# An Holy Experiment
# and
# The Separation of 1827-1828

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William Penn seized the opportunity granted to him in 1681. The British Crown owed his late father, an Admiral of the Royal Navy, a considerable debt, and Penn persuaded His Royal Highness Charles II to pay it off by granting him Proprietary rights to Pennsylvania. In 1682, Penn set in motion what he called "an holy experiment:" a colony, run by Quakers, and dedicated to Quaker principles, yet open to all religions. In so doing, Penn let fly a flaming arrow which arced across the heaven of slow time to embed itself into Arch Street meeting house in Philadelphia, one-hundred-forty-five years later, at the opening session of the yearly meeting on April 16, 1827, and set it aflame.

## Mystical and Evangelical

The flame of contention that drove Friends apart was at least in part doctrinal in nature. Howard Haines Brinton's major work, *Friends for 300 Years*[1], focuses considerable attention on what he calls the "tension" between the inward and outward aspects of Quakerism, otherwise called its *mystical* and *evangelical* aspects. *Primitive* is a term frequently used as a synonym for *mystical* in this context.[2]

Brinton suggests that the main attraction that George Fox's new religion brought in the mid-seventeenth century was its strong dependence on **inward revelation**--that is, the individual's self-discovery of God and God's Truth within himself--as opposed to the individual's dependence on **outward authority**—clergy and Scriptures. For poor, mostly illiterate or semi-literate peoples, this discovery was electrifying. Nothing goes to the head quite so well as the self-empowerment of having and finding God within one's self.

Nonetheless, Fox did not eliminate the Scriptures; he just deemphasized them, making them secondary sources of authority--secondary, that is, to the primacy of *that of God within*, or what Robert Barclay called *the unmediated revelation of the Holy Spirit*. [3] The 'unmediated' in his terminology, means 'without the help of clergy or Scripture,' and the *Holy Spirit* is the same as that of the Christian Trinity, which Quakers firmly believed in. That is, the "Inward Light" is the Holy Spirit illuminating the individual. Evangelicalism, on the other hand, includes the belief that the Scriptures are the "holy words of God," and, in later (Gurneyite) form, the sole source of God's Truth. Quakers tried to keep these inward and outward aspects in balance, strongly recommending that all Friends frequently read the Bible, but without regarding it as "the

[1] Brinton, Howard H., *Friends for 300 Years*, Pendle Hill Publications, Wallingford, PA, 1952; A revised edition came fifty years later, *Friends for 350 Years*, Edit. By M. H. Bacon, Pendle Hill, Wallingford, 2002.

[2]The word "conservative" has been variously applied to both of these aspects, with the result that when someone refers to one side or the other as "more conservative," I find it confusing. In essence, the Orthodox were conservative relative to Christian history, while Hicksites were conservative relative to Quaker history.

[3] These are spelled out in great degree in Robert Barclay's *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, published in 1676 and 1678 (Latin and English, respectively), but I strongly recommend *Barclay's Apology in modern English*, by Dean Freiday, published in 1991 by the Barclay Press. Both are available in our (Germantown) meeting library.

fountain of truth." They were not always successful. Brinton shows that all Quaker schisms emerged as stress-fractures along the *mystical-evangelical* line. One early schism, for instance, was brought about by the preachings of a powerful traveling minister named George Keith who traveled widely throughout Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) in the 1690s, saying that Friends had gone too far from traditional Christianity. Keith preached that by insisting on "that of Christ within", Friends were in danger of losing the "true Christ without." He earned quite a few adherents, including a number of members of Germantown Meeting. Keith was eventually labeled "schismatic" by PYM, and was refused the opportunity to preach. He returned to England where he was rejected also by London Yearly Meeting. He became an Anglican and ended his days as an Anglican Bishop.[4] I will come back to Keith a little later, for he plays a role in our tale. The coming Separation will be far more complex than just a doctrinal controversy, but I want you to keep an eye on the *mystical/evangelical* dimension as we move forward in time.

**Five starting conditions to remember**

I believe that the Hicksite-Orthodox split was essentially inevitable from the day that Penn stepped down to Pennsylvania shore from the ship *Welcome* in 1682. Several things, however, must be clear concerning the starting conditions of Penn's Pennsylvania Province in order to understand what happened.

**First**, many sects seek to separate themselves from the *World*, using the term to mean the physical and mundane community of humanity, as opposed to the spiritual; they see the World as the source of all Sin. For instance, The Pietists, a Lutheran sect, came to Germantown and set up an ideal community of Hermits on the Wissahickon Creek, distancing themselves literally from contamination of the World (see *The Settlement of Germantown*). Also, the Amish are a sect, descended from Old World anabaptists, who have more or less successfully separated themselves from the World and continue to do so today as best they can. George Fox, in contrast, very deliberately insisted that Friends must live their faith *in the World*, openly and frankly; they must integrate with the World, mixing with the social order they find, while keeping their Faith.

However, Fox never mentioned Government; I imagine he never considered the possibility of Friends being in government. William Penn, however, raised the stakes: he put his Quaker colonists in charge. This was really the heart of Penn's "experiment." In 1682, Penn expressed his conviction that government "*was part of religion itself, a thing sacred in its institution and end*," and therefore no less an appropriate task for Godly folk to undertake. Penn declared, "*There are another sort of persons, not only fit for but necessary in* [outward] *plantations, and that is Men of universal spirits, that have an eye to the Good of Posterity, and that both understand and delight to promote good Discipline and just Government among a plain and well intending People; such persons may find Room in Colonies for their good Counsel and Contrivance, who are shut out from being of much use or service to great nations under settl'd Customs.*"[5] That is, Quakers have the Right Stuff and this is the Right Place.

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[4] See the account in *The Settlement of Germantown* for fuller details. Keith is regarded by J. William Frost as one of the only three well-trained Quaker theologians (with Penn and Barclay) of the time.

[5] Quoted in Tolles, Frederick, *Meeting House and Counting House*, W.W. Norton &Co., New York, 1948. Page 10.

**The second thing** to be understood is that Penn's Quaker colonists were almost all uniformly poor folk. [6] They mostly came from areas in England that were notably poverty-stricken. In areas where there was somewhat more money, English oppression against them was both legal and economic; they were being fined into poverty if they were not already there, and sheriffs were instructed to confiscate, for sale to pay off the fines, especially those goods and tools essential to making a living. Being poor also meant that almost all the immigrants were uneducated in any formal sense, likely minimally literate, and no teachers themselves, although most had learned some basic skills, and could be considered basic artisans, able to make something. They had ministers among them, poor people like themselves, also without formal education, and probably little more literate, but who had demonstrated skills of reaching the Light Within, and articulating their faith and purpose. What all these poor people brought with them were the hard principles of Quakerism: industry, frugality and above all else honesty. These were no "huddled masses yearning to be free;" they were toughened in spirit and faith by years of adversity and repression. They were precisely what Penn wanted.

**The third condition**, essentially a corollary to the uniform poverty of the incoming settlers, was almost a complete lack of people of any higher class, aside from Penn himself, discussed below. The importance of this lack is easily explained: the principal reason that upward mobility was slow in European cultures was the determination that upper classes maintained to prevent those from lower stations from rising into theirs. Furthermore, everybody took for granted that class structure was just the way things were. Even George Fox acknowledged that social order should be maintained. But again, just as he may not have considered the possibility of Friendly government, surely, he also never considered what would happen **if there was no social order**. The absence of any kind of a middle class meant that there was no bar whatsoever to upward mobility in Penn's new province. The phrase 'nature abhors a vacuum' applies here; the Quaker poor were poised to experience explosive upward mobility.

**The fourth circumstance**, completing the incipient class structure of the new city, was William Penn himself, who was that most unusual creature, a convinced Quaker who was born and bred of the British upper middle class, a group whose principal characteristic is its sense of entitlement.[7] Penn's own love of wealth and position was inbred and a fatal seed of future separation. One of the largest plantations in Pennsylvania was Penn's own Pennsbury, where he kept a dozen slaves. Still, Penn actually spent fewer than five of the 35 years of his provincial governorship in Pennsylvania,[8] so his direct influence on his colonists was mostly through his writings. And being a model. He was critically important in providing the Quaker basis for the

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[6] Both Tolles (*Meeting House*) and Doherty (*The Hicksite Separation*) spend a lot of time on this point, that the starting people of the Philadelphia colony were homogeneously poor Quakers with only a few exceptions.

[7] Penn's father, a naval captain, gave critically important help to restore Charles II to his throne in 1660, and for this was rewarded with a knighthood (Sir William Penn) and a rise in rank (Admiral Sir William Penn). The admiral was not at all pleased with his son's new religion, and disinherited him, but restored him as his heir just before he died. Consequently, the Admiral's death in 1670 made his son wealthy and the Pennsylvania experiment real.

[8] Penn was Proprietor from 1681 to his death in 1718, less 2 years (1684-86) when he was temporarily stripped of his proprietorship—and confined in the Tower of London. He spent time in Pennsylvania in two periods only, 1682-1684 and 1699-1701. So, for more than 30 years of his proprietorship he managed from afar, via governors whom he appointed. Distant management proved frustrating and chaotic. From 1701 to 1718, his most important agent was James Logan.

development of the "Quaker aristocracy." (I will discuss this "Quaker basis" a little further on, in the section "Quaker caste.")

One other wealthy, patrician Friend in colonial Philadelphia was Thomas Lloyd, whom Penn enrolled to help him manage the Province.[9] Tolles describes Lloyd, using for the first time the expression 'Quaker aristocracy': "*The most distinguished Friend of the first generation in Pennsylvania, was in a real sense the patriarch and progenitor of the Philadelphia Quaker aristocracy. One of the few genuine patricians to be converted to Quakerism* [in 1662, when he was 22 years old], *this descendant of an ancient Welsh family came to Penn's colony in 1683, bringing a family coat of arms with fifteen quarterings*."[10] Lloyd served as President of the Pennsylvania Council and, when Penn was away, as Deputy Governor until his death in 1694. Unfortunately, I can find nothing to suggest just how Lloyd lived, nor any idea of what he might have thought—much less taught—about wealth. Therefore, I cannot explain Tolles' implication that Lloyd played a major role in the formation of the Quaker aristocracy. The best I can do is suggest that it is probable, given his origins, that Lloyd was very like Penn (although even more highly ranked than Penn) when it came to wealth and station. It's pretty clear that Penn liked it, and, as we will see, promoted wealth as a Quaker goal.

**The fifth thing** to keep in mind is that while the colonists may almost all have been homogeneously poor at the outset, there was still one critical difference that was part of the starting conditions: many colonists came from London and Bristol, English cities, while even more were farmers who came from the English countryside. There was a strong tendency for the city-folk to immigrate into the nascent City of Philadelphia, and for the country folk to move on to take up farmland in Philadelphia, Bucks and Chester Counties.[11] This is no surprise; each immigrant took up what he was most familiar with; thus, they immediately divided themselves into city folk and country folk, this division quickly and pervasively deepening.

Mind you, Penn's colony was not the first Quaker settlement in the New World; that honor belongs to New England Yearly Meeting, established in 1661 in Newport, Rhode Island.[12] George Fox visited there in 1672 as part of his two-year visit to the American colonies.

George Fox certainly understood that Penn's "holy experiment" involved very new territory for Quakers. He may even have been alarmed on behalf of the tide of poor Friends who shipped to the new Province. It is, perhaps, a somewhat bitter irony that George Fox issued a stringent warning when he wrote, in 1682, *My friends that are gone and are going over to plant, and make outward plantations in America, keep your own plantations in your hearts, with the*

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[9] Extended notes referenced in the Wikipedia entry on Lloyd make clear that Lloyd wielded great power in Philadelphia, especially in times of Penn's absence, but far from being a healing and unifying presence at such times as Penn had hoped, contributed his share to the persistent chaos that was Penn's *in absentia* government.

[10] Tolles, Frederick, *Ibid.*. Page 120. Quarterings are a means of joining coats of arms of different families onto the shield of a particular family, showing that family's heraldic history. It's a way of bragging, although in colonial Philadelphia, only Penn and Lloyd could understand what it said.

[11] From the start, Penn's Colony was divided into three counties: Philadelphia (which included what would later become Montgomery County), Chester (which included the future Delaware County) and Bucks. A substantial part of Philadelphia County was rural country, including townships such as Germantown, Cheltenham, Plymouth and Byberry, but most of Philadelphia County's population settled into the City.

[12] Sometimes called Rhode Island Yearly Meeting, and sometimes Newport YM.

*spirit and power of God, that your own vines and lilies be not hurt.*[13] It might have been better had Fox not dressed his message up in metaphor, and had instead addressed them plainly; his inward "vines and lilies" probably flew right over their heads, and his fears became realized.

**Provincial Government**

Penn's governmental frame consisted of three parts: (1) the proprietary executive: himself and his staff, including Lloyd; and a legislature consisting of two bodies, (2) a Provincial Council appointed annually by the executive, that is, by Penn himself, or his agents; and (3) a Provincial Assembly elected annually by the citizens of the three counties. The Councilmen tended to be mostly appointed from the City[14] Friends, giving the City undue legislative power until 1701, when Penn, under pressure from the Assembly, reformulated the framework. Henceforth, the legislative branch would consist solely of the elected Assembly; the Council would become an advisory branch of the executive.

Penn's "holy experiment" was putting Friends in charge: they had to make the laws, treat with the indigenous peoples, run the place, and make it work. And astonishingly, they did. All these poor Friends, who had no experience at all in running things, no experience in politics, did make it work--more or less (it surely wasn't ideal government). Quakers would remain in command of the legislature for 75 years and would be the greatest part of the Pennsylvania Judiciary through the same period. The connection between the Pennsylvania legislature and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting would be an intimate one; the Speaker of the legislative Assembly and the Clerk of PYM would be one and the same individual for many if not most of those years.

**Rural Farmers, City Artisans**

In the country and especially in the city, they had brought with them a very wide variety of skills, many of them artisans of one sort or another. In England and Europe, artisans formed hierarchies called "guilds," at the top of which could be found the masters. Those who found their ways to Pennsylvania were at the bottom rungs. Many had to make the trip as indentured servants, the only way they could afford the expense of the journey. Once there, however, they found their skills much in demand, and the complete absence of guilds in the New World made their market an open and free one, with no limit to how much they could make.[15]

There was one very important difference, though: farmers throughout the province thrived well enough. The land, having been pretty well untouched before them, proved rich and fecund. But, like farmers everywhere, while Quaker farmers did pretty well, they mostly did not get rich at it.

It was very different among City Friends. There, their artisanal skills brought in income the like of which they had never seen before, and many did extremely well. Indeed, within just twenty years many of these impoverished and oppressed Quakers had become quite well-to-do—and even more important, quite looked-up-to. They adapted to this unexpected and novel—but certainly very welcome—circumstance in ways that would indelibly stamp Philadelphia Quakers as unique. They did not all do so to the same extent, of course, but in a graded manner. The most

[13] Quoted in Tolles, *Ibid.* Page 3.
[14] If you wonder at the capital C on "City" here, understand that this signifies the one City of Philadelphia.
[15] Eventually, artisanal guilds formed here also, but much too late to impede Philadelphia's upward mobility.

successful artisans widened their scope and became merchants. The most successful of these bought ships, and became suppliers to the merchants.

**Quaker advantage**

While the first influx of immigrants were almost all Quakers, the new city of Philadelphia rapidly began to attract immigrants of all sorts, largely because its Quaker operators were seen as offering real opportunities to make a decent life. Within twenty years, by 1702, Philadelphia's population was already only half-Quaker, half other, in great variety. Mostly everyone did well; times were good, and Philadelphia was growing briskly. Nevertheless, Friends had an advantage in business, since they were known for several things: honesty, frugality, and diligence. Quaker businessmen did not "bargain", they set firm prices--because to set a price you did not intend to keep was dishonest. To sell something of lower quality at an inflated price was dishonest. Of course, you had to make a profit, but Quaker frugality kept that profit in reason. Quakers were known not to be risk-takers, so it was safe dealing with them. Furthermore, they had a reputation for working hard at whatever they did, so you could trust them to do what they said they would. Finally, all Philadelphia businessmen knew that Quaker merchants were required by their meetings to pay their debts--or be disowned (thrown out of meeting), which greatly facilitated mercantile credit to Friendly establishments. So buyers of every type preferred to buy from Friends. As the city grew, so grew the number of buyers and their money. In a city where all were doing well, Quakers did better—some a great deal better. [16]

The reputation for honesty and diligence applied to more than business, too. Elections to the Assembly were held annually, and there was—believe it or not—a Quaker Party, which duly dominated each election for decades even after Friends lost their majority in the streets of the city. In fact, by 1702 there were two branches of the Quaker Party, and here we see one of the threads of future separation strengthening. One branch —the City party— favored the Proprietor's interests, and those of landowners. The other, mostly rural, tended to be somewhat at odds with the Proprietor's wishes, chafing at Penn's restrictions. Tolles says, "[The] *two Quaker parties arose in Pennsylvania, drawing their strength respectively from the country and the city … the one cherishing liberty above all things and the other, property."*[17]

As time moved forward into the eighteenth century, the upward mobility of those rapidly earning City artisans became manifest: an elevated merchant class was emerging of increasingly wealthy Quakers, who were building mansions for themselves, and vesting themselves with expensive clothes and fancy carriages. Some of those estates were now vast in acreage, as land was still relatively inexpensive, and purchasing land was a preferred way that the new money being earned might be invested. The process was slow, but unmistakable. A clear class-structured society was emerging, with shippers at the top, merchants next, then builders and artisans. These socially high-ranked individuals were also in Government, regularly being appointed or elected. They also went to meeting every first-day (and more)[18] and most were "weighty" members of their meetings.

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[16] A good number of non-Friends who came to Philadelphia became Quakers, a pattern that continued well into the eighteenth century (a good example is Caspar Wistar, a German who arrived nearly penniless in 1717 and, already wealthy, joined Philadelphia Monthly Meeting in 1726).

[17] Tolles, *Meeting House*, Page 16.

[18] Many MMs in the colonial period had meetings for worship two or three times a week.

These were those whom Frederick Tolles dubbed "the Philadelphia Quaker aristocracy," who manifested their station with mansions and quite often two of them, the second a summer home out of the city, such as in Germantown. The few very richest merchants (often the ship-owners) Tolles called "Quaker Grandees," many of whose country estates remain today as tourist destinations. Stenton (see Figure 1), built by James Logan by 1730, is a fine example. Logan, a late-comer who arrived in 1701 as Penn's designated agent, himself became head of the Quaker Party that favored the interests of the provincial proprietors, and was unquestionably one of Tolles' grandees. Once Penn left for good in 1701, the 27-year-old Logan, who arrived that same year, remained the best-educated gentleman in the City, and politically one of the most powerful. He selected for himself the position of proprietary Indian agent, from which he revived a dormant trade in skins and furs. The British upper-class's enduring love for beaver hats was the principal underpinning of his enormous fortune.

Figure 1. Stenton, no date referenced

Stenton, a red-brick Georgian structure, sited on 511 acres in the Logan section of Philadelphia, was typical of grandee mansions in that it was, for all its stature, relatively plain of adornment, especially around the doors and windows. No pillars for Quakers. "*Logan himself represented the secularization that followed increasing material wealth. Where the world made demands incompatible with faith, Logan, unlike some of the more straight-backed Friends, was willing to bend."*[19] And as he did so, Logan spoke with the authority of Penn.

One can get no finer exemplar of the self-engrandizing Quaker than Isaac Norris. His father Thomas Norris was a poor Quaker carpenter who emigrated from London with his family to Port Royal, Jamaica in 1678, when Isaac was seven years old. At the age of 20, in 1692, Isaac traveled to Philadelphia as a precursor to the family's planned move there, but on return to Port Royal he discovered that the whole family had died in a catastrophic earthquake.[20] After settling his father's estate, Isaac came back to Philadelphia in 1693 with enough of a nest-egg to jump-

[19] Bronner, Edwin,. "Village into Town, 1701-1746", *Philadelphia, A 300 Year History,*Edited by Russell Weigley, W.W. Norton & Co, New York, 1982. Page 43.

[20] The Port Royal earthquake of 1692 caused both a substantial subsidence of land into the sea and a resulting tsunami; the combination killed some 5000 people, about three-fourths of Jamaica's population.

start himself in business as a merchant, at which he was phenomenally successful. In 1694, he married Thomas Lloyd's daughter Mary, which no doubt helped to drive up his social status. When William Penn returned to Philadelphia for the last time in 1699-1701, while he was in residence in the city it was at Isaac and Mary Norris' home.

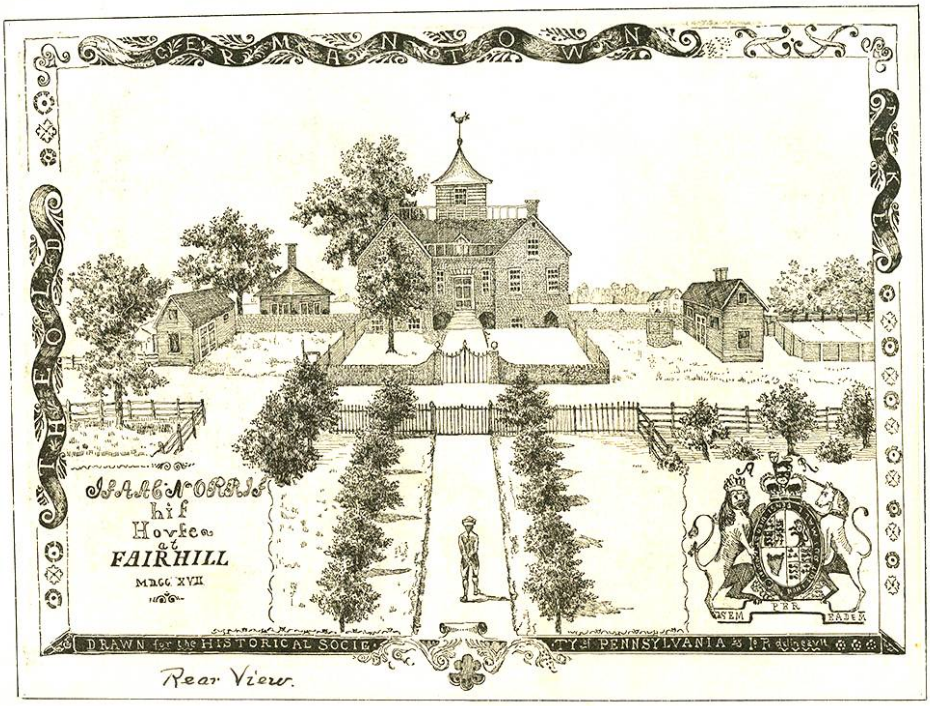


Figure 2. Isaac Norris' Fairhill mansion, dated 1717. Note coat-of-arms

Tolles writes, "*Like the ownership of a yacht or a private airplane today, possession of an elaborate equipage was a sign of having 'arrived' in colonial society. … Isaac Norris in 1713 ordered a coach … emblazoned with his coat of arms.*" His carpenter father had no coat-of-arms; it became fashionable in the Quaker aristocracy to create your own; I think it is probable that Isaac Norris started the trend. His coat-of-arms is on the picture of their country mansion Fairhill (see Figure 2).[21] "*A few weeks later, however, he reconsidered this latter bit of ostentation, saying that on second thought he 'would have only I N in Cypher, the rest all plaine.' Before long we find Norris writing again to England: 'I am not for a Livery, but my wife has a mind that the Servants who drive and go with the Coach Should be distinguished from the Others.' He therefore ordered liveries 'Strong and Cheap, Either of a Dark Gray or Sad coullour…or any Grave Coullour thou likes.'*" [22] His wife Mary Lloyd, of course, would have been raised to be conscious of her social standing, even though Quaker. There is a good chance, I think, that she would have set the standard for wives of the Quaker aristocracy. Between them, Logan and Norris would set a strong standard for open spending of wealth. Among other things, they demonstrated "plain" ostentation.

