with all presently, neither will they sell land within 4, 6, or 8 miles of their settled plantations.” Groom quoted them: “We (say they) plant 7 or 14 years in one place, and when the ground grows waste, we remove to another place. Neither (say they) will we sell land near us, because cattle, horses, hogs will destroy our fruits, for we neither keep such things nor fence.” Groom had observed that in Indian settlements far from the colonial towns, “their plantations are as neat dressed as most of our garden ground about London, full of Indian corn, pease, beans… water and muskmelons, potatoes squashes and other fine things, and they generally live together like country villages, every family apart, and every man and woman hath their pieces of land, and things upon it, and work as we do, in such work as pleaseth them best, and indeed, if one have but a bit of victuals, and others want, they will divide it amongst them all, though never so little.” Groom insisted that he understood the Indians’ virtues, and he suggested that Penn did not. Ironically, he was complaining about Penn’s approach to the Indians at exactly the time that Penn was presenting himself as a benevolent emissary to the Indians of Pennsylvania and an innovative expert on Indian affairs.[[80]](#endnote-80) The disputes that divided the Quakers as they moved into New Jersey were often fuelled by opportunism and petty rivalry, but they also implicated more fundamental disagreements among the Friends over colonial policy, the nature of the Quakers’ relationship with Native Americans, Africans, and other people identified as “heathens,” and Quakerism’s claim to special insight into Truth.

During his lifetime Perrot had attracted followers in North America, and long after his death many American Quakers refused to comply with disciplinary strictures. Indeed, as historian Kenneth L. Carroll has argued, one of Fox’s principal purposes in crossing the ocean had been to suppress dissent and encourage discipline in America’s Quaker meetings.[[81]](#endnote-81) In nearly every American colony there were Quakers who resisted the imposition of Fox’s style of discipline, and the problem was particularly persistent in eastern New Jersey. Hartshorne’s meeting in Middletown eventually became a notorious centre of disruption. Edmundson came to Middletown in 1675 and complained that some within the meeting were “tainted with the ranting spirit.” At a meeting for worship convened at Hartshorne’s house, a man Edmundson identified as a “ranter,”[[82]](#endnote-82) Edward Tarff, confronted him with a performance that not only challenged the hierarchical structure of discipline within Quaker meetings, but also conventional oral and written modes of religious expression, English norms of politeness, and perhaps also the spiritual pretentions of individuals with white skin.

In his journal Edmundsom described what happened.

One Edward Tarff came into the meeting with his face blacked, and said, “It was his justification and sanctification, also sung and danced, and came to me, where I was sitting, waiting upon the Lord, and called me “old rotten priest,” saying, “I had lost the power of God.” But the Lord’s power filled my heart, and his word was powerful and sharp in my heart and tongue. I told him he was mad, and that made him fret. He said I lied, for he was moved by the Lord. I looked on him in the authority of the Lord’s power, and told him, I challenged him and his God, that sent him, to look me in the face one hour, or half an hour, but he was smitten, and could not look me in the face, so went out.

After Tarff fled, Edmundson stood and told the meeting as a group that this incident had demonstrated the “power of God.”[[83]](#endnote-83) Edmundson believed that he had won this face-off, and on that day he had defeated the opponents of Quaker discipline in Middletown, but if that was so, it was at best a temporary triumph. When Keith visited Middletown more than a decade later he repeated the complaint that the meeting was disturbed by “a very bad sort of ranters.”[[84]](#endnote-84)

Keith’s experience in East Jersey radically altered his assessment of Quaker discipline, though he remained uneasy with claims of Christian supremacy. For several years, in collaboration with Furly and others including van Helmont, Keith had emphasized the possibility that all people, regardless of their familiarity with the Bible, might have access to grace. Now, in East Jersey, he was appalled to encounter so many “Airy Notionists, who teach and profess Faith in the Christ within, as the Light and Word; but either deny or slight his outward coming, and what he did or suffered for us in the Flesh.” “God forbid,” Keith exclaimed, that such people might be counted among the members of the Society of Friends. [[85]](#endnote-85) In a letter he wrote to Fox from New Jersey in 1688, he outlined the problem and reiterated his position in the controversy disturbing East Jersey’s Quaker meetings. Christ, Keith insisted, was indeed “the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” including men who had no exposure to formal Christianity.[[86]](#endnote-86) Nonetheless, those who had access to the written Gospel had an obligation to respect it, and “not to mix the doctrine of Truth with words of man’s wisdom or contrary doctrine whatever.” Keith intended “to hold fast in all things to the express testimony of Scripture.”[[87]](#endnote-87) He complained that America’s Quakers, and their children in particular, needed to devote more time to the study of the Bible. After he moved to Pennsylvania in 1689 he pursued rigorous disciplinary efforts there, which was the immediate cause of his momentous break with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.[[88]](#endnote-88)