[21] Fairhill, on the road to Germantown, is not now available for public viewing, having been burned down by the British in 1777 on their way to Germantown and its Battle

[22] Quoted in Tolles, Ibid. Page 131. Those liveried coachmen almost certainly included some of Norris's slaves.

Perhaps the single most important aspect of these social developments in Philadelphia is understanding that the social consequences and the religious consequences were the same. That is, the Friends who became the socially most elite—Tolles' 'grandees'—became at the same time the weightiest members of their meetings, those most looked to when making decisions in the Society of Friends. One should never think that in meetings where business was discussed that every voice was valued equally. Every voice might be heard, certainly, and with respect, but the 'sense of the meeting' included measurement of the weight of each voice spoken. This was also true of rural meetings; the difference there was that rural 'weight' was not attributed to cash value.

I don't want to leave the impression that the City top layer belonged exclusively to Friends. Philadelphia was very good to many others as well. A good example is the Presbyterian Scot John Macpherson, whose shipping and privateering wealth allowed him to build his mansion in 1761; Mount Pleasant on 160 acres, is still visitable in Fairmount Park.

**Quaker caste**

The emergence of a wealth-based caste system in Philadelphia's Society of Friends is sufficiently bizarre as to require some discussion.

First let me observe that almost all Penn's citizens came from England, and were accustomed to a caste-based social structure, with an aristocratic top layer. This would feel "natural" to them.

Jack Marietta writes, "*Nothing the founders* [of Quakerism] *said prohibited Friends from having wealth, having it in decidedly unequal amounts and spending it according to the size of their estates and their social rank*."[23] The two major theologians of the new religion were Robert Barclay and William Penn, both very wealthy men from landed families, who in no way felt that poverty was an essential ingredient to Godliness. It is likely that Fox and Barclay never imagined a wealthy Friends society growing out of an impoverished population. And in such a short time! Therefore, there was no counter-current in Quaker testimony or history. About the only testimony that applied was that of Plainness of dress and living. Strictures on dress were initiated by George Fox in reaction to the stylistic extravagances of the Royal Court in the period following the restoration of the Crown in 1670, and filtering out into public life therefrom. These are reflected in Barclay's last Proposition XV, "Vain and Empty Customs", in his almost poetic Summary:

*"MODEST APPAREL*
*If to be vain and gaudy in clothing---*
*If to paint the face and braid the hair---*
*If to be clothed with gold, silver, and precious stones---*
*If to be covered with ribbons and lace*
*Constitutes being clothed in modest apparel---*
*If these are the ornaments of Christians---*

[23] Marietta, Jack D, *The Reformation of American Quakerism 1748 – 1783,* University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. Page 98.

*If these can be considered humble, meek and mortified*
*Then our opponents are good Christians indeed, and we are proud, peculiar, and conceited because we are content to have what we need or what is suitable, and because we condemn anything more as being superfluous—but not otherwise!"*[24]

This is where Friends stood on arrival in 1682. About a decade later, the yearly meeting appears to have become exercised about clothing, as it began to publish warnings against extravagant dress, such as (in 1695) "*…that none wear long lapp'd sleeves or Coates gathered at the sides or superfluous buttons or broad ribbons about their hats…*" [25] In 1711, strictures in plainness are broadened from clothing to include household furnishings. By this time, the wealthier merchants were beginning to build their more sumptuous homes. But then expression of concern stopped. Caton notes, "*Friends rarely mentioned material goods in meeting or disciplinary records. This lack …suggests that Friends who transgressed … were dealt with informally, outside meeting, and that plainness … was open to individual interpretation."*[26] Caton's conclusion is more than supported by the fact that no one in the history of PYM was disowned for cause of lack of plainness, and this for the best of reasons. As will be discussed later, the rules that governed Quaker life advised, but did not require plainness.

**Penn's paradigm**

The proprietor, William Penn, here plays a pivotal role. Penn was by anyone's estimation a very weighty player in the Quaker hierarchy, at the level of George Fox and Robert Barclay. Penn had a positive belief in God's material benevolence to those who work hard, writing: "*Our* [Quaker] *principle leaves every man to enjoy that peaceably, which either his own industry or his parents, have purchased to him…for we know, that as it hath pleased God to dispense it diversely., giving to some more, and to some less, so they may use it accordingly*." [27] This dubious Quaker precept, then, was Penn's gift to his settlers (especially those in the City), guiding them to accept their wealth as their just reward for their hard work, and to spend it as they wished. I will call this "Penn's paradigm" for lack of a better term. Tolles spells out the resulting Philadelphian Quaker ethic: "*If one kept one's inner eye single to the Lord and labored diligently in one's calling, one could expect that God would show His favor by adding His blessing in the form of material prosperity. And conversely business success could be regarded as a visible sign that one was indeed living 'in the Light.'"*[28] That City Friends would become unbelievably successful at attracting wealth over the next decades could only confirm them in their belief that this was proof of God's love, and His intention that they should continue in the same way.

Penn's paradigm is, truly, rather different from the Quakerism envisaged by Fox, who was himself always poor and whose audience was the English poor. Its adoption and adaptation by City Friends did much to make them very different from rural Friends, who stuck with the original model Fox had given them. Rural Friends had no difficulty with dressing plainly; they

[24] Barclay, *Apology.* Page 436. I can't help but be struck by the resemblance to Kipling's famous poem "*If."*
[25] Quoted in Caton, Mary Anne, "Quaker Women's Plain Dress in the Delaware Valley", *Quaker Esthetics,* Eds. Emma J Lapsansky and Anne A. Verplanck, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2003. Pg 248.
[26] Caton, *Ibid* Page 249.
[27] Marietta, Ibid. Page 98. Note especially that Penn included the right to inherit wealth as a Quaker principle.
[28] Tolles, Ibid. Page 56.

dressed as they needed, and could not afford better. Ostentation comes with extra income, and becomes a problem with wealth.

It is not the case that wealthy Friends did not recognize some part of their dilemma, at least toward the beginning. In 1708, as the Philadelphia wealthy were firming into the aristocracy, Isaac Norris wrote a somewhat defensive letter to Joseph Pike, an Irish Friend, also wealthy, who had apparently reprimanded him for living too high: *"It is not improbable, but upon this occasion of furnishing ourselves…something of what thou fears may have happened, but if it be, it will wear off, and yet I hope it is so little as hardly to be noticed*." In this hope, Norris was indeed being disingenuous. He continued, *"…yet I cannot see it reasonable that Joseph Pike and Samuel Combe* [a poor former member of Pike's Cork Monthly Meeting] *should wear the same and live at the same rate within doors. Thus every man ought soberly and discreetly to set bounds to himself…still bearing due regard to the society he is of."*[29] Norris took his argument one step further: *"If we will be instrumental to the more general spreading of our noble principles, the light and manifestation of our blessed Lord…we must not appear too narrow in other things…*" Norris acknowledged that *"although in conversation* [this word often means 'association'] *among Friends it may be very well to be particular in such thoughts, yet for standing and public orders…and meetings, there should be a great care and an eye always to the universal good."*[30] Norris would remain at the center of the Philadelphia aristocracy, one of its grandees, as would his children and grandchildren. And it may even be that Norris was correct in arguing that by shedding their image as a peculiar and plain people, it gave greater positive weight to their message to the burgeoning masses of non-Quakers in Philadelphia that Friends had much to offer. This idea, however, would have little currency outside of Philadelphia.

**Rules and enforcement**

Quaker life was governed by rules spelled out in a text called *Rules of Discipline.*[31] These rules owed their origin to the oppressions mounted by a suspicious English government, anxious to prevent any sort of religiously-inspired rebellion. Friends were a new religion coming into being at a time of extraordinary strife: the English Civil War, which ended in 1649 with the toppling and beheading of the monarch Charles I, succeeded by Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate, which filled the intervening time to 1660 and the Restoration of Charles II. Both Cromwell's ascendant Puritans and the monarchy's Anglicans held Friends in great suspicion. Furthermore, George Fox's efforts had been widely successful; Friends were a popular option, which only made the crown more nervous. Quakers defended themselves from oppression by making clear that they had specific and pacific intentions that had nothing to do with government and rule, and that all Friends were required to observe these proscriptions, so that governments need not have any fear of them. To make this proposition credible, Fox established the earliest rules in 1672, central to which was essential honesty, and required absolute obedience. "*The first book used as a discipline in the colonies was a collection of epistles and sermons that George Fox delivered in 1672 in Newport* [Rhode Island]. *Formal disciplines were drawn up by Philadelphia in 1704 …*

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[29] This is very close to Barclay's formulation: *If a man dresses quietly and without unnecessary trimmings, we will not criticize him if he dresses better than his servants.* I suspect that Norris was not so familiar with Barclay's *Apology* for surely he would have cited Barclay's support of his dress.

[30] Tolles, Ibid. Page 124. The notion, however, of a double-standard of behavior (acting one way with Friends, another way with others) would eventually--a century later—be condemned in the *Rules of Discipline*.

[31] *Rules of Discipline* has morphed over time into today's *Faith and Practice.*

*and London in 1738.*"[32] In this way started the *Rules*, guiding all Friends. The Introduction of the *Rules of Discipline* (*ROD*) says: *"For this important end, and as an exterior hedge of preservation to us, against the many temptations and dangers, to which our situation in this world exposes us, the following rules have been occasionally adopted by the society, and now form our code of discipline. In the exercise whereof it is to be observed that, if any member be found in a conduct subversive of its order, or repugnant to the testimonies which we believe we are intrusted with for the promotion of truth in the earth, it becomes our indispensable duty to treat with such, in meekness and brotherly compassion, without unnecessary delay or improper exposure … This is the extent of the society's censure against irreclaimable offenders, they are disowned as members of our religious community; which is recommended to be done in such a disposition of mind, as may convince them, that we sincerely desire their recovery and restoration…"*[33]

Credibility also required transparency; the Crown and everyone else had to *see* that these rules must be obeyed. Enforcement was followed up with publication of a disownment together with explanation of the reason for it. Often this amounted only to a notice placed on the door of the meeting house, or posted in the market place. In some cases, however, publication was wider; in one case, it included notification to newspapers in the rest of the American colonies as well as London.[34] That Friends had to follow their rules or be thrown out was a fact well established and known to any who lived near them or worked with them.

These rules were compiled in hand-written manuscripts, usually in the form of yearly meeting minutes, and successive yearly meetings would amend them, tweak them, adding new ones as needed, so that in time they became an amalgam of manuscript fragments. Such a set of London Yearly Meeting's latest *Rules* came to Philadelphia with William Penn in 1682. In its turn, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, instituted in 1684, began its own revisions. They had, as well, for reference, the latest set in manuscript of New England Yearly Meeting's *Rules*. The first whole *Rules of Discipline* was published in manuscript form in 1704 by PYM. When a revision was made, it was inserted as a manuscript into the book, identified by date. From time to time, PYM would ask someone to go through and rewrite the whole with the additions inserted and dated. A few whole copies could be made, for distribution.

The first printed *ROD* (for PYM, at any rate) was published in 1797. For reasons known only to PYM, they wanted it printed "old style" with the "medial s" or 'ſ,' for instance. Printers' convention allowed substitution of small 'f', giving a text full of spellings like 'fuccefs' (for 'success')[35]. Those responsible for the *ROD*, the Meeting for Sufferings (see later), may have been inundated by complaints; and if they realized that the *ROD* was hard to read, they probably also recognized that even without the typography the *Rules* were sufficiently archaic in phrasing as to be damned hard to understand as written. A revision was authorized, but it wasn't complete until 1806, when a modern version, very much abridged and clarified as to intent, appeared. The 1806 edition, then, is treated as the source edition for all subsequent *RODs* (see Figure 3). This,

[32] Frost, J. William, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1973. Page 222.
[33] *Rules for Discipline of the Yearly Meeting held in Philadelphia*, Kimber, Conrad and Co, Philadelphia, 1806.. Page 1.
[34] Marietta, Jack D, *Ecclesiastical Discipline in the Society of Friends, 1682-1776*, PhD Dissertation in History, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA, 1968. Available through University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI. Pages 9-10.
[35] This is a convention already in use for several centuries, as I've seen the 'f' for " ſ," in 16th century renaissance documents also.

however, gets us well ahead of our story, and the 1806 *ROD* will play a role in it when we get there.

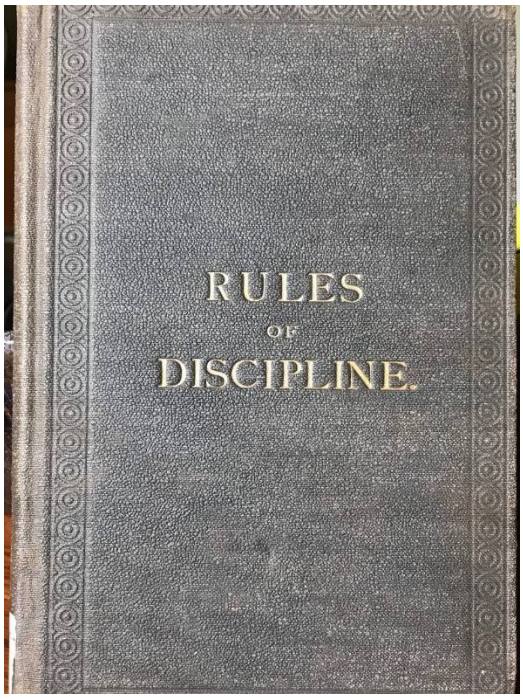

Figure 3. Rules of Discipline of PYM, 1889

These rules could and did lead to disownment, today often referred to as 'being read out of meeting.' In general, early meetings were small enough for problems to be apparent, and when such a problem was perceived a couple of weighty Friends were appointed to look into it, and report back to meeting for discipline (very much later called meeting for business) in a timely fashion. After a while, however, treating enforcement in this *ad hoc* way proved insufficient. In 1719, enforcers were added to the *Rules*: "*It is recommended that in every monthly meeting a proper number of faithful and judicious men and women belonging to each of the particular or preparative meetings, be appointed to the station of overseers … whose duty it is to exercise a vigilant and tender care over their fellow members; that if anything repugnant to the discipline, harmony and good order of the Society appears … it may be timely attended to and not neglected*." Thus, overseers were appointed in each monthly meeting (MM) to be the principal first responders to perceived infractions, and the *Rules* spelled out in meticulous detail how enforcement should proceed. It is of special importance that Overseers, like Ministers and Elders, were not then committees of the meetings, but stations of the monthly meeting whose existence flowed from the Discipline.[36] It should be noted that this gave two areas of enforcement in the Society: Elders were responsible for matters of worship and ministry, while Overseers were responsible for the Rules of Discipline. Over the next century, the *Rules* were amended severally relating to the overlap of these jurisdictions.

[36] Thomas Ambler discusses this, in his interview with Leanna Whitman in 2013; see the collection of interviews held at the Friends Free Library. The interview can also be accessed through the meeting website.

Penn himself urged Friends not to be too intrusive into personal liberty, saying "*I do not mean… that we are to resign to the benefit of Society that which is private or personal … as about meat or drink, … clothes, houses, trades … so as there is no excess, for that is everywhere wrong*."[37] While, in general, Friends ignored Penn on this, and made many *Rules* that certainly infringed on personal liberty, in the beginning, the Society tended not to find fault so much, and early on there were very few disownments. Where fault was found, admonishment was usually sufficient. Disownments picked up slowly over the course of the eighteenth century, and accelerated after the French and Indian War.

Jack Marietta did his PhD dissertation at Stanford University on Quaker discipline in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, investigating every monthly meeting's minutes in the Colonial period relating to discipline. He cites 12,998 disownments in PYM over the colonial years, 1682-1776.[38] Marietta makes clear that disownments generally increased over the years, peaking in the last fifteen years of the colonial period.

**Plainness**

Given the attention and stress placed on Plainness and the obvious wide-spread (in the City, anyway) failure to observe it, one would expect it to be a common source of disownments. However, the *ROD* never actually forbade fancy dressing. The *Rules* demonstrated two levels of discipline: "advices" and disownable offenses. Plainness, no matter how distressingly it was flouted, never rose above the level of an "advice." You could not be disowned solely for disrespecting it, although it could certainly accompany and add to more damning disobedience, such as obstinate failure to attend meeting or defaulting on your creditors.

The problem was, of course, that plainness as a goal was impossible to define, and the usual recourse to 'moderation' was no better. Moderation was a moving target, and had infinite gradations. In any case, if you were poor, moderation was irrelevant; the issue arose with income, and became acute with wealth. Philadelphia Friends of the higher ranks became well-known for a particular mode of "plain" ostentation, summed up as "*of the finest sort, but plain*" (in the words of John Reynell, a Quaker merchant ordering to the peculiar needs of his wealthy Philadelphia customers). Friends could—and did—wear clothes made from the finest (and most expensive) materials, cut to the fashions of the day (although Friends tended to be a decade or so behind the "newest" Paris modes), all so long as obvious "superfluities" were removed: bangles, ribbons, ornaments, laces, and so on.

**Marriage to outsiders**

Friends were, at this same time, beginning to acknowledge an ominous—even alarming—trend that greatly overshadowed Plainness. As the number of non-Friends in their social milieu grew, so did the tendency of their youth to find mates outside the Society. The alarm developed because Quakers counted on their children to make the Society grow. Even at good times, there were relatively few people who became members through conviction. The average family then raised six or so living adults (out of about ten born), and not all of those married to procreate new Friends. When a young Friend "married out" it was the loss of these figurative six Quakers that PYM was counting. If the Society was not growing as it should, marrying out was seen as the leak in the dike that needed to be plugged. Even if the errant member was "pardoned" and

[37] Quoted in Frost, *Ibid.* Page 59.
[38] Marietta, *Reformation*. Pg. 6; and Marietta, *Ecclesiatical*, in whole.

allowed to re-enter the fold, the Society was sure the non-Friend parent would inevitably skew the beliefs of their children; they could not be counted on to become proper Quakers. For this reason, after 1712 children were considered "birthright" Friends only if both parents were members of the Society of Friends at the time of birth.[39]

In 1712 the *Rules of Discipline* advised against "*marrying a person not in unity with our society*," strengthening the advices in successive reprints until finally, in 1721, the *Rules* required disownment for anyone who did so. Concern for this was so high that enforcement was pursued with exceptional vigor, and disownment for "*marrying out of unity*" was by far the most common cause of disownment for the next century. Between 1722 and 1776 just under 6,000 men and women were so disowned, adding up to about half of the total disownments. The *Rules of Discipline* also required that, in case of a disownment for this reason, those disowned who sought reinstatement should have to persuade both their monthly meeting (MM) and their quarterly meeting (QM) of the genuineness of their penitence, since it was thought that the MMs were granting reinstatements much too easily.[40] These measures, however, as draconian as they were, were very disappointing, and did not slow the rate of exogamous marriages at all; indeed, just before the revolution more than half the marriages in PYM were of this nature. Reformers were well aware of this, and felt that it was a prime indicator of the fact that Quaker youth were not being raised properly in the tenets of the Society.

This, however, was not entirely fair. The *ROD* also contained rules, inherited—so to speak—from Catholicism, against incestuous marriages, in which marriage to a second cousin was frowned on (advised against) and to a first cousin was forbidden.[41] In colonial times, youth's main social group was family, and you might have ten or twenty first-cousins whom you went to meeting with, and you might not even know how many second-cousins you had. But they were all or mostly Quaker. It was not always so easy finding prospective mates in your social milieu who were not family.

**Ministers and Elders**

Also important to our story are the roles of the meeting members, which are few and simple. Well, maybe not all that simple. Friends are all equal, except that the *Rules* spelled out one kind of Friend that was special: **Ministers**. Friends today who attend unprogrammed meetings may be a little puzzled by a specially noted "minister," in so far as unprogrammed meetings are defined by not having pastors or ministers or whatever. These were unlovingly called in the *Rules* "hireling ministers," and attending preachings of such a person, or being married by one, was itself cause for disownment. The Quaker term "minister" is a very specialized one. All Friends were able—theoretically—to make contact with the Light Within, with the Truth that God speaks within us. When he or she did so, the vocal result was 'ministry," and those in attendance could hear it. Brinton explains, "*The theory of Quaker ministry is simple.*

[39]"Birthright" membership had been brought to Philadelphia in 1682 by Penn, and was the standard by which a very great majority of Quakers had achieved membership throughout the New World. It is interesting to know that Barclay, in his *Apology*, specifically deplores the idea of birthright membership, instead feeling that membership should only follow personal experience of the Light Within. Nonetheless, membership by birth persisted without serious questioning until deep into the twentieth century, well after the Society had broken apart and rehealed itself, and was discontinued by PYM in the 1970s.

[40] When Isaac Norris's granddaughter Mary Norris married John Dickinson in 1770, she immediately wrote a letter of apology to Philadelphia Monthly Meeting sufficient to persuade the meeting not to disown her to begin with.

[41] I go into this in more detail in *Golden Age of Germantown*, page 14.

*As the worshippers sit together in silence to wait upon the Lord, anyone among them may find arising in his consciousness a message which he feels is intended for more than himself alone. It is then his obligation to deliver that message and to cease speaking when he has delivered it. …If a thought comes to him with peculiar life and power, he may be justified in assuming that this is a sign from God to speak. He may sometimes be mistaken. There is no sure test of divine guidance in this or any other undertaking. If, however, through prayer and humble waiting he has become sensitive to the 'still small voice,' he will be increasingly enabled to recognize a call when it comes.*"[42] In other words, anyone might be a minister, but "real" ministry takes practice. Those who could do it regularly were prized, for many of their listeners could not apprehend that 'still, small voice' themselves, but they could hear it—and recognize it--when it was spoken aloud. Such ministers' names were sent forward to quarterly meeting where they were "recorded" as Ministers of the Society. Most of them traveled about, ministering (these were called "public Friends"), some to a great extent, even into other yearly meetings, and they were seen as an essential outreach to the Society, as well as an even more essential means of keeping the wide-spread Society as an integrated community.

The recorded ministers of a particular meeting would themselves meet regularly in what was called a 'Meeting of Ministers." Monthly, Quarterly and the Yearly Meetings also hosted their own meetings of ministers.

After the George Keith business in the 1690s, Friends in the Society leadership must have reflected in some consternation about what had happened. They had been greatly challenged, and largely helpless, and managed to fend off a real schism only by turning a blind eye to the rules (which forbade any public opposition to ministry, and bore no testimony against schismatic ministry). What, they wondered, could they do when a minister—especially one so powerful as Keith—went rogue? The *ROD* simply does not contemplate such a circumstance. The leadership realized that Ministers, once recorded, had no check at all; Meetings of Ministers were a law unto themselves. Elders, I believe, were invented as the cure.

**Elders**

Elders, I have always found, are a considerable enigma. What are they—and why? Elders were constituted in 1714, when the following paragraph appeared in the *Rules of Discipline:*

*"The* [yearly] *meeting agrees that each Monthly Meeting where meetings of ministers are or may be held, shall appoint two or three Friends to sit with the ministers in their meetings; taking Care that the Friends chosen be prudent, solid Friends."*

These Friends were quickly called 'Elders." Elders, then, became that check. What's more, it was preferred that it stay that way, that Elders remain entirely distinct from Ministers. If an Elder appeared to have a desire or a leaning to become a Minister, that Elder had to resign his or her eldership immediately; you could not be an Elder-Minister. The Meeting for Ministers was renamed: Meeting for Ministers and Elders.

The "powers" of an Elder are never very clearly spelled out, other than to giving encouragement and guidance to ministers. But there is one phrase in the *Rules* that is indicative of one special power, underlined (by me) at the end of the paragraph: "*As the occasion of our religious meetings is solemn, a care should ever be maintained to guard against anything that*

[42] Brinton, *Ibid.* Page 103.

*would tend to disorder or confusion therein. When any think they have aught against what is publicly delivered, they should speak to the party privately and orderly; and if any shall oppose a ministering Friend in his or her preaching or exhortation, or keep on the hat or show any remarkable dislike to such when engaged in prayer, let them be speedily admonished in such manner as may be requisite, unless the* [minister] *against whom the uneasiness is expressed has been disowned by a monthly meeting, or* <u>*his or her public appearances disapproved by the elders.*</u>*"*[43] Aha! Elders could "disapprove" of spoken ministry; no one else could. If Ministers had a special talent at hearing God's truth, Elders were credited with its opposite; they could identify false Truth.

One specific duty, which was never spelled out, and only alluded to in *Rules*, was that a Minister who was given a certificate to travel was expected to travel with one or more Elders, who would see to his or her needs and monitor the ministry. The term "eldering" is taken today to mean criticism, but in fact eldering often meant encouragement of young and budding Ministers, who needed guidance. Guidance was an Elder's job. While Ministers arose from all classes, Elders, especially in Philadelphia, tended to be appointed from the wealthiest (=weightiest) class.

Later, in 1753, Elders were expected "*to take the oversight of the meetings for worship held in Philadelphia during the time of the yearly meeting."* Subsequently, this responsibility was broadened to all meetings for worship, those cares now answered by meeting committees for worship and ministry.

Just as I want you to keep an eye on the mystical-evangelical dimension, keep another eye on the Elders. They will be equally important.

# Reform

Among the Friends who lived in PYM's rural regions, as they regarded the growing spectacle of Philadelphia's appalling Quaker aristocrats, a spirit of needed Reform arose in the 1730s and 1740s. The first reformer, and loose "leader" (although the movement did not have any real leader until later) was a Chester County Friend named John Churchman (1705-1775), who at a young age became *"concerned for 'the good order of the church'."* His meeting, Nottingham MM, noted his depth and sincerity in the matter, and made him a reluctant Elder at the age of 26, in 1731. "*The Friends who promoted him did not question his qualifications, but he did, and they had to overcome his diffidence. To their dismay, he shortly turned his scrupulosity upon them"*. When, at a meeting of the Chester Quarter Ministers and Elders, he upbraided them for hackneyed responses to Queries, they responded with courteous comments on his ministry. But he made it clear that he was not interested in their courteous praise, but wanted them to do better and act upon it. They did; Nottingham rescinded his eldership, making him a minister in 1733, and sent him out to tell the world. He was an indefatigable traveling minister, reputedly second only to John Woolman in the effectiveness of his preaching.

[43] *Rules of Discipline,* 1806, "Section on Ministers and Elders."

"*Wherever Churchman went, he redoubled—revived, in some cases—attention to discipline* [and] *right conduct…*"[44] both in American as well as British journeys (where he found Quakerism no less sliding into turpitude than he did in the colonies). A true conservative, he was not so concerned with "sin" as the moral laziness of slacking Friends, who drove him crazy.

Other reformers there were, some inspired by Churchman, others coming to it on their own. "*It is impossible to prove that all or even most ministers were enthusiastic about reform, but …almost every Friend on record as having been enthusiastic about reform were ministers.*"[45]

They were especially perturbed by their perception that the younger, succeeding generation were not the Quakers their parents had been, but all too happy to inherit the princeliness. Some of these succeeding sons had been sent back to England for a better education, and were classmates of the English upper class and aristocracy. A visiting English Friend (and reformer), Samuel Fothergill, summarized it: *Their fathers came into the country, and brought large tracts of land for a trifle; their sons found large estates come into their possession, and a profession of religion…which descended like a patrimony from their fathers, and cost as little. They settled in ease and affluence, and whilst they made the barren wilderness as a fruitful field, suffered the plantation of God to be as a field uncultivated and a desert. … A people who had thus beat their swords into ploughshares, with the bent of their spirits to this world, could not instruct their offspring in those statutes which they had themselves forgotten.*[46]

It is not easy to say exactly what the reformers sought at the start; but as a particular part of their desire for improved discipline and behavior, what they wanted was for City Friends to stop acting like fat-cat popinjays and start behaving like proper Quakers again; and even more, to lead their children away from ostentatious wealth back into propriety. Their ministry was often about Friends' testimonies that had been put aside or forgotten.

**Slavery**

Unquestionably, abolition eventually became an important part of the reform message. While Friends today take pride in the fact that Quakers founded and led the American abolition movement, they have been slow to acknowledge that, in the beginning, Friends were a significant part of the problem. In short, from the moment they set foot in the New World, Quakers owned slaves, took an active role in the slave trade, and in a few cases owned and operated the ships that transported slaves from Africa. They did this throughout the colonies, from New England to the Carolinas, very actively in all of the yearly meetings without exception.[47] They did so without apparent second thoughts, regarding slavery as an absolute economic necessity. Opening colonies in virgin lands involved a huge amount of manual work, and there just weren't enough hands. Indentured servants were a partial and inadequate source of labor, and the supply fluctuated awkwardly. Slaves, on the other hand, were always available. When George Fox toured the colonies in the 1670s, he noted the wide presence of slaves and recommended that Friends should make efforts to improve the quality of their existence and in

[44] Marietta, *Reformation*, page 32.
[45] Marietta, *Ibid.* Page 38.
[46] Quoted in Marietta, *Reformation*. Pg 40.
[47] Drake, Thomas, *Quakers and Slavery in America*, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1950. Drake was for some years the curator of the Quaker collection at Haverford College. This work is perhaps the best documented of multiple works on the subject.

particular introduce them to Christianity so as better to save their souls. But at no time did he suggest that slavery as an institution was wrong. In the 1806 edition of the *Rules of Discipline*, the word "equality" does not occur; Friends were still distant from this testimony. Barclay didn't mention slavery at all in his *Apology*.

Before the reform movement started, antislavery ministry was uncommon, and only heard in the rural quarters. The Germantown anti-slavery proclamation of 1688 is discussed in *The Settlement of Germantown.* When it was presented to PYM in the 1688 yearly meeting, it apparently had little or no impact at all. A few years later, when George Keith was mounting a schismatic attack on Quakers' views of Christ, his message included a strong antislavery component. PYM refused to let him preach, labeling him "schismatic" and "heretic."

A Friend named Robert Pyle of Concord Meeting (in what is now Delaware County) tried to persuade slave-owners to set a limit on how long a slave might be in servitude, but the Pennsylvania Assembly's response in 1700 was to write legislation affirming life-long servitude for slaves. The Assembly turned around a decade later and tried to abolish slavery in Pennsylvania, but the English Crown stepped in and squashed the effort as antithetical to British trade. Chester quarterly meeting, had more of an effect in 1715 and 1716, when it persisted in bringing to PYM insistent condemnation of slavery. The yearly meeting clerk, Isaac Norris, a considerable slave-holder himself, had little difficulty in deflecting it, given the large number of slave-holders—mostly powerful and weighty Friends—in the Philadelphia meetings. Norris managed it in classic political style. On the one hand, he added palliative advice to the *Rules of Discipline* against the slave trade (that slave-holders might be admonished by their meetings), but made sure that language was included that clearly indicated that no one should be disowned for it. Then, on the other hand, he branded antislavery ministry as a schismatic testimony, contrary to Friends' discipline, based on the fact that George Keith, the notorious schismatic and heretic of the 1690s, had advocated antislavery. With this, ministers who continued antislavery ministry could be accused to their meetings of participating in schismatic behavior. Several ministers, including William Southeby and John Farmer, were thereby disowned or censured. These actions succeeded in damping down antislavery ministerial ardor for several decades, although they didn't slow down Benjamin Lay, whose bizarre and antic ministry in the 1730s proved so annoying and disrupting that PYM hired gatekeepers whose special mission was to keep Lay out of meetings. Lay was also disowned by his monthly meeting, although this, too, didn't slow him down.

**Government service**

Reformers also added withdrawal from government to their listed purposes and their messages, although this was challenging to prosecute when Friends were so successful at it. All of these involved Quaker testimonies that they felt were being ignored and forgotten by City Friends. While their aims may have modified and altered with time, one thing remained the same: *there's something seriously wrong with those City Friends.*

## Reformers gain Elder allies

The reform movement consisted mostly of traveling ministers, and not very many of them, from the outer counties crossing into the city, as if it were a foreign land, and where, for the most part, they were viewed as peculiar and strange, and their message strongly resented. So far so good.

Now we begin a fascinating period where the energy of the reforming ministers, mostly rural and concerned to bring about renewed 'discipline and right conduct' in PYM, is transferred to the Philadelphia City elders, determined to harness discipline so as to preserve the Society. The change will be complete by the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783, by which time the elders will be in control of events.

The first step in this awkward dance sequence occurred in the late 1740s when the reform movement acquired a titular leader: Israel Pemberton, Jr. It is more likely that Israel appointed himself into that position, taking title as a matter of course and his elevated station. He was the oldest son of Israel Pemberton senior, a grandee who had the largest estate in the province. His three sons, Israel Jr, James and John, were therefore completely unexpected partisans of the reform camp, all three elders of the Philadelphia MM (as was their father), and all three otherwise typical members of the Philadelphia Quaker aristocracy. I think it is unlikely that John Churchman would have regarded him as an appropriate person to lead the reform movement, but Churchman was away in England at the time (being very disheartened by backsliding English Friends).

In April 1750 Israel Pemberton Jr, was appointed Assistant Clerk of the yearly meeting. His appointment as AC, however, does not mean he was seen as the next clerk—this was not a training position, as it is (sometimes) today. The assistant clerkship was, rather, a way of recognizing the reform movement, and acknowledging, at least to a small degree, its legitimacy. The fact that Pemberton and his brothers were all exceptionally weighty members of PMM certainly helped. It is unfortunate that Israel Jr was a pugnacious individual, and had few skills at mediation or persuasion. He drew complaint, for instance, from Hannah Logan, daughter-in-law of James Logan, who grumped that reformers were "*so hot in their own Zeal in carrying on the Reformation that they are in Danger of Judging all who don't think as they do"*, notably Israel Pemberton, "*who gives Friends daily uneasiness by his froward Conduct*."[48] No doubt, a substantial part of her irritation was that the Pembertons were of the aristocracy, and Elders of the meeting, and thereby traitors of her caste.

## Bolt out of the Blue

What happened next is something that no one in their right mind could have predicted, with the direct consequence of precipitating Israel Pemberton Jr. into the clerkship of PYM.

In May 1750, John Kinsey, Clerk of PYM for the last dozen years or so, very suddenly died of an apoplectic fit— a stroke—while he was arguing a case before the New Jersey Supreme Court. Kinsey had been in every way a grandee of the Society, accumulating an immense amount of property. He owned, for instance, very nearly the entire frontage along Philadelphia's main drag High Street (later Market Street) between 5th and 6th Streets. He had been in the Assembly for 19 years, its speaker for the last eleven, while also serving as Chief

[48] "Froward" is not a misprint, as my spell-check insisted; it means "difficult, contrary" when used about people.

Justice of the Supreme Court. He was in exactly the same mold as a previous Clerk, Isaac Norris, who had died of an apoplectic fit experienced in Germantown Meeting in 1735.[49] Kinsey's loss was deemed enormous by the Society. Then his executors, led by Israel Pemberton Jr (one of the instances of extraordinary Providence), found that "*Kinsey, as one of the trustees of the General Loan Office* [of the yearly meeting], *had used his authority to misappropriate £3,000 or more for his own use … The sum amounted to fifteen times his salary as the Chief Justice of Pennsylvania.*[50] It was a total and unbelievable shock, and Pemberton immediately took steps to prevent knowledge of this failure from leaking out, understanding that the defalcation of the Society's most exalted and respected leader could spell the end of Quaker respect in both the city and the region. On Kinsey's death, Pemberton had immediately become acting-clerk of the yearly meeting, a position that greatly helped him in his intention to cover everything up until he could repay the debt and fix the books. He had to let some others into the secret, but none objected to his plan, and it was not until 1951 that a historian named Edwin Bronner discovered and published it.[51] Kinsey, it turned out, was land rich but cash poor. Pemberton feared that selling off much property might excite too much attention and speculation, so he and a few others (almost certainly including his brothers) paid off the missing amount out of their own funds, then hoped for the best. Amazingly, their cover-up stood (for two centuries!).

What Kinsey's death did immediately was to alter the City Friends' opinion of Israel Pemberton Jr.. Seen now as a hero for saving PYM's bacon, even if by only the few in the know, Pemberton was easily confirmed as clerk of the yearly meeting at its next gathering the following April 1751. It appears, too, at this point, that the Elders of PYM found Pemberton someone they could work with.

**Reform apotheosis**

The very vagueness and uncertainty of Elders' duties could only lead Elders to work out their duties for themselves. Brinton writes, "*It was inevitable that in the Society of Friends … the priestly type of mind should appear … The elders assumed some of the priestly functions … During the eighteenth century the influence of the elders gradually increased. … The elders became guardians of tradition and like all persons of priestly inclination were more interested in the conservation of old truth than in the discovery of new.*"[52]

It is not at all clear to me to what extent the Elders themselves had been directly influenced by the conservatism of the reformers' efforts to turn the clock back. The Elders had, by this time, become the guardians of the Society and were greatly troubled by the Society's apparent failure to grow in strength and numbers, despite rigorous prosecution of discipline.

Thus, the Elders of the yearly meeting's Meeting of Ministers and Elders may have found the new clerk's reforming commitment to the old testimonies rather a breath of fresh air, not

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[49] See *The Germanification of Germantown.*

[50] Toogood, Anna Coxe, *Historic Resource Study, Independence Mall, The 18th Century Development, Block One*. Independence National Historical Park, 2001. See http://www.npshistory.com/publications/inde/hrs-mall-block-one.pdf.

[51] Bronner, Edwin, *The Disgrace of John Kinsey, Quaker Politician,* The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, Vol 75, #4, 1951. Pp 400-416.

[52] Brinton, Ibid. Page 117-18.

breathed, so to speak, for several generations. Between the reformers, the Elders and the new Clerk, then, the reform movement had its apotheosis in the early 1750s.

The Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders in 1755 responded positively that "*Friends must endeavor to have their minds 'sufficiently disentangled from the surfeiting Cares of this Life, and redeemed from the Love of the World, that no Earthly Possessions nor Enjoyments may bias our Judgments or turn us from that…entire Trust in God…'*" Even Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, which the reformers surely thought the center of iniquity when it came to offenses of Worldly behavior, came close to acknowledging the problem. In responding to the PYM Query *Are Friends careful to bring up those under their direction, in Plainness of Speech and Apparel…* in January 1756, wrote and forwarded to PYM, "*It is too obvious to be unobserved by those who are honestly concerned…that there's a great declension in many professing among us from the primitive Simplicity of our Forefathers…*"[53] However, it is unlikely that reformers would take much satisfaction from the insertion of the word "primitive" before Simplicity, suggesting that Simplicity was historical, quaint and outmoded.

**Discipline explodes**

The most important step was direct attention to discipline. As Israel Pemberton felt his way into the new leadership role, the leaders of the reform movement collected themselves together. "*At the yearly meeting in September 1755, a committee of fourteen Friends, including Fothergill, Churchman, and John Woolman drafted a new discipline. Suffixed to it was an admonition for 'elders, overseers and all others active in the discipline to be zealously concerned for the Cause of Truth, and honestly to labor to repair the breaches too obvious in many places…that the primitive beauty and Purity of the Church may be restored'.*"[54] This last phrase perfectly sums up what the reformers had been working toward.

Elders and overseers responded to the clarion call, and while there were some (possibly quite a few) complaints about the new stringencies suddenly being imposed, the rate of prosecutions of disciplinary infractions suddenly jumped. They had been slowly increasing for two decades, but in the next ten years, 1755-1765, every category of infraction showed a dramatic leap in every meeting for which Marietta could extract disownment figures.[55]

Disownments: Philadelphia Monthly Meeting 1760: 2250 members

| | 1735 | 1745 | 1755 | 1765 | 1775 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 65 | 140 | 255 | 160 | |
| Marriage | 40 | 90 | 135 | 100 | |

Disownments: Abington Quarterly Meeting[56] 1760: 1063 members

| | 1735 | 1745 | 1755 | 1765 | 1775 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 37 | 60 | 138 | 108 | |
| Marriage | 15 | 40 | 66 | 42 | |

[53] All quotes are seen in Tolles, *Ibid*. Page 236..
[54] Marietta, *Ecclesiastical.* Page 147.
[55] The numbers cited below come from Marietta, *Ecclesiastic*, Appendices, Pages 173-4, 197-200.
[56] I chose to bring forward Abington Quarter figures because AQM included Germantown PM, and because all other groupings except PMM were much smaller in size, thus reducing confidence in their meaning.

But what a cost! The 'purity of the church' called for the dismissal of about 12% of the adult membership throughout the yearly meeting in that decade (1755-65) alone!

However, if the real advent of reform wasn't already challenging enough for City Friends, the outside world had another shock to spring on them.

# Falling off the cliff

### Indian War and the End of the Holy Experiment

1756 was, for City Quakers, a really bad year. Although they were now only about one-fifth of the population of Philadelphia, the Quaker Party was still winning elections to the Assembly where they yet maintained a majority, albeit not so dominantly as they used to. Among the non-Quaker voters who regularly voted for them were the increasingly numerous German immigrants who flooded into Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century (see *The Germanification of Germantown*). Indeed, by mid-century there were many more Germans than Quakers. Their support was aided inestimably by negotiations between the Quaker Party and German spokesmen in the 1740s in which Friends offered, among other things, easier naturalization without oaths of loyalty and positions in local government which they could hold without having to speak English.[57]

The British and French were, as usual, at war, but they were more recently allowing their war to leak over into the American colonies, where they were uncomfortably placed cheek-to-cheek, the British along the coast and the French inland up the Mississippi River and out the St. Lawrence River. They came increasingly into contact along the Ohio River valley, which involved confrontation in western Pennsylvania.

Quakers in the legislature had in 1710 worked out a means by which they could vote for military expenditure without, they insisted, trampling all over their Peace Testimony. In what was known as Queen Anne's War, they voted an amount "for the Queen's Use." Isaac Norris, prominent on the Provincial Council, argued that it was not inconsistent with Friends' principles "*to give the Queen money, notwithstanding any use she might put it to, that being her part, not ours*."[58] But as conflict began to encroach more deeply into the Province, Quaker legislators became harder pressed to be franker and more vigorous and direct about their defense of their western citizens.

Also in 1710, and possibly not a coincidence, the *Rules of Discipline*, included a new "advice"---that is, not a disownable prohibition---that recommended "*all in profession with us to decline the acceptance of any office or station in civil government, the duties of which are inconsistent with our religious principles; or in the exercise of which they may be … under the necessity of exacting of their brethren any compliance, against which we are conscientiously scrupulous.*" This Advice would seem to have had no effect whatsoever on Quaker legislators.

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[57] McCoy, Michael, *Absconding Servants, Anxious Germans and Angry Sailors*, Pennsylvania History, Vol. 74 #4, 2007. Pages 429-30.

[58] In a 1711 letter to James Logan, head of the Proprietary Quaker Party.

Many histories seem to suggest that, after the French and Indian War, Friends "withdrew" from Government, as if they did so in a thoughtful manner after concluding that they should do so. That isn't the case at all, although the idea was promoted by reformers, and had certainly been proposed even by insiders. In 1749, for instance, James Logan, William Penn's erstwhile secretary and now leader of the Quaker Proprietary Party (and definitely not a reformer), wrote a long letter addressed to PYM arguing that the Peace Testimony, which he did not share, was completely incongruent with Friends' participation in government. This letter was routinely given to a small yearly meeting committee to review. They concluded that it was too divisive and recommended that it not be read at the yearly meeting.[59] Withdrawal from government was now part of the reformers' agenda, but was especially unpopular and challenging to argue persuasively as long as Friends maintained a majority in the Pennsylvania Assembly. Events would undo this majority in 1756.