The trajectory of Keith’s thinking was unique, but his career, and the course of events in New Jersey and Pennsylvania generally, dramatized the link between Quaker discipline and race relations. Two difficult policy issues also made this clear: Sabbath observance and the future of slavery. In the 1670s the Quakers who drafted the first set of laws for West Jersey did not mandate Sabbath observance. Weighing the maintenance of discipline against liberty of conscience, they chose the latter. Similarly, when Quakers gained power within the government of East Jersey in the early 1680s, they blocked a bill that would have made the observance of the Sabbath mandatory. The Quakers on the East Jersey Council complained, “This bill insinuates as if the first day were holy which the holy scriptures never said more than any other. Every day is holy to the Lord… if one man esteem a day above another, another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Liberty of conscience ought to be preferred….”[[89]](#endnote-89) By contrast, when Penn drafted the first laws for Pennsylvania, he included a provision requiring the inhabitants to abstain from labour on the first day of every week, “that they may the better dispose themselves to worship God according to their understandings.”[[90]](#endnote-90)

Furly was visiting London when Penn was working on the *Frame of Government*, and he joined a wide circle of advisors who commented on Penn’s early drafts. He was one of several advisors, Quakers and non-Quakers alike, who expressed concern that as Penn’s governmental scheme was evolving it was becoming less like the West Jersey plan and increasingly hierarchical and rigid. Regarding Penn’s proposal to require rest on the first day of each week, Furly wrote that it would be “a vile snare to the conscience of many, in this day, who do not look upon that day as of any other then human institution, and may be pressed in spirit (whether right or wrong is not the question) sometimes to work upon that day, to testify against that superstitious conceit that it is of divine institution…”[[91]](#endnote-91) Having been chastised for his position on hat-wearing a decade earlier, Furly was careful in this instance not to say whether he agreed with those who might feel compelled to make a statement by working on Sundays. Be that as it may, Penn was unmoved by Furly’s concerns on this issue, and in 1682 when he met with a group of his Pennsylvania colonists south of the future site of Philadelphia to enact their first statutes, Chapter One of their “Great Law,” as it became known, banned work on Sundays. Pennsylvania’s Great Law declared that this was necessary in order to follow “the example of the primitive Christians and for the ease of the Creation.” The statute specifically directed all the colonists, whether they be “masters, parents, children or servants,” to worship on the first day of every week, or at a minimum to “read the scriptures of truth at home.”[[92]](#endnote-92)

If we consider Pennsylvania’s statutes in the context of the wider Quaker world, and compare Pennsylvania with East and West Jersey, it becomes apparent that Penn endorsed a relatively traditional stance on the relationship between Christianity and the state. Others like Furly supported policies that would have had the effect of denying any officially recognized status to Christianity, at least as far as Sabbath observance was concerned. On the question of the Sabbath, Penn supported a measure of legally enforced Christian supremacy. This element in his approach to governance helps explain why he also allowed his colonists to import and keep slaves.

The issue of slavery came up during the drafting of Penn’s *Frame of Government*. In his comments on Penn’s draft, Furly recommended that Pennsylvania outlaw the importation of slaves from overseas. He also declared that the colony should direct that any slaves brought into Pennsylvania from elsewhere in America should be freed after serving for eight years. In making this latter recommendation Furly suggested that Pennsylvania would be following the example of West Jersey.[[93]](#endnote-93) There was in fact no provision for such a process of manumission in West Jersey’s laws, but Furly’s comment should not be dismissed as simply a reflection of his mistaken understanding of the West Jersey precedent. Furly knew something of West Jersey, and he certainly would have known that Penn was familiar with the laws that that colony’s proprietors had proposed. It is possible that Furly was aware of the abstract declaration in the *Concessions and Agreements* (in a provision regulating criminal and civil procedure) that “all and every person and persons inhabiting the said province shall as far as in us lies be free from oppression and slavery.”[[94]](#endnote-94)