Since 1718, when William Penn died, his sons Richard and Thomas Penn, and Grandson John Penn (all three had long since resigned their Quaker memberships) had inherited the proprietorship. Their Indian policies were very distant from their father's benign view, and they cheated the local Delaware Indians out of land on several instances. This being cheated was sufficiently obvious to other Indians as well, that it was the source of humiliation to the Delawares, who ultimately joined the great majority of American Indians in supporting the French against the British. Fighting the French was one thing; fighting Indians was altogether different. Indians didn't do battles, they marauded, taking scalps. Legislative Friends dithered. Then in 1756, at the formal request of the Assembly, including two Quakers--both of whom were very quickly disowned--the Proprietary Governor declared war on the Delawares, offering a bounty on Indian scalps: $130 for males over the age of 12, $50 for females. Six Quaker assemblymen resigned their seats immediately in revulsion.[60] In the soon-to-follow election, most Quakers refused to vote at all. Nonetheless, Quaker candidates ran and 12 out of 36 elected assemblymen that October were Friends—the first time since the Assembly was formed in 1683 that they were not a majority.

London Yearly Meeting meanwhile had sent a delegation of two to Philadelphia bearing a letter of recommendation that Quakers stop participating in government. They arrived to find the *fait accompli* of voluntary resignations. The emissaries from London interviewed the newly elected assemblymen with a mind toward persuading them to resign also, and four of the newly-elected twelve did (including James Pemberton). The most notable of the eight Quaker legislators who retained their offices at this point was Isaac Norris, Jr, the Speaker of the Assembly, who would remain in that position until he resigned it in 1764.[61]

But in 1756, for all practical purposes, Penn's holy experiment was abruptly derailed, and City Friends were devastated at the sudden demotion from political authority.

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[59] Quakers required Unity for their decisions. They were able to maintain this through carefully choosing what topics they were willing to discuss. It served Friends badly to volunteer to talk about something they could not agree on. Thus, those topics they "agreed to disagree" on would not be officially discussed. See *ROD 1806* under "Yearly Meeting" for the advised procedures, established in 1695. Since Logan died soon after, in 1751, he would not see how right he had been, and PYM was spared his crowing "I told you so."

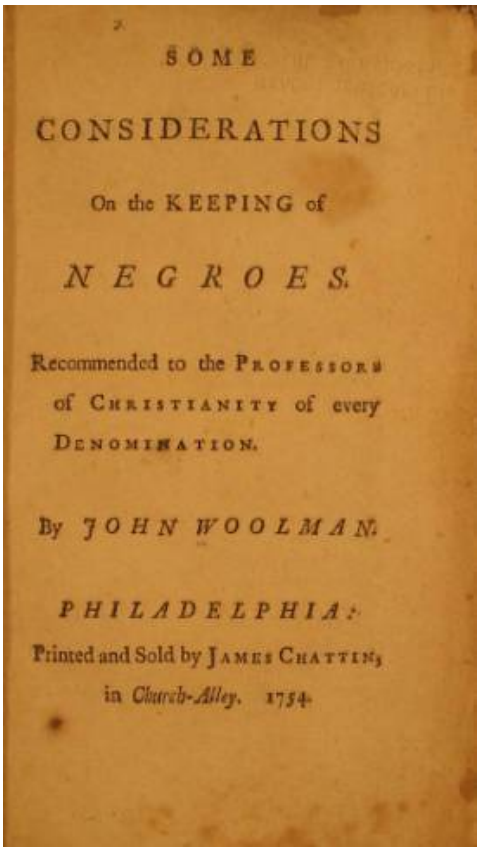
[60] James Pemberton, Joshua Morris, William Callender, William Peters, Peter Worral and Francis Parvin; see Marietta, *Reformation*, footnote 26, page 320.

[61] See Pennsylvania House of Representatives, House Speaker Biographies, www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/SpeakerBios, Isaac Norris II

At the same time, the degree of reformer-and-Elder success and control can be seen in the fact that in 1756 Israel Pemberton was clerk of PYM, John Pemberton was clerk of the PYM Ministers and Elders, and James Pemberton was clerk of the new Meeting of Sufferings (see below).

**Abolition and John Woolman**

The removal from politics was part of the reformers' goals, of course, so it did not discomfit them, nor the Elders. Reformer attention turned more toward another goal, that of abolition. Anti-slavery sentiment had been largely dormant for several decades, but in the 1750s it "*grew strong enough to receive a sympathetic audience in the councils of the Society,*" losing the stigma of schismatic thought. Significant antislavery ministry returned with the astonishing John Woolman of Mt. Holly, New Jersey, who became a minister in 1743 at the unusually young age of 23, and promptly took himself to Virginia Friends' meetings whereby to steep himself in slavery and learn about it. Drake writes, "*John Woolman, the greatest Quaker of the eighteenth century and perhaps the most Christlike individual that Quakerism has ever produced, became the channel through which the antislavery impulse flowed into the conscience of the Religious Society of Friends… With no desire for leadership …* [he] *had the peculiar gifts of the mystic—a vision of God's truth, and a capacity to kindle that in others… He worked not by angry denunciations…but by quiet, kindly persuasion. He chose the truly Quaker way of love*."[62]


SOME

CONSIDERATIONS

On the KEEPING of

NEGROES.

Recommended to the PROFESSORS of CHRISTIANITY of every DENOMINATION.

By JOHN WOOLMAN.

PHILADELPHIA:

Printed and Sold by JAMES CHATTIN, in Church-Alley. 1754.

Figure 5, Woolman's *Considerations*

[62] Drake, *Ibid*, Page51. See in the Addenda excerpts from Woolman.

Drake's portrait of Woolman-in-action showed him deeply empathic with a slave-owner's economic need: yes, he knew it was hard, very hard; and he knew, also, that the slave-owner knew that it was wrong, but he had no choice, really, none at all; and that the slave-owner knew also how difficult his own salvation would be, and that his children, too, their salvation might be endangered, but he had little choice… One at a time, Woolman gently persuaded slave-holders that their slaves were people, and that they needed to give some thought to their own end-of-life future. No one suddenly freed their slaves after his visit, but he left behind a host of slave-owners who appreciated his visits and who realized that these were issues they did care about. Drake is very persuasive that Woolman was close to the lone voice that truly spoke Conscience to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Woolman wrote up his thoughts about slavery, and persuaded PYM to agree to his publication of them in 1754—the first such publication that the yearly meeting approved and then even paid for (see Figure 5), and, in addition, sent out copies to every yearly meeting in North America. All this demonstrates his extraordinary powers of persuasion. Not quite satisfied, immediately following its publication of Woolman's treatise, the yearly meeting published an epistle, written mostly by Woolman, *An Epistle of Caution and Advice, Concerning the Buying and Keeping of Slaves (1754)* which established Philadelphia as the center point of abolition (even while there were in Philadelphia still many Quaker slave-owners). Woolman's greatest success came after he visited slave-holders in Rhode Island (who were seemingly worse than their Philadelphia brethren); after an extended tour there, New England Yearly Meeting united in ending slavery in 1770.

Fig. 6. London Coffee House, Front and High Streets, artist not referenced.

When Friends built their main Meeting House in 1696, they placed it at 2nd and High Streets (later Market St.), a very central location. It got too small for their increasing numbers, so they tore it down in 1755 and rebuilt it much larger--the new one was called the Greater Meeting House—in the same place, just one year after William Bradford, printer and patriot, bought the London Coffee House, only one block away at Front and High, and made it into a major site for

slave auctions (see Fig. 6). The timing is suspicious; I think that having their noses rubbed in slave auctions a short single block from their doorway quite likely made Friends a little more open to Woolman's message.

## Meeting for Sufferings

In 1756, then, Philadelphia Friends for the first time felt their backs to the wall. One of the chronic problems that faced the yearly meeting was that it existed only seven days of the year, and when it was not in session there was no means by which it could respond to circumstance. It was unsatisfactory to rely on the clerk to shoulder that responsibility alone. The Quaker leadership, in particular that represented by the Meeting for Ministers and Elders, determined to change this. In yearly meeting that year, PYM borrowed a solution from London Yearly Meeting and created the Meeting for Sufferings (MFS).[63] It's first clerk was John Pemberton, a reformer, Elder and younger brother of Israel, and clerks following him would usually be Elders. It was held that the MFS clerk should not be the PYM clerk.

Timeliness of response was a critical issue. In mid-century it might take a week or more for a call to go out to some of the outlying meetings that they needed to come in to an urgent meeting of the MFS. So the core members of this important meeting were "*twelve Friends appointed by the yearly meeting living in or near Philadelphia, for the convenience of getting soon together, and also of four Friends chosen out of each of the quarterly meetings; who were directed to meet together in Philadelphia forthwith, for the regulation of its future meetings.*"[64]

The Meeting for Sufferings, then, was a committee charged with responding to issues that needed a PYM response when the yearly meeting was not in session, with special attention to getting together quickly when the occasion demanded. The net effect, however, was to create a critically important and powerful committee that was significantly controlled by City Friends, and especially Elders, the weightiest Friends. The MFS would eventually evolve into Representative Meeting. Brinton accurately refers to the MFS as being the "Executive Committee of PYM."

In 1771, the MFS was assigned one other specific duty: it was given the responsibility for overseeing all that was published by and about Friends "*relative to our religious principles or testimonies, and to promote or suppress the same…*". This mandate included the *Rules of Discipline*, the rules that governed how Friends live their lives. After 1771, the Meeting for Sufferings wrote the rules.

We will keep a vigilant eye—yes, a third eye--on the MFS, as it will play a major role in developments to come.

## Sanctions[65]

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting was still unable to unite on making slave-ownership a disownable offense. However, antislavery Advice was strengthened and admonishments pressed more vigorously. In 1757, Philadelphia Monthly Meeting "*called four purchasers of slaves*

[63] The name, Meeting for Sufferings, was also taken from LYM, and was based on the fact that one of the urgent needs was a quick response to an individual "suffering" persecution for being Quaker.

[64] *Rules for Discipline,* 1806. The text of the Rule forming and explaining the Meeting for Sufferings is printed in the Addendum to this piece.

[65] "Sanction" is my term. Friends didn't call it anything, which makes it hard to talk about. It had the same consequences as being "under dealing," which was the state of a member accused of an infraction and awaiting decision by the MM.

*before it and instead of dismissing them with an admonition, it suspended consideration of the four until it questioned Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting as to how far Friends could testify against their error"*[66] ("testify against" is Quaker-speak for "prosecute"). PQM's answer was the invention of an intermediate punishment: "sanction" (my term for it) was a state in which a member was not disowned, but was stripped of the privileges of membership. He (or she) could not attend Meeting for Discipline, he could not participate on meeting committees, and the meeting would not accept his donations of support. He could, on the other hand, attend meeting for worship, although this was an opening extended to disownees, as well. The result was that such members' voices were lost in policy-making discussions, and the antislavery movement moved forward refreshed and increasingly less impeded. Response to the new policy was varied; some meetings, such as Gwynedd MM, applied no sanctions at all, and few meetings applied sanctions vigorously. Of slave-owners brought to the attentions of meetings of the region in the 1760s, about one-third were sanctioned. Like enforcement of other delinquencies, enforcement accelerated with time. After 1776, when slavery became finally punishable by full disownment, sanctioning disappeared.

The reform movement was further heartened when sanctioning found another application in 1758, when PYM recommended that Quaker magistrates resign their judiciary positions if they found they were required to find against Friends in issues relating to tax or military requisitions. Quaker magistrates in this category who failed to resign might be sanctioned (although, in fact, there's no record of a magistrate being penalized in this way). Furthermore, in 1762 the yearly meeting was able to unite on another Advice: "…*Friends ought not to be active or accessory in electing or promoting to be elected, their brethren to such offices … in civil government*." After this, the Quaker Party was run by non-Friends. Regardless, Quaker candidates to the Assembly would continue to run and be elected until 1774, but year by year there would be fewer of them. After 1774, there was no one to sanction.

With government service and abolition more-or-less accounted for, still it is not easy to imagine how true economic reform would manifest itself in the wealthy monthly meetings of Philadelphia, where caste still remained at least in part. Tolles says, "*The dramatic act of Nicholas Waln, one of these Younger Friends, in giving up the 'world' in which he had made a notable place for himself, and dedicating his life wholly to the service of God, may be taken to mark the beginning of the end of the period of transition* [to reform]." Waln was a "*young Friend, a brilliant and popular lawyer, fond of fine clothes and choice wines, and owner of a gaudy yellow carriage* [who] *surprised Friends in the Market Street meeting house in February, 1772, by kneeling in prayer and committing himself unreservedly to a life of devotion to God*…"[67] One other aspect of this born-again act is that Waln had married, only ten months previously, Sarah Morris Richardson, the 25-year-old daughter of two grandee families. It is said that she was a small woman in stature, whose father had balanced her with a sack of gold coins, which he made her dowry. She was well-accustomed to the luxuries that great wealth made possible. Suddenly, her new husband renounced all that, giving up his lucrative law business to embrace, as the reform movement desired, a life of simplicity and, as it turned out, ministry. She

[66] Marietta, *Ecclesiastical*, Pages 116-17.
[67] Tolles, Ibid. Page 138.

was not pleased, but complain as she might, there was nothing she could do about it. Nicholas Waln spent the rest of his life as a traveling minister; his reward was being made clerk of PYM in 1789.

The sincerity and Quakerliness of the act, reminiscent of that of Saint Francis--except that Waln did not shed his clothing--would certainly serve as a sign of the times if it were the first of many acts of contrition among the wealthy, even if the others were less dramatic. But Waln very clearly was an actor alone. No other member of the Quaker aristocracy is said to have publicly confessed contrition. They continued steadily in their course of making money and displaying their wealth. Tolles provides evidence of this in the Philadelphia tax list of 1769: "*Although … Quakers probably constituted no more than one-seventh of Philadelphia's population, they accounted for more than half of those who paid taxes in excess of one hundred pounds. Even more striking is the fact that of the wealthiest seventeen persons in Philadelphia eight were Quakers in good standing and four were men who had been reared in the faith."*[68] That they continued to display it ostentatiously is shown in a 1772 list of private carriages in Philadelphia, probably the number-one emblem of displayed wealth at the time. Of 84 carriages known and listed in the city, 33 (just under 40%) were owned by Friends.[69] In sum, wealthy and weighty Friends may have been chastened by the French and Indian War and driven out of government, but they did not change their spots.

**A hedge around us**

Elders, too, must be watched. As Brinton mentioned before, they had made themselves "*guardians of tradition"* and even more, guardians of Discipline, all speaking to the need for Friends to circle the wagons and defend themselves from encroachment of the outside world. What was needed, they felt, was, simply, more and better Discipline to build that protective hedge about them.

In 1762, between reformers and Elders (and now James Pemberton had succeeded to the clerkship of PYM) they approved a change in discipline that strongly foretold of even stricter governance to come. It is one thing to be more zealous in the discipline, but this was a serious change in Friendly procedure. It was in the discipline relating to marrying out of the Society, a problem getting worse all the time despite frequent and aggressive disownments. The minutes of the 1762 yearly meeting included, after a long preamble: "*It is therefore now earnestly recommended to Friends in their respecting Monthly Meetings that they be careful speedily to proceed to put the rules of our discipline in practice against such transgressors, <u>without waiting upon or soliciting for papers of acknowledgement from them</u>…"*[70] [my underline] Previous to this, the *Rules* always specified making a concentrated effort, but taking as long a time as might be needed, to persuade transgressors to repent, and that the disownment itself was a last resort. This was a process that took, sometimes, years. Here and now, any gentleness of approach was abandoned; the underlined portion told them: disown immediately! The result was an instant increase in disownments for this reason that continued through the end of the colonial period—and beyond, except that Marietta ended his data gathering in 1776, so we lose these numbers.

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[68] Tolles, Ibid. Page 49.
[69] The family names are listed in Tolles, Ibid page 131, footnote 60.
[70] Marietta, *Ecclesiastical,* Page 249.

At the same time, there was a renewed attention relating to plainness. "*After 1702, when the Society ceased to issue periodic instructions on the costume of Friends, prosecution of Friends for vanity of dress almost entirely disappeared; there was only one such case in Pennsylvania between 1701 and 1755. Between 1755 and 1776, however, there were fifteen such prosecutions, and fourteen of the offenders was disowned.*[71] The *Rules* had not changed; plainness of dress was still only an Advice, but it became part of more serious indictments now with greater frequency. There was a strong feeling among Elders that if Friends were to survive as a people in this hostile world, the most important thing was for Friends to see themselves as different, and that the best way to accomplish this was to make others see them as visibly and obviously different. Plain dress, which had been largely put into obeyance in the years when they were riding high, came back as an essential ingredient of self-protection. This was a point of view that belonged strictly to the Elders, and not to the reformers. It is here that the switch-over occurs, when the Elders take over as the prime movers of change in the Society.

"Plain dress," however, as a concept, was always extremely vague, and for the most part undefined by any Quaker authority at any time. It was treated as one of those things that was self-evident, and didn't need discussion. Most agreed: plain clothing should be utilitarian. Barclay found three good reasons for clothes: they (1) protect one from the environment, (2) cover one's "shame," and (3) differentiate men from women. On his own statements, of course, he should have included a fourth: clothes differentiate masters from servants. Barclay wrote, "*Vain display and superfluous uses in apparel are the first thing to be considered. But first the social position and the country in which the person lives must be taken into account. Neither the needs of their bodies nor the requirements of their estates in life would be satisfied if we maintained that all people must dress alike. If a man dresses quietly and without unnecessary trimmings, we will not criticize him if he dresses better than his servants*."[72]

People have looked in vain for the way positively to describe the costume that spelled female "Friend." Mary Jane Caton turned it upside-down in an essay called "The Aesthetics of Absence."[73] She points out first the significance that every statement in the *Rules of Discipline* on dress is negative: dress should NOT be superfluous, or vain. When you get to details, you get lists of what it should NOT be: ruffles, laces, adornments, etc. Then she cites the Swedish traveler Peter Kalm who visited Philadelphia in the 1770s, who wrote that the Quakers he saw "*wore no clothing that differs from that of other women* [in all its variety] *except* [they wore] *no cuffs*." Aha! Says Caton; the significance lies not in what they chose to wear, but in what they avoided. Once you accept this epiphany, you can find some positives, as well. As Barclay wanted, they dressed "quietly." Women Friends wore all colors. Bright, fully saturated colors SHOUT; they chose muted, less saturated colors.

This was the best Elders could expect. Women, especially younger women, simply would not contemplate going around looking like Ministers, who did wear pretty much a uniform, judging by photographs of groups of ministerial women: dark gray, totally unadorned full-length

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[71] Marietta, *Ecclesiastical*, Page 248. Marietta further adds, in footnote, "*Ten of the fifteen offences occurred in Philadelphia."*

[72] Freiday, *Barclay's Apology.* Page 405.

[73] Caton, Mary Jane, "The Aesthetics of Absence: Quaker Women's Plain Dress in the Delaware Valley, 1790-1900, in Lapsansky, Emma J & Verplanck, Anna, Editors, *Quaker Aesthetics*, University of Penna. Press, Philadelphia, 2003. Pages 246-271.

dresses that left only their faces and hands visible, with just a touch of white at the neck. No cuffs. Bonnets were optional.

# Twenty-seven years of Angst

The twenty-seven years between 1756 and 1783 were long and trying ones for Philadelphia Friends, full of dispiriting events which served to crush the spirit. At the beginning of 1756, they were at the very top, with all political and social power, and when the Revolution came in 1776 they were toppled and despised as hardly better than traitors; then they suffered serious financial and social oppressions during the war years. Writing about these varying events is, I discover, not a cheering thing to do, and equally difficult, I suspect, to read. So I invite you, unless you are somewhat masochistic, to skim and skip to **End of Sufferings** on page 39.

### Friendly Association and Paxton Boys

Marietta writes, "*In 1756, some Friends* [led especially by the same assemblymen who had resigned after the scalpings were approved] *resolved to use their private influence and wealth to aid the Indians*"[74] who had otherwise been abandoned to being scalped by bounty-hunters. Furthermore, Marietta notes that these Friends understood that active support of the Indians at this time would subject them to abuse and accusations of treason, but they likely did not anticipate how bad it would get. They formed the Friendly Association[75] and, over the next five years earned for their efforts little other than denunciation and condemnation. More than anything else, it linked Indians and Quakers in the popular mind, and at this time Indians were regarded as murderous savages, so the line of doggerel common then was painful:

"*many things change but the name*
*Quakers and Indians are the same*"

In 1763, when the Friendly Association ended its efforts, the Ottawa Chief Pontiac then led a rebellion against the British in the Ohio Valley and Western Pennsylvania, raiding east of the Allegheny Mountains that summer. The Delawares, subjects of the Friends Association benevolent efforts, were part of the raiding Indians. As frontiersmen from the raided areas fell back into the east, they took out their rage on those Indians who lived in the more eastern counties, who fled wherever they could. Some who took shelter in Lancaster were killed by a mob. Another group took shelter to Philadelphia.

A large group of Scots-Irish men calling themselves "Paxton Boys" marched on Philadelphia, swearing to kill the Indians there, making non-specific threats against Quakers, and demanding that Israel Pendleton be turned over to them. Somewhat embarrassingly, Pendleton fled with his family.

Philadelphia Friends were further embarrassed when, as the City prepared to defend itself under the direction of Benjamin Franklin, a group of some 200 young Friends, bearing guns, joined the defense efforts, much to the delight of a spectrum of their political opponents, who then cited that Quaker claims to be "peaceful" were obviously hypocritical. This event was truly

[74] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 187.
[75] *The Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Measures*, to give its full title.

a shock to the Elders of the Philadelphia meetings. There were roughly 800 Quaker families in the city then, and if each family had at least one young man of an age to take part, then 200 culprits represented an astonishingly large fraction of Friends' families whose children failed to grasp or adhere to the Peace testimony, clearly a disownable offense. A committee was formed to investigate, and did so over the next two years. It seems to have been an all-or-nothing choice for the monthly meetings. How could they survive the loss of so many of their young men? Marietta says, "*The Society … finessed an exception on behalf of its young men who had mustered to meet the Paxton men*."[76] In the end, none of the young men were disowned, adult or not. This also--perhaps with some justification--gave rise to further jeers of "hypocrisy." It also helped to make Elders subsequently more militant. The Peace testimony would henceforth be prosecuted rigorously.

The Paxton Boys were turned away, more or less diplomatically, by Franklin, who met them in Germantown[77]. In all, Friends were overwhelmed by the storm of disfavor. Marietta says, "*Such were the returns for Quaker philanthropy to the Indians. Friends judged that it was wisest not to reply*."[78] In this they were supported by a condoling letter from John Hunt[79] of London Yearly Meeting: "*Truth will gain ground, not by open contests and reasoning, but by humble resignation and Suffering. The great cause of Religion never lost by Suffering.*" Marietta further writes, "*The primary effect of Pontiac's Rebellion and its aftermath was to remind Friends that they were an increasingly outnumbered and powerless minority in Pennsylvania*." They could follow the reformers and "*the teachings … that Friends must depend finally upon Providence and not on worldly prospects. But at the same time other Friends took their perilous situation as a reason for redoubling their political activity, in pursuit of the power that would make them … secure. Although a minority of the Society, they were stalling the reformation by their persistence in office.*"[80] While PYM continued to be unable to agree on withdrawal from government, it did ask its Quarterly and Monthly Meetings to try to get their assemblymen to resign. But even this was undercut when James Pemberton, Clerk of PYM and younger brother of Israel, the previous Clerk, ran for and won a seat in the Assembly in 1767. That Friends would fail to unite on political policy was the surest thing you could bet on.

**Repeal the Provincial Charter?**

If the Quaker leadership was at odds, so also were their former political opponents in the legislature, who comprised the provincial proprietors together with a variety of other parties associated with various groups and religions. The more paranoid Friends[81] felt they were all Presbyterian and determined to stamp Quakerism into dust. The legislative conflict with the proprietary executive was not at all relieved by the fall of the Quaker party into a minority; if anything, it got worse, coming to a head in 1764 after the Paxton Rangers episode. The

[76] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 233. Unfortunately, Marietta does not tell how they did this, nor references a source.
[77] See a full account in *The Germanification of Germantown*.
[78] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 192.
[79] One of the two London YM delegates who had arrived in 1756 bearing a letter recommending withdrawal from government. He will return to live in Philadelphia before the Revolution.
[80] Marietta, Ibid. Page 202.
[81] This group were convinced that the Paxton Indian massacres and march were engineered by the proprietors together with Presbyterians in order to crucify Quakers. Cf Marietta, Ibid. Page 193.

Assembly responded to an intolerable demand from the governor by deciding to ask Benjamin Franklin, already in London, to lobby the British Parliament and Crown on its behalf to repeal the proprietary charter and to reintroduce royal government into Pennsylvania. You can imagine how well this played in Boston! To further this purpose, the Assembly "*instigated a press campaign to gain popular support and signatures upon petitions for royal government*."[82]

Friends' response to this development was a kaleidoscope of opinion, pro and con. There were outright Loyalists, like Thomas Livezey of Germantown Meeting, who were delighted at the prospect of a return to Royal government. [83] A good many supported it simply because they felt that anything would be better than the present proprietors. However, quite a few were alarmed at the possibility of Franklin's success because, they felt, it might well mean rescinding their Constitution, which guaranteed their right to exist freely. As little as they liked the proprietors, they wanted to keep their Constitutional rights.

At first, it appeared that Friends were largely in favor of the project. In the summer of 1764, however, the Meeting for Sufferings could not come to agreement about it, although they did send a letter to London asking the Yearly Meeting there not to intervene in Parliament on the issue. A specially called Yearly Meeting that September was very heavily attended, as Friends from rural meetings came in extraordinary numbers, due to "the uproar of the past year." Remarkably, *"it appeared unquestionably clear that most Friends disapproved of the campaign for royal government, including the signing of petitions for it … The free exercise of religion and especially religious ethics like pacifism, depended on the constitution of the province. Very few Friends from the country had signed the petitions, and now, in convocation, they could make their opinions heard.*" It was also very clear that the division between City and Rural Friends very much paralleled the lines of opinion concerning the reintroduction of royal government. In the end, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting acknowledged the division, resolving that it "*would not support the campaign, but rather be 'still & quiet in this time of probation'. It appeared to be a particularly gratifying resolution for the reformers, who were preaching less involvement in politics and greater dependence on Providence.*" [84]

In London, Franklin pursued his designated purpose, but found the climate there singularly unwelcoming. Acknowledging failure, he returned to Philadelphia in 1768. It didn't matter; politically, Friends were now painted as uniformly committed to Loyalism for the remaining time before the Revolution, Franklin's embassy the principal exhibit of their treason--despite the fact that it was not Friends who had sent him, but the Assembly. But, curiously indicative of the vagaries of political winds, this time Quakers benefited as public opinion veered (a little) in their favor, repairing some of the damage incurred after the French and Indian War. It wouldn't last.

## Stamp Acts and Tea

Political winds are fickle, indeed, and city Quaker merchants began to draw renewed ire when they initially acquiesced with the British Stamp Act of 1765, regarding it as a normal fiscal issue as far as they were concerned, and not impinging on Quaker testimonies. When it provoked

[82] Marietta, *Reformation*. page 194. Given that the Assembly's existence would almost certainly cease with the return of Royal Government, I can only be astounded at this suicidal effort.
[83] Livezey's rather funny letter in support to Franklin appears in *Germanification of Germantown.*
[84] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 200.

riots in New England, and Quakers found themselves renewed object of attacks by the Proprietors-and-Presbyterians, now wholly combined in many Friends' minds, they joined in a move by four-hundred local Philadelphia merchants in a non-importing agreement which would obviate stamp taxes. When the merchants formed a committee to enforce non-importation, five of its eleven members were Quaker. All might have worked out but James Pemberton, Clerk, who signed the agreement initially, became convinced that the stamp protests were purely a machination of the Proprietor-Presbyterians, and led a very vocal and public attack on the protests that again tended to stamp Quakers as pro-British. Happily, Parliament rescinded the Stamp Act the next year, taking the pressure off of Friends.

In 1767 Parliament brought forth a new tax under the Townsend Act, and it all started once more. This time New England proposed a colonies-wide boycott, which the Pennsylvania Proprietary government rejected. Philadelphia Quaker merchants, on the other hand, joined the boycott, and again a number of Friends were on the Philadelphia enforcement committee. As things grew hotter, Meeting for Sufferings became concerned that enforcement might easily put the enforcers in a position laced with violence, and thereby recommended that Friends withdraw from that committee. Which they did. This meant, unhappily, that a more unified picture could emerge of Quakers apparently approving the tax, even though that was not the intent. Intended or not, Friends again found themselves vilified as Loyalists.

The passage in Parliament in 1773 of the Tea Act was not intended to coerce the American colonials; indeed, it was part of the Parliamentary rescue of the financially troubled British East India Company, by allowing it to export large quantities of Indian tea stored in England for sale, very cheaply, to the American colonists. However, any sales would, of course, be accompanied by taxation under the Townsend Act, a red flag producing immediate resistance. James Pemberton campaigned strongly in favor of accepting the tea. Of the six Philadelphia merchants who took commissions to accept Indian tea, four were Quaker. Meeting for Sufferings in 1774, with the purpose again of avoiding potential violence, determined "*Friends were advised to avoid any role in … organizations promoting resistance to Britain, to have nothing to do with committees, mass meetings, conventions and the like.*"[85] The result was another even more strenuous press campaign against plutocratic Loyalists who would not lift a finger to help the colonial cause.

## Continental Congress

Among the last Quakers to remain in politics, Joseph Galloway, a close friend and ally of Ben Franklin, was Speaker of the Assembly[86] when the time came to send a delegation to the First Continental Congress of 1774. In addition to being a Friend, Galloway was a Loyalist, making him a very odd duck to be leading the delegation of eight, including three other Quakers[87]. Galloway proposed a conservative "plan of union," but it was rejected in favor of

[85] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 216

[86] Readers may be surprised that even when a tiny minority Friends continued often to be the Speaker. This is probably a residue of their reputation for honesty. In the political maelstrom of contending Assemblymen, Quakers were least likely to stab you in the back.

[87] The delegates were Joseph Galloway, Edward Biddle, John Dickinson, Charles Humphreys, Thomas Mifflin, John Morton, Samuel Rhoads, and George Ross. Mifflin was also a Friend, who would be disowned by PMM in 1775 for promotion of military matters; Rhoads was another, the son-in-law of Israel Pemberton Jr; Morton was also, the son-

more radical ambitions—in particular, independence. After this Galloway returned to political eclipse as Friends found they had finally exhausted their political capital, and could not get elected any more.

Quakers generally found themselves in a position in which they could not support any kind of revolutionary activity without threat of disownment, isolating themselves to a state of dependency on royal protection of their interests. They then received letters from Friends in London saying, rather bluntly, that they had no one in Parliament, and certainly not the King, to promote their safety. They were alone.

Reformers, to some degree, welcomed the prospect of war. Marietta writes, "*It may do* [reformers] *an injustice to say that they preferred wartime to peace. … The trouble with peace … was that Friends prospered, became proud of their ability to regulate and control their lives … War was better. The din of it broke through even their impaired faculties and caused them to question their presumptions and situations in the light of God's unfolding will. The war was also as effective a form of discipline as any Friends could have devised."*[88] Anthony Benezet hoped that the "crucible of war" would bring rich Friends to their senses.

The misfortune for many Friends is that most of the evidence of their loyalism, of their antagonism to the revolutionary side, was brought about by actions and activity over the last decade-and-a-half of the Philadelphia merchants and politicians, together with the Meeting for Sufferings. Reformers over this period had been somewhat driven into retreat--not silent, but still less and less heard as the "political" Friends had sought safety with increasing desperation and activity. Marietta points out that "*the worst outcome for a reformed Society of Friends would have been for Friends like James Pemberton to have found their trust in power confirmed and rewarded … Whether the political Friends ever took the lesson to heart or not, they were definitely out of office and without power. The reformation had advanced. What remained was to have Friends, the pious as well as the political, pay the cost of retreat from the world and of neutrality to the Revolution.*"[89] That cost would come high, and Friends' actions would make it higher than it might have been otherwise.

**Revolutionary War**

Probably the costliest decision was made in January 1775 when, now facing almost certain war, "*the Meeting for Sufferings met long hours, day after day, and resolved that monthly meetings must discipline Friends who participated in the Continental Association or any other groups fostered by the Continental Congress. If members disregarded the admonitions, they were to be disowned. The Meeting for Sufferings accompanied the order with a public declaration of the Society's hostility to the Congress and the consequences arising from it—which the Meeting called 'Insurrections, Conspiracies & illegal Assemblies'. The declaration also professed Friends' loyalty to the King and his government.*"[90]

Marietta does not say whether this particular Meeting for Sufferings was well attended by its more rural delegates, or, as often happened, mainly by its City delegates. The result was a

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in-law of David Deshler of Germantown. John Dickinson, Isaac Norris Jr's son-in-law, was not a Friend, but very sympathetic, and would possibly become a member after the war.

[88] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 252.

[89] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 230.

[90] Marietta, *Reformation*. Pag 223.

very frank and unambiguous taking-of-sides, formally expressing this both positively and negatively: loyal to the King, hostile to the patriots. Even London Friends looked askance, writing letters that reminded their Pennsylvania brethren that the King felt no loyalty to them.

The main justification for MFS's choosing the British side was that this was the side of established order. The *Rules of Discipline*, under the section *CIVIL GOVERNMENT*, says: "*We cannot … join with* [those who] *form combinations of a hostile nature against any* [established government]; … *for it is written, 'Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.' Acts 23:5.*" Such an argument might well work in colonies directly governed by the British, but the fact is that in Pennsylvania that order was proprietary and belonged to the Penn family, a full remove from the King. It was hardly eight years before that the contentious issue of returning more directly to royal government had been settled in favor of not so doing, with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting occupying a neutral ground officially. Nonetheless, with MFS's going well beyond the neutral we-don't-take-sides position, Friends from PYM were unambiguously self-labeled as *on the British Side* for the duration of the war.

A number of disownments soon followed, mostly for acts of service with patriotic groups, even before War actually broke out in April, and immediately were publicized by the Patriot Party, most particularly the disownment of Thomas Mifflin, active in the Continental Congress, and who would later become well-known as the first Governor of Pennsylvania in the new United States. From this point on, anything and everything that Friends did would be trumpeted publicly.

First to afflict them were taxes on estates to raise money for the military. Shortly after that came requirements that all men serve in the military. After long debate over the Constitutional provision that allowed religious pacifists to refuse service, the Assembly agreed to ignore that provision. For men who refused to serve, for whatever reason, a fine would be assessed. Friends could pay neither the tax nor the fine, since both were frankly intended for military use. Those Friends who paid either were disowned.

Second, Thomas Paine arrived from London[91] in 1774 and within a year published *Common Sense*, acknowledged to be the single most significant writing promoting Independence. Quaker spokesmen, presumably from the MFS, responded to it with some public hostility, leading Paine to publish it anew, this time with an appended vitriolic attack against Friends, widely read.

Third, Patriots supplanted the existing government of Pennsylvania[92], and threw out its Constitution, removing at a stroke that which Friends had labored to protect over the last fifteen years. The Patriotic Government wrote a new provincial Constitution that required loyalty oaths, anathema to Quakers.

Reeling under these hammer strokes, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in September of 1776 was hugely attended, "*the largest ever to that day*." In a quiet meeting in which little disagreement was evinced, PYM confirmed the controversial decisions made by Meeting for

[91] Some have portrayed Paine as a former, disowned Quaker; his Father was apparently a Friend, his mother not, and there is nothing to indicate that Paine was ever a Friend.

[92] At this moment no longer under the direction of the Penn family, but a civil government under the leadership of John Dickinson, who despite not being a Friend, was married to one (Mary Norris) and was very sympathetic toward them.

Sufferings the previous year.[93] I do not think that this means that rural Friends united with their City brethren on the issues involved. I believe it is much more likely that they just felt that what's done is done. So be it. They may, on the other hand, have felt that this was a good time to promote some other long-delayed decisions. At that meeting PYM–finally--made slave-holding and slave-trafficking disownable offenses.

Withdrawal from government was more-or-less completed in 1774. *Rules of Discipline* subsequent to this year were quite certain that participants might be disowned, but it was very unclear whether simple participation itself could be the cause of such an action, while participation detrimental to Friends was more clearly sufficient cause. This ambiguity would never be resolved. Since withdrawal from government and abolition were two of the pillars of the reform movement, reformers must have been very gratified. They remained mostly quiescent for the duration of the war.

In the first years of the Revolution, 420 Quaker men enlisted to bear arms and were mostly disowned. These came from all Quarters. An assessment of the socioeconomic sources of these volunteers showed that they came from the poorest sectors of Friends society, city and country alike. After the war, a tiny proportion (7.5%) requested reinstatement. Marietta writes, "*City Friends were clearly overrepresented among the arms bearers. Whereas Philadelphia had 17% of the Quaker population of Pennsylvania, it had 37% of the arms bearers*."[94] This suggests that reformers may have been right, at least to some extent, in feeling that City youth especially were lapsing in their understanding and attachment to Friends' testimonies.

The troubles of the Society of Friends began in earnest with the new "patriotic" government of Pennsylvania, which dramatically increased the fines involved -- which increased again almost each year of war -- and added imprisonment to the possible penalties. In 1777 the legislature required oaths of fealty, with substantial and increasing penalties for those who refused—as Quakers were obliged to do. In 1779 refusal to take these oaths meant Quakers could no longer operate their schools. "*The Society* [of Friends] *required that Friends refuse the services that the law demanded, refuse the monetary equivalent of the services, and refuse to pay the penalties their disobedience brought."* What they suffered in exchange was bailiffs seizing their property for sale, to pay the penalties; such seizures mostly exceeded the value of what was owed. "*The Society kept records of the losses of all Friends.…In Chester County, one monthly meeting with 120 families lost £6109 from 1777 to 1781*." Tabulation of these losses added up to £38,550 in all. After the war, the Pennsylvania legislature implicitly recognized the unfairness of many of these acts by awarding recompense to those who had suffered unfair loss.[95]

Relatively few Friends were imprisoned, although the threat was constantly there. The one significant exception, however, deserves retelling. In 1777 British General William Howe in New York loaded his army aboard 250 ships and took them south, ultimately debarking his army in upper Chesapeake Bay, clearly planning to attack Philadelphia from the south. At this point, Philadelphia was evacuated of officialdom, first to Lancaster, then York, along with a small number of wealthy families, including Daniel Wister, a Friend who moved his family out to

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[93] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 233.
[94] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 235, references a socioeconomic chapter written by Radbill, found in Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War,* Chapel Hill, Univ of North Carolina Press, 1979, Chapter 1, pp 1, 95.
[95] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 237-8.

Gwynedd for the duration. This is the point at which Daniel Wister's 16-year-old daughter Sally Wister's Diary opens.

It is also the point at which a rather sorry event evolved, the round-up of some of Philadelphia's leading Quakers—the "pay-off" for their declared loyalty to the King. Under instructions from the Second Continental Congress and Pennsylvania's Supreme Council, 41 prominent men, including 26 Quakers were arrested. Elizabeth Drinker's diary recounts the day:

> *September 2*, [1777] *Third day. H.D.,*[her husband, Henry Drinker] *having been and continuing to be unwell, stayed from meeting this morning. He went towards noon into the front parlour to copy the Monthly Meeting minutes; … when Wm Bradford, one Blewer and Ervin entered, offering a Parole for him to sign – which was refused. They then seized on the book*, [together with other papers] *and carried them off, intimating their design of calling the next morning at 9 o'clock. … They accordingly called on the Fourth in the morning and took my Henry to the Mason's Lodge, in an illegal, unprecedented manner; where are several other Friends, with some of other persuasions, made prisoners. Israel Pemberton, John Hunt, James Pemberton, John Pemberton, Henry Drinker, Sam Pleasants, Thomas Fisher, Sam Fisher, Thomas Gilpin, Edward Pennington, Thomas Wharton, Charles Jervis, Elijah Brown, Thomas Affleck, Phineas Bond, William Pike, Miers Fisher, Charles Eddy, William Smith (Broker), William D. Smith, Thomas Coomb, etc."*[96]

All had been given an option to sign a loyalty oath. Those who refused were bundled away and transported to exile in Virginia, where many were imprisoned without benefit of trial for over half a year in Winchester.

Anthony Benezet, the most astringent of the reformers and possibly the most indefatigable of them as well, wrote a letter in 1777 to James Pemberton in the Winchester prison, in which he wrote unsparingly:

*The suffering providence which now is displayed over us seems particularly calculated to bring us to ourselves … as the tryals & devastation is greater upon those whose possessions are most expensive, , & have been at the greatest pains & expenses in adorning their pleasant pictures. … If this afflictive providence does induce us to begin anew upon the true foundation of our principles, in that low & humble state* …[which] *constituted the real followers of Christ, it will have done much for us.*[97]

My first reaction, on reading this, was to consider it a chastisement; but I recalled that James Pemberton was a leader of the reform movement, and thereby a brother to Benezet. This letter, then, is Benezet's idea of solace to a downed fellow reformer.

The prisoners were held seven months before release in April, 1778. Two of them, John Hunt and Thomas Gilpin, died during their captivity, and Israel Pemberton Jr. died shortly after his return.[98] These were prominent and wealthy citizens, and when they returned to Philadelphia

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[96] *Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker*, Edit. By Henry Biddle, J.B. Lippincott &Co, Philadelphia, 1889, Page 45. I know, she lists 21 names, plus the unrevealing 'etc.'.

[97] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 253.

[98] Hunt is the same man who had arrived twenty years before, an emissary from London YM, sent to advise Friends to withdraw from political activity. He returned to Philadelphia and became a fellow city merchant, and a Loyalist. Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 342.

in the Spring, many found that their warehouses had been seized and the contents sold to benefit the war effort.

Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown on October 19, 1781 contributed a final coda of violence a week later, when it was formally announced in the City. It wasn't the actual end of the war, as that dragged on until the Treaty of Paris almost two years later, but it was the last action, and served, in Philadelphia at least, as the end (certainly not in New York, which would remain occupied until the Treaty took effect). Elizabeth Drinker's diary tells of the celebrations: *Gen Cornwallis was taken, for which we grievously suffered on the 24th, by way of rejoicing. A mob assembled about 7 o'clock or before, and continued their insults until 10, to those whose houses were not illuminated.* [Patriotic candles were expected in every window] *Scarcely one Friend's house escaped. We had nearly 10 panes of glass broken; the sash lights and two panels of the front parlour broke in pieces—the door cracked and violently burst open; when they threw stones into the house for some time, but did not enter. Some fared better, and some worse. Some houses, after breaking the door they entered, and destroyed the furniture, etc. Many women and children were frightened into fits, and 'tis a mercy no lives were lost."*[99] It was, indeed, a hateful riot. But it was the end of sufferings.

# End of Sufferings

### Post-war relaxations

If Friends were worried that the post-war period might bring about additional political and judicial punishments, they were correspondingly relieved when nothing like that happened. Their only judicial challenge came from a group calling itself "Free Quakers," made up of a hundred or so former Friends, led by Timothy Matlack, most disowned by their meetings for war-time activities.[100] Matlack claimed the right to use Quaker facilities, such as meetinghouses, citing as his reasons, the patriotic services for which they had been disowned. This might have worked under the governance of the radical patriots, but the new state government and judiciary were already the more moderate Democratic-Republicans and Whigs, who found no merit in the Free Quakers' claims. These were the same moderates who would go on to award recompense for Friends' losses mentioned above. Thus, the repression associated with wartime radical patriotism was suddenly relieved.

While Quakers throughout the region had suffered significant economic losses, they had mostly survived. Everyone needed to eat; farmers returned to providing farm products, and began to thrive once again. In the city, recovery was probably a little slower, but merchants found that they still had a bit of that original Quaker advantage. And really, little had greatly

[99] Biddle, Henry, *Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker*, J.B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia, 1889. Page 137. Following the true end, September 1783 finds Philadelphia is in the middle of an outbreak of Yellow Fever, and Elizabeth Drinker makes no mention of the Treaty of Paris. No mob celebrates.

[100] Timothy Matlack was the son of the Timothy Matlack who was step-father of the first Reuben Haines, master brewer (see *Germanification of Germantown*). The younger Timothy was disowned in 1765 for marrying a non-Friend.

changed. Wealthy Friends were still wealthy; they fixed up the damage to their homes. They again summered in Germantown and other Philadelphia exurbs (see *Germanification of Germantown*).