Regardless of the details of Furly’s thinking, it is clear that he retained the belief he expressed with Keith in 1671, that non-Christians could receive the inward light. He also continued to be troubled, as Keith was, by the conundrum surrounding the salvation of non-Christians. Along with Keith Furly briefly collaborated with van Helmont, who sought to resolve the problem by arguing that non-Christians could be saved only after undergoing reincarnation and living a new life in a place that gave them access to the Gospel.[[95]](#endnote-95) In a letter to Penn in 1684 Furly acknowledged that van Helmont’s theory had no scriptural foundation, but he went on to observe that the reincarnation idea had the benefit of “clearing the divine providence, justice, mercy and wisdom of God and rendering the most perplexed articles of Christian faith easily conceivable to the meanest as well as largest capacity.”[[96]](#endnote-96) Keith was more evasive in his comments on van Helmont, but he probably adopted a similar view. Van Helmont’s theory of reincarnation preserved the special power of Christianity, and it made universal access to salvation plausible, but it did nothing to advance Furly’s or Keith’s reputation for Christian orthodoxy. Fox hinted that van Helmont may have been inspired by the devil, and during the schism in Pennsylvania Keith’s past association with van Helmont was deployed against him as a slur.[[97]](#endnote-97)

It was in the context of the Keithian schism that Keith’s name first became attached to an explicit denunciation of slavery. In 1692 his followers produced an antislavery tract entitled *An Exhortation and Caution to Friends concerning the Buying and Selling of Negroes*. The pamphlet began by declaring that “Negroes, Blacks and Taunies [American Indians] are a real part of mankind, for whom Christ has shed his precious blood, and are capable of salvation as well as white men, and Christ the light of the world hath (in measure) enlightened them, and every man that cometh into the world.”[[98]](#endnote-98) The statement paraphrased Fox’s ministry in Barbados, and continued a controversy that had roiled Quakerism for decades. The authors of the *Exhortation and Caution* insisted that God had already reached the hearts of non-Christians and prepared them for salvation. But they did not advocate benevolent slaveholding to facilitate missionary work. On the contrary they insisted that the inherent cruelty of slavery endangered the souls of the enslaved by embittering them and instilling within them a prejudice against the Christian religion.

Keith’s thinking had changed considerably since 1671 when he collaborated with Furly on *The Universal Free Grace of the Gospell Asserted*. Though the 1692 *Exhortation* follows a logic consistent with Keith’s earlier views, it is possible that Keith was not the author of the later piece. As Katharine Gerbner has reminded us, the Keithian movement’s antislavery pamphlet was the work of a committee that included a wide range of colonists from England, Wales, Scotland, Germany and Holland. By studying this joint authorship Gerbner has found links between the 1692 antislavery statement and the earlier protest issued by Quakers and others in Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1688.[[99]](#endnote-99) In fact, the hopes and anxieties that inspired these protests grew out of a turmoil that began much earlier. The *Exhortation and Caution* continued a creative, ambitious, fractious and expanding debate that had raged since the 1650s.

The Quaker message that all people could be inspired directly by God gave an evangelizing, millenarian impulse to early Quaker colonial efforts, and led Quakers to insist that their colonial projects served the spiritual needs of both Africans and Native Americans. The Quakers were bitterly divided amongst themselves, however, and this led to recriminations between colonial promoters over their treatment of American Indians in particular. Penn’s declaration to the Indians, at the moment of the founding of Pennsylvania, that he would treat the Indians differently than all his European predecessors contained a sideways rebuke against other Quakers, particularly in New Jersey.[[100]](#endnote-100) But his rivals in New Jersey were equally scathing toward Penn’s treatment of Indians there. Though it was remembered longer than any of the other promises made by Quaker colonists, Penn’s assurance of good behaviour toward the Indians of Pennsylvania is best understood as building on decades of work and propaganda by his predecessors, starting with Coale and continuing through Hartshorne and Fox.

Similarly, by 1682 the parameters of the Quakers’ debate over slavery had already been established. Critics complained that Quaker slave masters were negligent and complacent, and the slave owners responded by insisting that their slaves were well treated. As masters, they asserted that they were living virtuously and setting a good example, and that they were providing the slaves all they needed in both material and spiritual terms. Rous’s critical message, rearticulated and elaborated upon by Fox and others, challenged the status quo but also justified and informed Quaker efforts to encourage benevolent slaveholding. Later, in the eighteenth century, the promotion of good slaveholding formed an essential component of the Quakers’ project of ending slavery gradually, only after a long, peaceful, transitional stage during which slave owners prepared their slaves for freedom by educating them, introducing them to the Gospel, and instilling virtue within them. Under such a scheme, slaveholders, in effect, were to act simultaneously as masters and liberators.

In competition with this profoundly hierarchical social vision was the Quakers’ professed belief that all people, regardless of gender, education, race or social standing, could receive immediate inspiration from God. From the earliest days of the Society of Friends, the egalitarian implications of this conviction led some Quakers to challenge social conventions and hierarchies, occasionally to the point of questioning the privileged status of the Christians among the peoples of the earth. The men and women who followed this line of thinking to its logical conclusion generally shared an iconoclastic, confrontational style and a tendency toward eccentricity that almost invited censure from Quaker authorities. Furly and Keith were only the first in a succession of Quaker abolitionists who ran afoul of the Friends’ disciplinary procedures.[[101]](#endnote-101) The meetings sought to avoid divisive controversy, but there was much more behind their disciplinary actions than that. Quakers like Fox, Edmundson and Penn recognized the destabilizing potential of egalitarianism, and they knew that taken to an extreme, antiauthoritarianism threatened the coherence of Quakerism as a religious persuasion and the institutional viability of the Society of Friends.