**Taking stock of reform**

The end of the war is a good time to take stock. John Churchman, who started the movement, had died in 1775, but his son George, also a minister from Chester Quarter, took his place. He expressed a sense that some of the reformers were beginning to feel satisfied with the changes they saw. He wrote *"We have on the whole just reason to acknowledge … that wisdom and strength …doth prevail and spread among Friends … if I am not mistaken, a reformation is coming forward."*[101] Others, including Anthony Benezet, felt there was more to do. There were other differences in the movement, as well. Then, as now, there was no agreement among reformers—as well as the rest of the Society--on the knotty issue of tax refusal (which, for example, Benezet expressed reservations about). But there is little question that they could be pleased: slave-holding was now firmly disownable, and government service disownable (with a little ambiguity), the two victories unquestionably major changes in the Society. The reformers also generally demanded increased attention to testimonies. The Peace Testimony had been badly disrespected during the French and Indian War and after—especially the complete forgiveness of the 200 arms-bearing youths at the time of the Paxton Boys adventure. But the Society had been very stiff and unforgiving thereafter, especially for the whole duration of the Revolution. Issues of discipline had been more fiercely pursued and prosecuted from 1755 to the war, although it is not easy to assess how that reflected on the Friends who remained after the great winnowing of transgressors in the years before the Revolution. Did it indeed leave a more disciplined Society? Marietta writes, "*At the end of the war, the Meeting for Sufferings expressed gratification at the number of Friends who had learned spiritual discipline from the trials and sacrifices of the war.*" This is the Elders speaking, and perhaps they really were pleased. But the real remaining issue before the reformers was the one they had begun with: what about those wealthy Philadelphia Quakers—the aristocrats, and especially the grandees?

The wealth did not disappear. Friends continued to build and display (in their characteristic muted way) for the next century. However, there does appear to have been a subtle change in attitude: wealth may have become less admirable, less a sign of Godliness. There is one teasing nugget of information that suggests that, while wealthy Friends remained the same, the view that their meetings had of them may have altered. This comes from a footnote in Marietta: "*By 1786, no Quaker elite … were among the list of ministers and elders who represented Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting at Yearly Meeting. For this data I am indebted to Robert Gough who permitted me to read his manuscript, "The World of the Rich: Wealth and Social Cohesion in Late Eighteenth Century Philadelphia, page 436."*[102] In 1755, many of those grandees would routinely have been appointed Elders; thirty years later, they were not. If other evidence supports this conclusion, this would represent a change that would have been more welcome to the reformers than all the rest. Wealth was on its way to disapproval. Marrietta concludes, "*Friends emerged from the reformation a more modest, plain people than they had*

[101] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 260.
[102] Marietta, *Ibid. fn 5.* Page 306. Unfortunately, this book, by Robert Gough, does not appear to have been published, nor has he published another book on Quaker or Philadelphia history.

*been before 1750. In the post-Revolutionary era, the economic elite of Pennsylvania hardly appeared among the leaders of the Society. The age of Quaker "grandees"… had ended, even though Quaker wealth did not."*[103]

**Post-war ministry on wealth**

It would appear, however, that, while their number was smaller, reformers still thought there was work to be done. Marietta indicates that the post-war period brought about a new refinement in reformers' ministry; "*the change that occurred brought wealth itself, and not just its possible effects or misuse, under severe criticism… Anthony Benezet was the most strident Quaker critic of wealth, writing, 'The great rock against which our society has dashed … is the love of the world & the deceitfulness of riches, the desire of amassing wealth.'*"[104] Benezet died in 1784, however, and did not live long enough to see how it would turn out. But his ministry would continue with others. Wealth was a topic that had interested John Woolman also. Rufus M. Jones, of Haverford College and one of the foremost of Quaker historians, gives an extended quotation from Woolman that speaks to wealth: "*When the Spirit of this world which loves riches and in its working gathers wealth and cleaves to customs which have their root in self-pleasing, … it still desires to defend the treasures it hath gotten. This is like a chain in which the end of one link encloseth the end of another. The rising up of a desire to obtain wealth is the beginning; this desire being cherished, moves to action; and riches thus gotten please self; and self … desires to have them defended. Wealth is attended with power, by which … proceedings contrary to universal righteousness are supported; and hence oppression … clothes itself with the name of justice and becomes like a seed of discord in the soul. … Oh, that we may declare against wars and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may we walk in the light and therein examine our foundations and motives in holding great estates! May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions."*[105] Woolman, however, died shortly before the Revolution, at the age of 52. Had he lived, his emollient, gentle style might have brought about a different result than was obtained by the ministry that ensued.

If railing against wealth became a reforming ministerial message, it served to inflame feelings while, at the same time, offering no concrete resolutions. In this same period, abolition was also still a favorite ministerial topic. There was a very important difference, however, between the two messages. Abolitionists could advance a clear and easily understood goal: FREE ALL SLAVES! On the other hand, fulminating against wealth could advance no credible goal, as reformers could not define their terms--how much is too much? Nonetheless, anti-wealth ministry continued to aggravate the tensions between the rural and Philadelphia meetings, and contributed greatly to a growing and ugly resentment of class and wealth that characterized the last decades before the split. This unlovely contribution, however, was the last part of the role of the reforming ministers. By the turn of the century, the Elders of the Yearly Meeting, even if no longer the wealthiest of the monthly meetings, had pretty well taken control of the machinery of governance and would drive it unerringly to division.

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[103] Marietta, *Ibid.*, Page 99.

[104] Marietta, *Reformation*. Page 99.

[105] Jones, Rufus M., *The Faith and Practice of the Quakers,* Richmond, Indiana (1927). The entire quotation may be found in *A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich,* Published by The Fabian Society (Tract # 79), London, 1897.

# Set Afire

Rufus Jones writes, "*The greatest tragedy of Quaker history was the separation of the Society in America, in 1827 – 1828, into two branches. It was a tragedy in the old Greek sense of the word --- an inevitable collision, due not to the perversity of this person or that, to an accidental blunder here or there, but to the irresistible maturing of tendencies of thought which at that period were irreconcilable, and could end only by breaking the once united and harmonious body of Friends into two unsympathetic and misunderstanding branches, both shorn of power."*

The "tendencies of thought" were principally the burgeoning of concepts of liberty arising out of first the American Revolution, and then, quickly following, the French Revolution, together with spreading rationalism (that is, reasoning instead of faith, as the basis for religious thought), all of these waves breaking on the shoals of increasing requirements for conformity to rigid standards. "*The influence of the 'world' beat in upon the youth of the Society.*[106] *Many of them became entangled in the rationalistic inquiries of the time, many were unresponsive to the ministry which they heard and were untouched by the kind of spiritual nurture offered to them."* At the same time, "[the Elders of the yearly meeting] *inclined severely to more rigid puritanical measures and to an increasingly evangelical type of religion. They were for winnowing the Society clean of all who failed to conform to the requirements of Discipline, and they were ready to prune away all branches of the vine that seemed dry and fruitless. In many sections the application of rules as a method of purification was excessive, and the Elders, in their zeal for what seemed to them spiritual ideals, were over-stern, not in sympathy with the spirit of youth and determined to preserve 'the peculiar heritage' by methods which they insisted worked well in the days of their own youth. They were, however, not wide awake to the new needs of the new time. The current of thought had changed. …The guardians did not understand the signs of their times … and hoped fondly that Discipline, which had always worked like magic, would continue to work."* [107]

Brinton agrees, "*In the days following the American … and the French Revolution there was much talk of freedom which had its influence on the Quakers. It is not surprising that there should arise in the first quarter of the nineteenth century considerable resistance … to those who were enforcing very strictly a definite code of behavior."*[108]

The central collision of liberty against authority was greatly complicated by a frank doctrinal squabble fought between Elias Hicks and the Yearly Meeting's Ministers and Elders that had little to do with the concerns of the rural meetings, but was held by City Elders to be exquisitely necessary. These two post-war developments among Philadelphia Quakers drove Friends finally toward separation. I treat them here independently, although one can argue that

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[106] Jones here implies that youth played a role in the Separation. He does not provide evidence in support, and I have never seen this suggested in another source. For that matter, Elders were not necessarily older.
[107] Jones, Rufus M, *The Later Periods of Quakerism, Vol.1*, Macmillan and Co, London, 1921. Page 435-36
[108] Brinton, *Ibid.* Page 228.

their simultaneity was no accident. Both occurred with uncanny speed. This is, I think, explicable when you consider what City Friends had gone through in the last thirty or so years.

In 1756 they were riding very high, at the apex of Philadelphia's caste system, and still a majority of the Pennsylvania legislature, despite being in the electoral minority. All this City Friends might have ascribed to the truth of what I previously described as "Penn's paradigm," that God intended them to be wealthy and at the top. In a stroke, the bubble imploded beneath their feet; their fall was virtually instantaneous, and for the next quarter century everything just kept getting worse until they were despised and reviled as a people. I think they lost a lot of confidence in their contact with God, and it may have severely shaken their belief that they really understood what He wanted.

## Conformity to Discipline

When the thunder and lightning of war cleared, their world had changed. Elders concluded that they urgently needed to reorganize themselves, circle their wagons defensively, rededicating themselves to a purer conformity. In essence, they needed–everyone needed—conformity to the rules.

Previously, on page 10, when I introduced *The Rules of Discipline*, I mentioned that the Meeting for Sufferings first printed the text in 1797, but now dominated by Elders, extensively revised it nine years later, in 1806. The principal result was a document vastly easier to understand and much clearer in intent. I think this was due to the Elders' realization that if the Society needed to follow the rules more closely, they had to have rules they could understand. The rules in 1806 were themselves promulgated, as before, in alphabetically organized topics. More to the point, as the Elders clarified the rules, they added to them, creating six new reasons for disownment. For example, in the section titled "*CHARITY and UNITY,"* which generally advised being nice to each other, with charity for all, up through 1797, no one would be disowned for being uncharitable. In 1806, the Meeting for Sufferings determined that anyone treating other Friends meanly should be disowned. Tightening and strengthening the rules was important, even rules about loving.

## Resurgent Evangelicalism

Severely shaken belief is a mindset that is very open to a change of paradigm, and that is what the Great Awakening offered. By the turn of the century, City Ministers and Elders were strong proponents of the Bible as a principal source of God's Truth, equal to the Light Within.

What is called "the Great Awakening" occurred in two parts, more or less independently, first in the 1730s and 40s, and then again in the 1780s and 90s, immediately after the Revolutionary War. Both parts were similar, being energetic general religious movements, highly revivalistic, with tents and excited preachers; and both strongly evangelical, emphasizing the Truth of the Bible and the Holy Scriptures, and the need for a Creed. Both parts of the Awakening were said to have helped develop various Protestant churches, first in the colonies and then in the early republic. Accounts appear to say, however, that neither part of the Awakening had much to do with Quakers, and this I disagree with.

In the earlier Awakening, the reformers went in the opposite direction from that of the movement's evangelicalism. The reformers sought a return to the essential mysticism of

acknowledgement of The Light Within, so that it certainly cannot be claimed to have been caught up in the evangelical content of the Awakening. However, the overall mood and excitement of the Awakening was revivalism and returning to religious roots, and this very definitely could have affected the reformers. I think it no coincidence that the reform movement started at that time; indeed, I believe that the earlier part of the Awakening jump-started them. City Friends, on the other hand, did not appear much moved at this time. The strongest voice of the first Awakening was that of George Whitefield, whose magnetism was vouched for by Ben Franklin, when Whitefield came to raise money for an orphanage in Georgia: "*…I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded, I began to soften, and concluded to give the coppers. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give the silver, and he finished so admirably that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all."*[109]

When the Awakening ramped up again following the Revolution, it was again revivalistic and strongly evangelical, and this time it caught up City Friends and Elders in particular in its content. It helped that Nicholas Waln, the "born again" Quaker, now a minister and a strong evangelical, was made Clerk of PYM in 1789.

The Awakening was not just an American phenomenon. It arose in England also, even before it did in the new republic. London Yearly Meeting was quite taken with the evangelical spirit, and determined to share it with the American yearly meetings. "*English Friends brought new enthusiasm for Evangelical views to … the large cities* [of America]. *Thomas Shillitoe, Anna Braithwaite and her husband Isaac, Elizabeth Robson, William Forster, George and Anna Jones were outstanding among those who visited in America and zealously promulgated the new views. They were theologically sensitive, aggressively orthodox and on the lookout for doctrinal 'unsoundness'. They naturally came into contact with city Friends first … who were … first to accept the new doctrines. The 'Evangelicals' thus came to coincide pretty much with the city Friends in contrast with those living in the country."*[110] Rufus M. Jones would later write, "*This 'Orthodox' attitude was distinctly stronger and more in evidence in Great Britain than in America. It has been seriously questioned whether there would have been a separation in 1827-1828 if it had not been for the aggressive influence of visitors from England.*". However, Jones completes the thought, adding "*There would have been serious storm even if no Quaker visitors had crossed the Atlantic; whether unassisted it would have … wrecked the ship no mortal now can tell*."[111]

In a word, "orthodoxy" was the required form and the Scriptures, along with the Inner Light, were the sources of Truth. A creed was strongly emphasized.

The several Monthly Meetings in Philadelphia[112] began to emphasize the importance of Scriptural writings. Indeed, the transition to a formal recognition of Quaker evangelicalism was

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[109] Retold in Bronner, Edwin, "Village into Town, 1701-1746", *Philadelphia, A 300 Year History*, Edited by Weighley, Russell, W,W. Norton & co, New York, 1982. Page 49.
[110] Russell, Elbert, *The History of Quakerism*, Friends United Press, Richmond Indiana, 1979. Page 291.
[111] Jones, Rufus M. *The Later Periods.* Page 458
[112] PMM had subdivided into five MMs by 1816: PMM (Arch Street), PMM Northern District, PMM Southern District, PMM Western District, and Green Street MM. Green Street was the most recently formed, in 1816, at its meeting house at 4th and Green Streets, and would become the only Philadelphia Hicksite meeting.

accomplished within two decades of the end of the war. The most important change in the 1806 *ROD* is found in the section called "*CONDUCT and CONVERSATION*," in particular in what they defined as "blasphemy: *"Advised that such be dealt with, who are given to lying, swearing, cursing; men and women unlawfully or unseemly keeping company with each other, or any other scandalous practice; and where any are guilty of gross or notorious crimes, or such other disorderly or indecent practices as shall occasion public scandal, after being dealt with by the overseers or other concerned Friends, if they are brought to a sense thereof, such offenders ought without improper delay, to remove the scandal, and clear, as much as in them lies, our holy profession therefrom, by acknowledging the offence, and condemning the same in writing under their hand, to the satisfaction of the monthly meeting whereto they belong. And where any such offender refuseth so to acknowledge and condemn the fault, the said monthly meeting ought speedily to testify against him or her, and the fact"* ('testifying against' someone is Quaker-speak for disowning). To this point, nothing has been changed, except to shorten and clarify. Of some significance, perhaps, is the complete deletion of a rather long paragraph concerning "*The love of money being the Root of all Evil."* But the change I want to bring to your attention is the next paragraph, which is completely new, and I am bolding it to remind everyone of that fact.

**"If any in membership with us shall blaspheme, or speak profanely of Almighty God, Christ Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, he or she ought early to be tenderly treated with for their instruction, and the convincement of their understanding, that they may experience repentance and forgiveness; but should any, notwithstanding this brotherly labour, persist in their error, or deny the divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the immediate revelation of the Holy Spirit, or the authenticity of the Scriptures; as it is manifest they are not one in faith with us, the monthly meeting where the party belongs, having extended due care for the help and benefit of the individual without effect, ought to declare the same, and issue their testimony accordingly."**[113]

When a new edition of *Rules of Discipline* appeared, printed copies were disseminated to all monthly meetings of the yearly meeting, where their local Meetings of Ministers and Elders would promptly take them up for close inspection and discussion of the changes that they found.[114] After the publication of the 1806 *Rules* came out, the above paragraph must have caused considerable stir, for it represented a very substantial change.

First, in that one set of phrases-- *the immediate revelation of the Holy Spirit, or the authenticity of the Scriptures*—the Orthodox have raised the Scriptures to equality with the Inward Light as sources of God's Truth, nullifying Fox's central theological principle, and eradicating that which made Quakerism unique. But even more important, this rule newly involved **belief** in the Quaker theology. Before this, rules had always related to behaviors. Blasphemy—speaking profanely-- is a behavior that was always deplored; but this was altered by the new section, which departed from misbehavior and entered the realm of the creed. Now to

[113] *Rules of Discipline*, 1806. Page 22.

[114]We see this, for instance, after the production of the 1797 edition, in the first several entries of the *Minutes of the Men's Meeting* of Germantown Preparative Meeting in 1798, held at Haverford's Quaker Collection: "*At a preparative mg held in Germantown by appt ye 16th of 3rd mo 1798. The book of Discipline being present John Johnson requests it until next mg."*

deny belief in God the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit, or that of God within, or especially the truth of the Bible: any of these was disownable.[115]

But Friends' *Rules of Discipline* had never before said you had to believe these things. And, here, in any case, you could argue that it was still about blasphemy, and not doctrine. You could see the creed in it, but it wasn't quite a creed, not exactly. Still, it is not difficult to imagine that outlying Friends might have wondered and discussed if this was just a first step—but a giant step--towards an authoritarian oligarchy of beliefs, orchestrated by the City meetings through the Meeting for Sufferings. This suspicion—that City Friends intended theocratic rule over them—would come to dominate rural Friends' views of their conflict.

**The Peaceable Kingdom**

Before we get to the heart of the conflict, I'd like to take a short break and introduce a grace-note into the coming conflict. While Elias Hicks would become a very significant figure on the scene, his cousin Edward Hicks, journeyman painter, would play a smaller role. Edward Hicks (1780-1849) was not born a Friend. He was, actually an Anglican born into a Loyalist family who had been moderately well-to-do before the Revolution, but impoverished by the time of Edward's birth. His parents died when he was still quite young, so Edward was raised by a Quaker family of farmers in Bucks County. At the age of 13, Edward was sold into a seven-year apprenticeship with a Langhorne coachmaker, where he learned all aspects of coach-building, including ornamentation.[116] At the age of 23 he joined Middletown Monthly Meeting, married Sarah, another member, and tried, with no success, to be a farmer, falling into deep debt. By the age of 31, he was a recorded minister, and found it even harder to make a living. He turned to his painting skills as a means of reducing his debt, although deeply conflicted about Friends' hostile regard to art, which he dutifully shared. Hicks wrote, "*I do not believe there* [can] *be such a thing as a fine painter in Christendom. It appears clearly to me to be one of those trifling, insignificant arts..,.*" However, debt required his attention, and he developed a hopeful belief that "*ornamental painting could be rationalized and justified as a useful profession"* so long as it was subdued in execution and simple in form.[117] He did no portraits, and much of his work—especially the Peaceable Kingdom series (he did 62 renditions between 1822 and his death in 1849)—was illustrative of biblical text.

What you may not know is that Hicks intended the allegorical work to have a hidden dimension: Hicks was a strong proponent of the rural side in the PYM conflict, and his animals were a reflection of this: the carnivores were City; the farm animals were country.

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[115] We don't talk much today about Quaker theology, for reasons I am not at all sure of, and some Friends may even be surprised that there is such. But there is and always has been, and good Christian theology, too, at least through the period of our story. Fox embraced the Trinity, and Robert Barclay wrote at length about it in his *Apology.* Early Quakers were Christian and believed in the Trinity. Indeed, as Barclay propounded at great length, the light within, that of God within us, is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit of the Trinity.

[116] In those days an apprenticeship was a contractual indentured servitude that included the goal of learning a trade. These were typically instituted at the age of 12-13, and the child's parents were paid by the tradesman who would teach the trade.

[117] Carolyn J. Weekley, 'Edward Hicks: Quaker Artist and Minister', *Quaker Aesthetics*, Edited by Emma Jones Lapsansky and Anna A. Verplanhck, University of Penn Press, Philadelphia, 2003. Pages 219.

Fig.5 Peaceable Kingdom, 1822

Fig. 6 Peaceable Kingdom, 1834

Hicks made this clear in private correspondence, but never made it public. The earliest *Kingdom* (Fig.5, 1822) shows the animals all pretty pacific, but by the time of the split itself, the

carnivores are obviously different, and the number of farm animals quite reduced (Fig. 6, 1834). Note, too, the busted tree in 1834: the Society of Friends.

**Elias Hicks**


Figure 7. Elias Hicks (from Wikipedia entry)

Just as evangelicalism was arising triumphant in Philadelphia—and in Baltimore, too—as the new century dawned, a Don Quixote-like character arose to engage the evangelicalists in Single Combat. Rufus Jones said of Elias Hicks (see Fig.7) that he "*was far and away the most striking personality of the historical drama."*[118]

The term "Hicksite" was applied to their opposition—and very successfully—by the "Orthodox" Philadelphia Quakers. It was, as it turned out, not a clever thing to do. Their opponents might have preferred "Reformed Friends," but had good strategic reason to accept "Hicksite." Both sides agreed on "Orthodox," although reformers intended it disparagingly, while the Orthodox regarded it as a term of approbation. (The word "orthodoxy" in Christian theology means, in essence, acceptance of the Nicene Creed--that is, belief in the Trinity: God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit; that Jesus died for all men's sins; and in His Resurrection and future coming.) While the Nicene Creed does not include Belief in the Bible as the source of Holy Truth, the Evangelicals certainly did, so it became part of Orthodoxy in this context. In these terms, Quakers were, at that time, good Christians, but did not have a creed.

Who was Hicks, anyway?

Elias Hicks (1748-1830) was born into a New York Quaker family of farmers. He married a Friend in 1771, Jemima Seaman, and the two settled in Jericho, NY, on Long Island, where he worked their farm. They instituted a meeting there, building a meeting house. In 1780, Elias Hicks became a minister, and spent the last fifty years of his life as a widely traveling minister.

[118] Jones, Ibid. Page 439.

He proved to be formidably eloquent with a strong voice and dramatic flair, often drawing crowds of both Friends and others. He was probably the best-known Quaker of his time. He spoke on a variety of topics, often against slavery, but mostly on That of Christ Within. The ten-year-old Walt Whitman heard him speak in Brooklyn in 1829, and later recalled, "*Always Elias Hicks gives the service of pointing to the fountain of all naked theology, all religion, all worship, all the truth to which you are possibly eligible—namely in yourself and your inherent relations. Others talk of Bibles, saints, churches, exhortations, vicarious atonements—the canons outside of yourself and apart from man—Elias Hicks points to the religion inside of man's very own nature. This he incessantly labors to kindle, nourish, educate, bring forward and strengthen*." Whitman's observation goes to the heart of Hicks' message: the absolute primacy of the Holy Spirit within the individual in understanding the intentions of God.

Elias Hicks' extraordinary proficiency as an orator and minister was, to a great extent, due to his simplicity of language, lacking the "educated" vocabulary and grace notes of a trained rhetorician, as well as his tendency, like Abraham Lincoln, to rely on homely examples to make his points. He further endeared himself to rural audiences by frankly saying that his greatest joy, his closest and most intimate contacts with God, were obtained in the activity of farming. In this way, Hicks brought God directly to the reach of his audiences, just as Fox had.

Hicks also was markedly anti-evangelical. When the leadership of Baltimore Yearly Meeting proposed formally to institute the Christian Creed in 1817, Hicks mobilized, and through a campaign of his ministry, helped prevent it from being adopted. He showed no inclination to back away from similar conflict with PYM. After 1817, the Philadelphia orthodoxy regarded Hicks as their arch-enemy.

It was the application of the principle of inward supremacy to the Bible that brought Hicks into direct conflict with the newly evangelical Quakerism of the City Friends. Although Hicks did not apparently preach this view openly, he did write that the Bible, in and of itself, had no spiritual authority; such authority came from the individual reading and interpreting it, and then only if he were reading it through the lens of the true Spirit of Christ within him. From Hicks' point of view, the scriptures were not the source of holiness, that of God within the reader was. Indeed, in an early (1818) letter he wrote that the scriptures did "fourfold more harm than good" to Christendom; this letter and phrase became the single most common piece of ammunition used against him by the Orthodox.

> "[Hicks] *stated his views more explicitly in a letter to Moses Brown, dated 3d mo. 30th, 1825, as the following passage will show, viz. : "As to what thou sayest of my contradicting myself, by saying at one time, that the Scriptures were the best book, and at another time, that it does more hurt than good; if this is, to thee, a paradox, it is one, I conceive, thy own common sense and every day's observation would easily solve. For it is my candid belief, that those that hold and believe the Scriptures to be the only rule of faith and practice, to these it does much more hurt than good. And has anything tended more to divide Christendom into sects and parties than the Scriptures? and by which so many cruel and bloody wars have been promulgated. And yet at the same time, may it not be one of the best books, if rightly used under the guidance of the Holy Spirit? But, if abused, like every other blessing, it becomes a curse. Therefore, to these it always does more*

> *hurt than good; and thou knowest that these comprehend far the greatest part of Christendom."*[119]

Over the period 1824-1825, Hicks and several English Orthodox theologians engaged in intense written dispute over the role of Scriptures in Quakerism. These included several Quaker ministers who came to the USA specifically to denounce his theology. The debate, however, was a decidedly unequal one. Rufus Jones indicates that Hicks' theology was idiosyncratic and shifting, and that he lacked "*the necessary prophetic vision or the intellectual leadership to enable him to cut through the* [theological] *jungle.*"[120] Elias Hicks' problem here was Friends' "guarded education." Like most other American Quaker ministers, Hicks had no education at all relevant to theology. He knew little or nothing about the history of Christianity, and only the general hearsay knowledge ("what everyone knows") of Quaker history. The chances are good that he had read Barclay, but not so good that he understood that much of it clearly. He was simply untrained, as were most Friends' ministers who grew up in the colonies. The "guarded education" was not an ideal shared by English Friends, who indulged, when they could, in a good education. English ministers, then, tended to have much better theological education and training. So Hicks was pretty much beaten up (in writing) by his opponents, although Hicks was unaware of his deficiencies, and those in the American Quaker audience were equally unequipped to see the differences. Indeed, there is a good chance that Rufus Jones, who graduated from Haverford in 1885, was the first-ever well-trained American Quaker theologian. Germantown Friends School, originally dedicated in the 1850s to the "guarded education," abandoned it in the 1880s and graduated its first students to Haverford in 1895.

It was at the time of these debates that Orthodox leaders identified the Reform movement as "Hicksite," in the belief that Hicks was a Loser. They failed to credit his obvious popularity. More importantly, they did not take into account the fact that the reform movement was not about the Scriptures, or only very little. By this time, I believe that what the reformers wanted most was a guarantee that City Friends should not attempt to rule them theocratically. Reformers, aware of Hicks's enormous drawing power and popularity, were only too glad to have their movement identified with his name, even if his ministry had little to do with their purpose or concerns.

Hicks' "leadership" was, then, a fiction maintained by the Orthodox and the popular press. Hicks, himself, probably had no sense of being a leader of a religious movement—at least he doesn't comment on that aspect of the conflict. I think he viewed himself as a knight-errant in single combat against the dragon that would impose a creed upon the Society of Friends. He summarized his feelings about the controversy in a letter:

> "*Hence the necessity of every individual rallying to the standard, the light within, for in that only can we as a people unite our strength; that being our only standard principle from the beginning; and if we desert that or add anything* [e.g., a creed] *to it, as essential … we shall become a broken and divided people, and*

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[119]Janney, Samuel, *The Doctrines of Elias Hicks*, 1867; republished in part as a pamphlet in the Quaker Pamphlets series on line: www.quaker.org/legacy/pamphlets/hicksa

[120] Jones, *Ibid.* Page 444.

*must remain so until all recur to this first principle as our only rule of faith and practice; and prove by our fruits that we are led and guided by it.*"[121]

## John Comly

But if Hicks was not the leader of the reform movement, who was? Edward Grubb refers to John Comly as "the real leader" of the PYM Hicksites (yes, I will use the word 'Hicksites' for obvious convenience). This is somewhat misleading, for the Hicksites had little--if any at all--coherent leadership to speak of, and they were just lucky that Comly was there at the time. Comly was never one of the Reformers, and from his Journal it is clear that until he had his epiphany—see below—he had no intention of leading Hicksites (or anyone else) anywhere whatsoever. Nevertheless, what he did—in the eleventh hour-- was indeed to lead "like-minded Friends" to Separation.

John Comly (1773-1850) was the man on the spot, serving as Assistant Clerk of PYM at the 1827 yearly meeting. Miracle of miracles, he wrote a journal![122] Although he knew Elias Hicks, and dearly loved him for his ministry, he never once, in his journal, referred to "Hicksites." Once he had identified the "orthodox" as a faction in the Society of Friends, he referred consistently to those on his side as, simply "Friends," or, occasionally, "like-minded Friends."[123]

## The Journal of John Comly

Comly began his journal in 1800, at the age of twenty-seven. He started it with a catch-up autobiographical sketch of his life up to that point. The most relevant points he made are:

1. He grew up on his father's 150-acre farm in Byberry, where his family belonged to Byberry meeting. He would remain in Byberry meeting all his life.
2. He learned to love reading from his mother, and read avidly whatever he could borrow. Sometimes he brought home books him mother would not let him read; these he had to return (presumably unread). His reading exposed him to a much greater world out there.
3. At fourteen he became a ploughman for his father. He eerily echoes Hicks in finding God in the activities of farming: "*Often also when at plough, my mind was lovingly visited with the illuminations of Divine Truth and the things which belong to my everlasting peace opened to my view.*"
4. His father went to meeting once a week; his mother twice (which was most "normal"). At fifteen, he was moved to attend more frequent meetings, and asked his father for permission, since it would reduce his time in the fields. Puzzled, his father granted it, and John went to meeting three to five times a week.

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[121] Janney, Ibid, quoted from a letter (published in Letters of Elias Hicks, 1834.)

[122] *Journal of the Life and Religious Labours of John Comly, Late of Byberry, PA,*
Edited and published "by his children", T. Elwood Chapman, Philadelphia, 1853. This is available on the internet at https://archive.org/details/journallifeandr01comlgoog.

[123] Indeed, from that time on he never again called orthodox members "Friends."

5. He wanted to be able to write better, and sought more formal education, and even learned Latin. At the age of twenty, he was asked to teach at the local school in Byberry.

He spent 18 months as a teacher at Westtown School in 1801-1802, in which time he met and engaged to marry Rebecca Budd, a teacher there, although they would actually marry in 1804 at her home meeting, Mt. Holly, N.J. The two of them then opened a boarding school for girls, the Pleasant Hill Boarding-School, broadened it to both boys and girls in 1810, finally ending the school in 1815.

He became a recorded minister in 1813 at the age of forty, and devoted his remaining thirty-five years to it. Unlike Elias Hicks, who traveled widely throughout the American yearly meetings, John Comly spent most of his time traveling parochially back and forth, endlessly visiting the rural meetings of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. His ministry, like Hicks's, was mostly on communion with God. He did also make some trips out of PYM—to Baltimore, New York and New England yearly meetings, but these were small endeavors compared to his ceaseless ministry to rural Pennsylvania. Aside from attending yearly and quarterly meetings in the city, he rarely visited Philadelphia Monthly Meetings. He only once visited Germantown Preparative Meeting, and his comments following that experience probably explain why he avoided the city preparative meetings.

*"1st day,* [of First Month,] *25* [1818], *Attended Germantown meeting. It was an exercising time. Testimony was borne to the necessity of our looking to the rock whence we were hewn and to the hole whence we were digged. I hope the pure mind was stirred up some. Oh! That our religious society would stand on the elevated ground of our profession and to which we are called as lights in the world. But, alas! Easy wealth, and splendor in the world, how they are idolized … Thus when the standard of truth is lowered to suit the circumstances of the times … it must make hard work for the faithful. To those was dropped a word of encouragement at Germantown."*[124]

In a typical week he would attend perhaps three scheduled meetings for worship, and another three or four pick-up meetings in other venues, arranged for him by local Friends, so that he might minister to others who might be interested in Friends' message.

*"In the 10th day following, accompanied by my friend J. Walton*[125]*, we attended Horsham meeting in the morning and had a meeting three or four miles northwestward in the afternoon. It was held in a wheelwright's shop, and although a rainy afternoon, a considerable collection of people assembled, and were very quiet and attentive. Among them was a cripple, very much deformed, who was carried there being unable to walk; the poor object seemed deeply interested and attentive, and his friends appeared very kind to him. If no other object was gained than affording him an opportunity of being at a Friend's meeting, it was a satisfaction to us and peace rewarded this little act of obedience to an impression of duty toward my fellow-creatures."*[126]

Comly's journal bespeaks an intensely serious individual. My best estimate is that he told one joke, as follows:

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[124] Comly, Ibid. Pg 236.

[125] In all trips of ministry--which was almost all trips--John Comly was accompanied by one or two Elders, as custom and discipline required, who were there to see to his needs as well as to monitor the appropriateness and wisdom of his ministry.

[126] Comly, Ibid. Pg 293.

*"Attended a meeting we had procured…at a private house* [in Caln Quarterly Meeting territory, in the western part of PYM]. *It was a large gathering … and a Presbyterian minister attended. After I got through with my communication, which I thought Divine Life attended, he stood up and very fully united with the doctrines and exhortations I had delivered, adding of his own … In his address he prayed for the success of my labours and appeared in full unity with the objects of my concern … After I got in our deerborn* [Dearborn carriage] *with the two elders who accompanied me, I told them it was time for them to do their duty in taking care of me, for if I had got to preaching Presbyterian doctrines, as it would seem by the unity of the minister, perhaps I had better go home."*[127]

These endlessly repeated trips into the Pennsylvania hinterlands meant that Comly was a familiar face and voice to the many thousands of Friends of PYM who lived outside the city; it is likely that he knew most by name, and had supped in the home of many. All who knew him recognized the gentleness of his spirit and trusted the integrity of his religious bent. But he had a leadership role as well; he was a constant representative from Abington Quarterly Meeting to PYM's Meeting for Sufferings for more than a decade[128], and when the Yearly Meeting of 1826 closed, he was PYM's Assistant Clerk. This did not show intent that he should be the next clerk; the position of AC was more of a sop to the reformers, in exactly the same way that Israel Pemberton had become AC in 1750.

Comly was aware of the Orthodox-Hicksite controversy, and as early as 1818 made comment on it: Speaking with a flock of new Friends, *"I cautioned them against disputations … Oh! What harm is done and what darkness and confusion is spread … by indulging the spirit of disputation and vain arguing about the Trinity, Baptism, etc., while the essentials of following Christ in meekness and lowliness of heart are neglected."* But he manages to traverse the next nine years without mentioning the dispute in his Journal at all, which act of forbearance must have demanded a heroic level of avoidance.[129] Therefore,, it is not until the last day of 1826, just over four months before the coming yearly meeting, really late in the game, that he finally opens the topic in his journal. Before we get to that, however, I want to bring you up to date in the narrative of events.

**Philadelphia Yearly Meetings, 1825 and 1826**

Elias Hicks attended and spoke to PYM's called yearly meeting in October 1825. Following this, Hicks spent a good part of 1826 touring many of the meetings within PYM, including Germantown. Several times in 1826, at meetings for worship, if Hicks spoke someone would rise to rebut his preaching. The first of these was early in the year at Pine Street meeting, where Jonathan Evans rose to this purpose. Evans, a very weighty Elder, was at that time the Clerk of the Meeting for Sufferings. He would have known better than anyone that what he was doing was explicitly disownable behavior under the *Rules of Discipline*[130]. That he of all people would do this made it acceptable. Others followed; none were disciplined. That such egregiously

[127] Comly, Ibid., Pg 290.

[128] Comly never once wrote an entry following a meeting of the Meeting for Sufferings. I have no guess to explain this extraordinary fact.

[129] On the other hand, some of this failure to mention what was going on may be laid to his failure to keep his journal at all in five of those nine years, 1819 to 1824.

[130] If queried on this, Evans would certainly have pointed out that, according to the *Rules of Discipline*, Hicks was known to be a blasphemer, and that the same *Rules* permitted Elders vocally to challenge his ministry in that case.

wrong behavior could be manifested in meetings for worship was a key piece of evidence that convinced John Comly that love and unity among Friends were irretrievably lost.

Increasingly anxious, Elders of PYM decided at the spring 1826 Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders to visit every meeting in the region to test the Scriptural soundness of all recorded Ministers. They spent much of 1826 doing just that. The exercise predictably resulted in a great deal of resentment, for many of the members so "tested" regarded their ministry as coming from God, not PYM. Indeed, I don't think the Elders could have found anything more inflammatory to do in the circumstances.

**John Comly's Epiphany**

Comly wrote, "[Dec 31, 1826] *Attended Fallowfield* [Bucks County] *meeting to satisfaction, although I felt some regret in observing the departure from that plainness and simplicity which were apparent at this meeting twenty-five years ago. Now many of their young people appear like what are called the people of the world. Lodged at Daniel Lukens', and part of our company enjoyed themselves in free converse. Allusion being made to existing differences in the society, I found it safest for me to be much silent on the subjects of controversy, and my mind enjoyed a peaceful calm. Oh! That all strife and contention might come and be subdued by the power of Love Divine*."[131]

At this point in the journal, Comly's children, editing the journal in 1853, and no doubt frustrated by his shyness in addressing the issues, superimposed their views:
*"The spirit of controversy and contest (to which some allusion has been made) which for some years had been assailing and making inroads upon the quiet and harmony of our society, and the difficulties, disorders, and painful circumstances in which it was becoming increasingly involved, were occasions of deep-felt exercise and travail to the sensitive concerned mind of our dear parent. And while his unobtrusive pacific spirit naturally shrunk from taking any part in the contest, we fully believe he was commissioned by the Head of his Church* [God] *and qualified for the arduous duties assigned him. And that, by careful attention to the openings of light and the dictates of unerring wisdom, he was eminently useful as an instrument to aid in gathering the tossed, tried and scattering members of our once favored society, into a more calm and tranquil state."*[132] Fortunately, having made their point, they allow him to speak for himself thereafter.

However, John Comly breaks from his journal mode here to make an extensive background summary. He does not explain why he is doing this, but I think it may be that he realized that he had been avoiding the subject for too long a time, and needed to bring himself and his potential audience up to date.

He begins with a pages-long statement that boils down to "power corrupts," even in ecclesiastical settings. *"Many cases of this character, unknown to the world, have occurred, and not a few in our highly professing society."* One such case was in New England yearly meeting. *"About the year 1820, this spirit … developed itself in New England, and measures were taken to bear down all before it by adopting a system of disownment … of members obnoxious to its influence. … About thirty members are reported to have been disowned at Lynne and Salem*." Then, when opposition to Hicks' ministry arose in Philadelphia, *"one of those most active of the*

[131] Comly, Ibid. Pg 299.
[132] Comly, Ibid. Pg 301.

*New England proscribers* [advised the Philadelphians] *to disown … those fifteen or twenty most active in opposing them, and that the rest would submit and be quiet."*

Comly moves to more recent events. "*Of the five monthly meetings in the city, embracing about thirty-five hundred members, one* [Green Street MM] *had rendered itself obnoxious to the censure of the other four by receiving* [in 1822] … *a visit from* [Elias Hicks] *, who was travelling on religious concerns with a minute* [from his monthly meeting] … *and giving him a certificate of their approbation …"* (That is, Hicks was doing everything by the book.) Comly goes on to relate that Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting in 1826 attempted in a stormy session to compel Green Street to disavow Hicks and disown the meeting officers who welcomed him, but was unsuccessful; the relevant officers in Green Street MM who would have to bring about the actual disowning were themselves too moderate and "*stood opposed to the operation of such an arbitrary stretch of ecclesiastical power*." Comly believed it was just a matter of time before more orthodox-leaning officers would be appointed, and New England-style disownments became a matter of course.[133]

"*This distressing state of things was painfully felt during the autumn and winter of 1826 by those who were situated immediately within the precincts of the city. A long struggle had been maintained against the usurpation of power; and to more distant observers it was evident that this scene could not long endure. The subject of the state of Friends in Philadelphia became a theme of serious concern, … and the approaching yearly meeting of April 1827 was anticipated as a period in which that large body of Friends might intervene to correct the abuses and settle the differences in that quarterly meeting*."

"*Having thus viewed the awful state of Friends in the city, and having seen the spreading of the same spirit in various parts of our yearly meeting, my mind had shared with others and became impressed with a religious concern to make a visit to the city in order to mingle with Friends and to see and feel whether any opening might present for active labor … to promote a reconciliation*."

"*In accordance with this, I attended the* [Philadelphia] *quarterly meeting of ministers and elders held in second month 1827 in which I had a full view of the nature of that spirit that was seeking to bear rule in the society. I beheld also the confusion of tongues among them, so they could not understand one another's speech. As I sat quietly observing the operations of that meeting, my heart melted in a feeling of brotherly compassion and pity towards Friends of both parties, and strong desires were raised in me that there might be a restoration of peace and harmony among them. But when I saw the determination to criminate an individual* [Hicks] *against whom violent prejudice appeared to exist, there seemed but little hope…"*

*"Such a select* [limited to Friends Ministers and Elders only] *meeting I had never before attended. Painful indeed the spectacle! Although this painful meeting afforded little prospect of a reconciliation, my mind was turned toward seeking for an opening to converse with some of the active ones in order to see and feel whether any door of hope remained for healing the awful breach."* He would not thrust himself forward, demanding converse, but sat pacifically, open to them. All knew him; none paused to greet him. *"Cold, distant, inhospitable, they passed by and left me to myself."*[134]

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[133] Comly, Ibid. Pg 304-5.
[134] Comly, Ibid. Pg 306-7.

That evening he spent with Friends of like mind and "*inquired of them whether any hope remained with them that peace might be restored, but they saw no way for it. … And now, under the views that had a little opened in my mind, I imparted a way of escape for them, if a system of disownment should be adopted by the ruling party, now nearly ready to use the Discipline for making a separation."* This I find a little ambiguous: is Comly proposing that disownment, in the circumstance, may be freeing? Or, as I feel is more likely, is he, under the threat of a pogrom of disownments, just beginning to see that pacific separation is the escape?

"[The next day] *I attended the* [Philadelphia] *quarterly meeting and was a silent observer of much confusion and disorder in the altercations that ensued on several subjects brought before the meeting … I saw the spirit of strife and contention rise higher and higher, and that both parties were wasting their strength for naught and dissipating the feelings of brotherly* kindness [in endeavors proposed by one side and opposed by the other]. … *Friends were interrupted while speaking, harsh epithets were applied to some; and irritation and heat manifested the unfitness of the meeting to transact its business …"*

*"During the course of their debatings, strife and tumult, my mind was occupied in a tender feeling for both parties. I saw the awful state of warfare and confusion with which they were involved. I beheld their nakedness, being stripped of clothing of Christian meekness, forbearance, and brotherly kindness. I mourned their exposure to a host of those feelings … which torment the minds of contending parties, where anger, malice, revenge, hatred … pervert the understanding and root out every Christian feeling*."

"*Under these impressions and awful views of the lamentable state of disorder in which the society was plunged, **my mind was opened to see more clearly that this contest would result in a separation of the two conflicting parts, as the only means of saving the whole from a total wreck; and the way and manner of this separation was clearly unfolded to my mental vision**; that on the part of Friends it must be effected in the peaceable spirit of the non-resisting Lamb—first by ceasing from the spirit of contention and strife, and then uniting together in the support and discipline of the Society of Friends, separate and apart from those who had introduced the difficulties, and who claimed to be the orthodox part of our society*."[135]

I have bolded the lines in the above, since it is clear that here is the entire plan of secession as the means of Separation, and the question is: is this just Comly's plan, suddenly crystalizing, or is this his report, as I believe, of a God-given epiphany?

Also, note his use of the word "orthodox" in the last phrase; this was his first use of it in his journal, and he would continue to use it from now on when referring to that faction, reserving the word "Friends" for those who were of his mind.

It was at this meeting, too, that he saw that the orthodox had seized control of procedure, and that proposals were passed by "sense of the meeting' despite an obvious large number opposed. He foresaw also that if the separation was brought about by disownments, the disowned would have nowhere to go, no plan "*and a dreadful scattering of the Society would be the consequence*." Therefore, like-minded City Friends would need to have a means for transferring membership to friendly meetings without due Certificates—which would most certainly be denied them-- and it would be best to make such transfers before the disownments. Comly was

[135] Comly, Ibid. Pg 308-9.

pleased to think that the lack of Certificates was the only *Rule of Discipline* that would be abridged.

Comly here acknowledges his duty of leadership. "*A duty now presented* [to me] *to labour with Friends to be still and quiet and let the others go on with their schemes … unmolested; …that a way of safety was about to open.*"

However, he worries: *"To be active in the promotion of such a separation in the society, I saw would be to expose myself to much censure from those who could not understand the subject or could not see it in the light which had thus been opened in my view."* [136] That is, he clearly saw that there would be many good Friends who, by choosing not to attend Philadelphia meetings, would not experience, as he had, the disarray of their meetings, and would therefore not understand why he was moved toward separation.