Notes

1. John L. Nickalls, ed., *The Journal of George Fox* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 104; See H. Larry Ingle, *First Among Friends: George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 81; Douglas Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox* (Richmond, Ind.: Friends United Press, 1986), 28. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophesy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 130-134. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Leo Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Naylor and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Kenneth L. Carroll, *John Perrot: Early Quaker Schismatic* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1971). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Allison P. Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century: The Life and Thought of Francis Mercury van Helmont (1614-1698)* (Leidin: Brill, 1999). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. On the Keithian schism see Jon Butler, “‘Gospel Order Improved’: The Keithian Schism and the Exercise of Ministerial Authority in Pennsylvania,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d ser. 31 (1974) 431-452; Andrew Murphy, “Persecuting Quakers? Liberty and Toleration in Early Pennsylvania,” in Chris Beneke and Christopher S. Grenda, eds., *The First Prejudice: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 143-165. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. See Rosemary Moore, *The Light of their Consciences: The Early Quakers in Britain, 1646-1666* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. See Katharine Gerbner, “The Ultimate Sin: Christianizing Slaves in Barbados in the Seventeenth Century,” *Slavery and Abolition* 31 (2010) 57-73, 61; Larry Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados: Challenging the Culture of the Planter Class* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 38, 48-9; Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (New York: Norton, 1972), 57, 105; William Noel Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, America and West Indies, vol. 7, 1669-1674* (London, 1889), 1101. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. John Rous, *A Warning to the Inhabitants of Barbados* (London, 1656), 2, 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. John Rous, *The Sins of a Gainsaying and Rebellious People Laid Before Them* (London, 1659), 1, 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. George Fox*, A Collection of Many Select and Christian Epistles, Letters and Testimonies* (London, 1698), 117. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Statement by John Rous in Humphrey Norton, *New England’s Ensigne* (London, 1659), 54. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Joseph Besse, *A Collection of Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, (London, 1753), 2:189. See also George Bishop, *New England Judged* (London, 1661), 72-3 [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. John Rous to Margaret Fell, September 3, 1658, in Maria Webb, *The Fells of Swarthmoor Hall* (Philadelphia, 1896), 187-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Webb, *Fells*, 184-9 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Rous, *Sins*, 5-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Webb, *Fells*, 276, 295-301. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. See John Donaghue, *Fire Under the Ashes: An Atlantic History of the English Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 261-6. While Donaghue has uncovered evidence of religiously informed antislavery earlier than most scholars have acknowledged, Rebecca Anne Goetz has focussed on the proslavery side of the debate. Goetz argues that in Virginia many of the most consequential, deleterious decisions affecting the status of Native Americans and African Americans took place within churches. Efforts to convert the enslaved to Christianity met fierce resistance in Virginia, leading to widespread assertions among whites that people of African and Native American descent were poor candidates for baptism. Most white Virginians assumed that the words “Christian” and “white” were synonyms, and they proceeded on that premise not only when drafting their statutes, but also in the daily governance of most of their religious communities. Thus the dominant strain of Christianity in Virginia justified the maintenance of a rigid racial hierarchy and as a consequence supported slavery. Rebecca Anne Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012). [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. See, for example, 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, Penn.: Norwood Editions, 1980). [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Kenneth L. Carroll, “Elizabeth Harris, The Founder of American Quakerism,” *Quaker History* 57 (1968) 96-111. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 152-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Charles Bayly, *A True and Faithful Warning to the Upright-hearted and Uprejudic’d Reader* (London, 1663), 11. Bayly had a remarkable life. See Kenneth L Carroll, “From Bond Slave to Governor: The Strange Career of Charles Bayly (1632?-1680)” *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 52 (1968) 19-38; Alice M. Johnson, “Bayly, Charles,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 1:81-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. David W. Jordan, “‘God’s Candle’ Within Government: Quakers and Politics in Early Maryland,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d ser. 39 (1982) 628-654, 630. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. John D. Krugler, *English and Catholic: The Lords Baltimore in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltmore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 215-216; Jordan, “‘God’s Candle’;” Kenneth L. Carroll, “Persecution and Persecutors of Maryland Quakers, 1658-1661,” *Quaker History* 99 (2010) 15-31. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
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