John Comly went home and talked it over with his family, especially his wife Rebecca, receiving from them support and encouragement. He then attended Abington Quarterly Meeting, but held his silence. After the meeting he spoke privately with various Friends about his idea. In mid-February he finally brought it to Green Street Monthly Meeting as a proposal, which they overwhelmingly accepted. Then, for the next six weeks Comly went on tour, spreading his plan, first to Abington quarter Monthly Meetings, then meetings of the Chester and Bucks quarters, where at all meetings folk were enthusiastic and supportive. At this point, he had become, finally and unambiguously, the leader of the Hicksites.

I find it very interesting, in that six weeks, that he recounts no meetings of the type he anxiously anticipated: doubters who did not understand his mission. And because of his anxiety, I believe he would have commented on them. What this suggests to me is that John Comly, well and truly blinkered, may have been the last Friend in PYM to discover the Great Problem. At the same time, he mentions no claims that others had previously thought of his solution, peaceable secession. Perhaps the solution required a sudden thunderclap of revelation, of the sort he experienced.

## Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, April 1827[137]

There appear to be surprisingly many differing accounts of this meeting, which mostly disagree with each other in serious ways. I have chosen to follow the one distilled from John Comly's Journal, since he was there, and was very much involved. Also, I think, he was an inherently and transparently honest man, who believed in the truth he was writing. Another account is that of Edward Grubb[138], largely in agreement with Comly's, but written very much after the fact (and not itself apparently sourced in Comly's Journal). I have attached in the Appendix to this chapter Grubb's entire account of that yearly meeting and its immediate aftermath. But here I will allow John Comly to relate the tale of this yearly meeting.

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[136] Comly, Ibid. Pg 311-2

[137] Comly's extensive reporting on this yearly meeting occupies his journal, Ibid, Pp 318-333.

[138] Grubb, Edward, *SEPARATIONS/ Their Causes and Effects/ Studies in Nineteenth Century Quakerism*, Headley Brothers, London, 1914. Grubb was an English educator and editor of The British Friend and a prolific author of liberal Quaker works. With Rufus Jones he was one of the three major leaders of the liberal Quaker Renaissance of the early 20th Century.

"*April 14th. I went to the city to attend select yearly meeting,*" a preliminary meeting attended only by appointed representatives. Here, almost immediately, "*Philadelphia quarter brought forward* [a complaint about traveling ministry, adding,] *contrary to usual practice and the order of society, that unsound ministry existed among* [the rural meetings]." This promptly drew considerable vocal strife; eventually a proposal was made to form a committee to investigate the issue. "*This was embraced by the orthodox on all sides, though opposed by Friends. But the more they were opposed, the more were* [the orthodox] *determined in favor of the measure; and in defiance of a very large opposition and expression of disunity, and over the heads of many valuable and exercised Friends, they went on to appoint a committee to visit select quarterly and preparative meetings on the subject of unsoundness in the ministry.*" Such a committee would be immeasurably more toxic than had been the visits of Elders the previous year. But the adoption and appointment of this committee showed exactly what Comly had feared and expected: the usurpation and corruption of Friends' procedures. "*Many tender spirits were pained with this arbitrary stretch of orthodox power.*" But Comly was gratified, too: "*My mind had been forewarned in the revelations of Divine Light to expect such an event, and therefore I calmly viewed these movements as permitted to occur, that the eyes of Friends might be opened to behold the enormities and arbitrary measures contemplated by this dominant inquisitorial spirit*."

On April 16, "*yearly meeting began, and while in the midst of preliminary business* [with only designated representatives in attendance], *a visit from* [Elizabeth] *Robson*[139] *was announced, and all proceedings suspended while we patiently heard her, almost an hour. Then went on with reading epistles, etc., till an unseasonably late period, inasmuch as it was known the representatives must stop to choose a clerk. At half-past one the meeting adjourned till four* [at which time the general meeting would open]." John Comly felt the delays were orchestrated, to prevent the representatives from having time to agree upon the name of a new Clerk. This was an issue he felt a keen interest in, insofar as he was the Assistant Clerk behind Samuel Bettle the outgoing Clerk of PYM, and he and Bettle were both candidates for consideration to become the new Clerk. "*The representatives stayed together, and had a boisterous time* … [until the time for resumption, when a few orthodox members proceeded] *to inform the yearly meeting that the representatives could not agree in the nomination for a clerk*." At this point the doors were opened to allow the entry of a multitude of general Friends, creating an enormous hubbub on top of the excitement engendered by the procedural impasse in the selection of the clerk. "*The report of a want of agreement on the part of representatives was considered by the orthodox to be a reappointment of the old clerk as a necessity, and they were forward to assert it, although opposed by many other Friends, who were dissatisfied with the clerk and the artifices of the party upholding him.*'

Comly was convinced this was all according to an orthodox plan to reinstall Samuel Bettle, the outgoing clerk, which would occur by default if the representatives were unable to agree on the name of a new Clerk. Bettle was a known orthodox player who had an established reputation for willingness to recognize and declare "sense of the meeting" in the teeth of disagreement. Grubb remarks that "*the recognized practice was that the Clerk* [of a meeting]

[139] Robson was one of the British Quaker ministers who traveled to the US to counter Hicks.

*should decide 'the sense of the meeting' not by the numbers, but by the 'weight' of those who spoke. This practice was carried to such lengths that Samuel Bettle publicly stated that as Clerk he did not consider most of the Friends who objected to the Declaration of Faith* [an evangelical document discussed in an earlier yearly meeting] *to have any 'weight' or influence at all."*[140]

*"After prolonged altercation and debate … the issue was abandoned as hopeless, the clerk eagerly made a minute confirming the old clerk and assistant as officers of the present year."*

*"I was very unwilling to resume my seat as assistant clerk* [as it appeared to many Friends to be] *"a mark of submission and weakness"* [Nonetheless,] *"I reluctantly yielded as a present expedient."*

Many accounts of this yearly meeting state that at this point the Hicksites walked out as a body and gathered together to form the Hicksite yearly meeting. It is, of course, possible that some did leave, but very many did not—as will be seen later—and certainly John Comly did not. He assuredly does not say anything about such departures.

With the question of the Clerk settled, no further business was on the agenda for the day. "*At the close of the sitting, Samuel Bettle spoke to me on the subject of my having been engaged among Friends … in promoting a division in the society. I told him I had not promoted a division, but that a division existing that I had not made nor promoted, I had seen that it must terminate in a separation of the two parties; inasmuch as things had been for some time growing worse and worse, and to me there remained no hope … of a reconciliation taking place. … I had therefore endeavored … to prepare the minds of Friends …to look forward to such a separation in a quiet, peaceable spirit and manner, by withdrawing from all opposition to all orthodox measures … and so to reorganize the Society of Friends on the principles of love and good will. He said this was a very different view of the subject from what had been reported among them. I asked him if he had confidence in my speaking the truth … in the representation I had given him, which he assented to; and I then repeated the substance of the above, requesting him to spread it among his orthodox brethren as my concern for the promotion of peace …"*

That night Comly decided to propose the next morning that yearly meeting adjourn until such time as it could meet again in love and harmony. The next morning, he did so, and found, to his distress, that this only led to more argument and contention. Wanting to avoid "an abrupt explosion," he told the assembly that he would withdraw the proposal,

*"Two proposals, from Abington and Bucks* [quarters] *relative to elders and meeting for sufferings, were not yet acted upon, and in conference with Bettle, he said that if we would give them up, he or they would give up the subject of appeals from Philadelphia quarter. I told him I had not had any hand in them … he said my influence was enough to induce my friends to let these cases drop, and that he would do what he could to quiet their party. I let him know that it was my wish that the meeting might get through in quietness, if practicable…*" and in this way the two clerks negotiated a superficial and temporary peace. Comly wrote, "*This I did, because I saw that my concern for a separation was gaining ground in many minds*" and that what happened in the present yearly meeting would have little impact on Friends' future.

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[140] Grubb, *Ibid* pg 33.

Comly also knew that during this day, some two hundred Friends were gathering at Green Street meetinghouse to begin discussions about the withdrawal and separation that Comly had been talking about. Comly was able to join them that evening.

The next day, the Clerks' trade went smoothly. Comly had spoken with the Abington and Bucks representatives the evening before, to let them know what was going to happen. Comly was emboldened by the relative cooperativeness, and asked the assembled to reconsider and rescind their appointment of the committee to investigate the ministry of many meetings. Immediate resistance and a surge of hostility made him realize that this was more than he could expect, and he withdrew the proposal--but only if his appointment as Assistant Clerk were properly made in unity, right then. Somewhat to his surprise, by voice vote, this was granted.

Comly was able to join the growing conference at Green Street meeting house a good part of that day. Discussion led to a decision to write an Address, to be sent to all the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings, explaining their reasons and hopes for an orderly and peaceable withdrawal. Since it was his idea, Comly was appointed to the committee charged with writing it. He became so busy with this task that he failed to attend several sessions of the yearly meeting that day.

That evening, Comly was walking down Third Street with Samuel Hicks. They were accosted by Samuel Bettle, who was concerned about some topics coming up the next day that might provoke dissent, on which Comly declined to comment[141]. "*So we walked on and discussed various interesting subjects relating to the present state of the two parties … and we agreed it would be better and much more honorable to part …But when I proposed an amicable adjustment of matters relative to a separation, and that a few moderate men of each party should be named to get together to consider subjects of mutual interest, such as equable division of property, etc., he peremptorily informed me that* [the orthodox] *would do no such thing, that they could have nothing to do with promoting our measures of a separation.*"

On the last day of the yearly meeting, all was relatively quiet until "*A certain young man, who it appeared had been at Green Street conference last evening as a spy, arose and opened to the meeting the business that had been transacted at that conference, and made some incorrect statements also. He mentioned my name particularly, and designated me as a ringleader … His statement being denied by a conspicuous Friend, he called on me by name to clear him of falsehood, or correct him. But I saw and felt the spirit he was in and in perfect composure … remained silent."* At this point, Comly felt a call of nature, but realized that if he left at this juncture it would be interpreted as a political departure from the yearly meeting, and that his leaving might trigger pandemonium. *"I was afterward told that had I then left the meeting, it was probable that fifteen hundred Friends would have followed."*

A committee staffed only by orthodox members was formed to look into the accusation. "*I now saw that the yearly meeting was now usurped by orthodox power, and henceforth was to be under their control and direction, as Philadelphia quarter already was."* Comly was certain that whole-cloth disownments would follow inevitably. "*At this yearly meeting the orthodox spirit had manifested itself in distinct view to many minds, who before had only heard of its*

[141] One of these was a concern from Southern District Quarterly Meeting that they had been told by the Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings earlier this year that they were not allowed to replace their representatives to that meeting. Comly would surely have seen this as another instance of orthodox improper manipulation of Quaker Rules.

*arbitrary doings, and to many who had heard very little … about the state of things in Philadelphia. … As for myself, I beheld the way marvelously opening for the oppressed seed to go free*."

"*After they had finished their business and the yearly meeting ended* [to his relief without further histrionics], *we repaired to Green Street conference;* …[600 were there], *and we proceeded in great harmony to finish the Address to Friends*, henceforth called the 'Green Street Address' and signed by Comly and nine others, and sent out to all Friends within the pale of PYM, as Comly preferred.[142]

Then he went home.

# From the ashes a New Church

### Building unity

A week later, on April 30th, John Comly wrote, "*I felt an openness to attend Abington monthly meeting. Friends introduced the 'Green Street Address', had it read, and with but little opposition directed it to the* [Abington] *quarterly meeting. I Returned to a conference at Byberry … much sympathy was felt for our suffering Friends in the city and the way was … opened for them to come forward and be joined to our meeting without Certificates.*"

And so it went. On May 2, "*Attended Horsham monthly meeting … the 'Address' was read and the minds of Friends seem preparing for the important movement of standing separate from our opposing brethren.*" Then, "*Gwynedd monthly meeting*"; and "*Richland monthly meeting*. May 5, "*Horsham quarterly meeting*[143] … [was attended by a number of the committee appointed by yearly meeting orthodox, who] "*alleged … that there were those present who had not a right to sit; alluding to such as had attended the Green Street conference. They used various arguments to induce us to withdraw, several times mentioning my name aloud …*" Comly remained silent and the meeting continued without action on the claims. On May 10, "*a general quarterly meeting where the orthodox committee from the late yearly meeting and a vast number of Friends from all parts within 30 or 40 miles attended.*" This meeting was at times noisy and chaotic, but in the end the 'Address' was approved.[144] Through the rest of May, Comly continued to attend monthly and quarterly meetings throughout the region, where the "Address" was consistently promoted and approved.

On June 3, in Philadelphia, "*This morning Friends opened a meeting for worship in a hired room in Carpenters Court … held by permission of Byberry monthly meeting. Several Friends of Southern District* [Quarterly] *meeting* [including Delaware and Eastern Maryland] *had applied to ours to be recognized as members without Certificates*." There being no Rules to guide them in this circumstance, "*Truth and charity supplied the deficiency… These Friends are now rescued from their trammels, by the transfer of their rights of membership.*"

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[142] The Green Street Address is reprinted in the Addenda to this essay.

[143] This is a rare error made by Comly; there was no Horsham Quarterly Meeting, and presumably he meant Abington Quarterly Meeting (which possibly met that day in the Horsham meetinghouse).

[144] This was, I presume, a specially called meeting of the Abington quarter, called for the purpose of discussing Comly's proposal, and probably took place in Abington meetinghouse.

But all they had done was to declare their intentions; they still needed to build their church. On June 4 *"Friends met at Green Street in conference … upward of a thousand were in attendance."*

*"Friends looking forward to organizing the yearly meeting, an epistle was addressed to our absent members so as to prepare the way for thus gathering again into one body … A large committee was appointed to assist Friends in their varied trials … attendant on the separation from religious communion with their opposing brethren."*

Then John Comly got sick and was consigned to enforced bedrest at home; he missed several weeks of intense planning which resulted in an Epistle being sent out to all meetings of PYM announcing a specially-called Yearly Meeting to be held on October 15 at Green Street meetinghouse, and inviting all like-minded Friends to attend.[145]

As soon as he recovered, he was back to work. On June 20th, "*Today was our* [Byberry] *monthly meeting and it was a favored, heavenly one. Many Friends from the neighboring meetings attended, and a large number from the city presented requests to be acknowledged as our members, whom we accepted …"*

That summer and fall he was active in numerous meetings organizing the coming yearly meeting.

**Specially-called Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, October 1827**

October 15th, *"The yearly meeting opened. Women Friends occupied Green Street meeting house, and it was well filled. Men Friends numbering fifteen to eighteen hundred, met in a temporary building that had been erected on neighboring ground (all the other meeting houses in the city being retained in the possession of the opposite party). … "Representatives appointed by five of the quarterly meetings attended this. … A large committee of men and women were appointed to represent the yearly meeting in its recess. … An epistle to Baltimore yearly meeting* [and to quarterly, monthly and preparative meetings] *was approved."* This said, in part:

*"Dear Friends:-- Having convened in this Yearly Meeting under very peculiar and trying circumstances … our minds have been comforted and strengthened in the evidence afforded that we are still mercifully regarded by our Holy Head … and tender sympathy has flowed toward our absent brethren and sisters, whom we affectionately salute in the love of the everlasting gospel.*

*We fervently desire that all may be increasingly concerned to retire from the noises, the contentions, and the confusions…"*

Two specific paragraphs of the record of this yearly meeting are especially interesting.

"*And we tenderly exhort, that in places where our members constitute the larger part of any meeting, their conduct may be regulated by the rule laid down by our blessed Lord: 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.'"* Encouraging gentleness on the part of a majority toward an orthodox minority is consistent with the decision that such departing members should be "released," rather than "disowned," in marked contrast to Orthodox policy. But that gentleness was not always practiced. We have few actual records, but one, in Middletown Monthly Meeting in Bucks County, suggests that the victorious Hicksites

[145] This Epistle is printed in full in the Addenda to this essay.

were unkind, at least, and probably ungentle in their eviction of the orthodox members from the meeting house.[146]

The second paragraph reads: *"The discipline under which we act, positively discourages members of our society from suing each other at law. To violate this discipline in a meeting capacity, is not only a departure from our established order, but is calculated to injure us in the eyes of sober inquirers after Truth…"* Again, I don't have records relating to such lawsuits, but the one I know of in New York, referred to below, is a suit brought by the orthodox against the Hicksites.

The yearly meeting concluded with a decision to meet again *"on the second second-day of fourth month next."*

[signed] *Benjamin Ferris, clerk of men; Rebecca Comly, clerk of women*

John Comly returned to his endless ministerial touring for another twenty years, serving as clerk of the yearly meeting as called upon. For the most part, his role in the separation and the formation of the Hicksite Yearly Meeting has been forgotten.

Green Street meeting house was just not big enough, and not central enough, as well, to be the central meeting of the Hicksite yearly meeting. In 1828, the Hicksites built a new larger meeting house on Race Street, that would be enlarged and rebuilt in 1856 as the familiar Friends Center today.

One point of agreement between the Orthodox and the Hicksites was that their yearly meeting was named "Philadelphia Yearly Meeting" without any attendant disambiguating phrase. Some Hicksite *Rules of Discipline* were later published with the addition of *Fifteenth and Cherry Streets* written under *Philadelphia*, helping to make that distinction. Friends of the region, on the other hand, quickly learned to disambiguate "Philadelphia Yearly Meeting" by referring to the two yearly meetings by their main centers: "Arch Street Yearly Meeting" and "Cherry Street Yearly Meeting." With some Friends, this substitution persisted; Thomas Ambler, in his 2013 interview[147] referred throughout to "Arch Street Yearly Meeting" as his yearly meeting.

**Points of View**

As may not surprise you, there were two views as to what "happened." Brinton writes: *The Orthodox claimed that the separation was due to doctrinal differences, but the Hicksite party denied this. The latter wrote to London Friends: 'We do not believe that the dissensions which have appeared among us had their origin so much in differences of opinion in doctrinal points, as in a disposition … to exercise an oppressive authority in the church.'*[148] I believe that the Elders' testing visits throughout 1826 set in concrete the rural suspicions that the City brethren were preparing to take and hold ecclesiastical rule over all of PYM. The means by which they could do this was already in hand. Meeting for Sufferings was clearly dominated by

[146] See *The Golden Age of Germantown* for the account.

[147] See Meeting Interviews, by Leanna Whitman; Friends Free Library. November, 2013. The interviews can also be accessed through the GMM website.

[148] Brinton, Ibid. Page 231. London did not accept this letter, nor read it to its constituents.

the city meetings, and MFS was responsible for writing and publishing the all-important *Rules for Discipline*. The 1806 *Rules* was hard evidence. Without that certainty, I'm not sure they would have acted with such determination.

I think the two sides also viewed the actual split in two different ways, too.

Comly and the Hicksites saw the event as a needed secession. John Comly, as Assistant Clerk of PYM, had become convinced that the Yearly Meeting had already arrived at a point at which "*Friends could no longer sit together in peace*." Nor could they sit in Unity, and without Unity the Society of Friends could not exist.

The Orthodox saw it, on the other hand, as an issue of discipline, and instructed all monthly meetings to identify and disown Hicksite members, as "acting out of unity." This they did.[149]

## Further Splits

Brinton indicates that additional divisions lay ahead. For mystical or primitive Friends, "*the historical Christ and the Inward Christ were one, the historical Christ having been the living incarnation and complete revelation of the Inward Christ*." Since this was a position that "*allowed for a wide variety of theological opinion, no further separations occurred among them. They reduced the authority of elders and overseers*." The resulting relative lack of oversight among Hicksite meetings, Brinton felt, resulted in a corresponding lessening of attention to Quaker traditions, while emphasizing "*democracy and tolerance*."

It was otherwise with the Orthodox Friends, who "*adopted a more authoritarian position, assuming greater control over the individual.*" They adopted a creed; at least New York Yearly Meeting did. PYM didn't, not formally, but according to Brinton, they activated the blasphemy Rule and disowned members for those creed-like elements for the next hundred years.[150] There was nothing in this creed that Hicksites didn't also believe, as was made clear in a New York lawsuit in 1833, in which a judge balanced the Orthodox creed of New York Yearly Meeting (O) against a statement of Hicksite beliefs and found them the same.[151] In addition to increasing their authority over the individual, the PYM *Rules of Discipline* of 1834, no doubt thinking about Green Street MM, also made it possible for Quarterly Meetings to dissolve Monthly Meetings in their care if the circumstances warranted it.

Brinton comments, "*The history of religion has shown over and over that creeds do not unite, they tend to divide. A group held together by a creed is more brittle, more subject to breakage than a more yielding organic group held together by the spirit*."[152]

## Gurneyite-Wilburite Split

The next split, the Gurneyite-Wilburite separation, came along soon enough. Well, for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting it did and it didn't.

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[149] The mechanics of separation for PYM and the outfall for Frankford Monthly Meeting and Germantown Preparative Meeting in particular are discussed in detail in the paper *Germantown the Garden Suburb and the Golden Age of Germantown Meeting*, pages 4-6.
[150] Brinton, *Ibib.* Page 232.
[151] Grubb, Ibid. Pp 46-7.
[152] Brinton, Ibid. Page 234.

London Yearly Meeting gave Joseph John Gurney a traveling minute to North America in 1837-38, despite a certain amount of opposition in London YM by members who felt he was too evangelical. Gurney came with greatly distinguished credentials, even aside from London's imprimatur. First, he was Robert Barclay's great-great grandson. He was a trained classicist and theologian, reading Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and had many, many publications. He was polished to an extreme, handsome and wealthy to boot. In short, he dazzled. Grubb wrote that Gurney was the first true and trained Quaker theologian since Barclay. It was Friends' misfortune that if Hicks was the arch-primitive, Gurney was the arch-evangelical, believing that the Scriptures were the final and only authority on the intentions of God--with no role for *that of God within.*

I want to make a brief discursion here, to reveal an irony. When the Puritans were rampant in the 17th century, they despised especially the Friends, both in England and New England. Frost observes, "*The Quakers were a by-product of the religious and social upheavals called the Puritan Revolution. The clash of ideas among Presbyterian, Anglican and independent churches meant that, in the absence of a controlling orthodoxy, new groups could form, such as the Diggers, Muggletonians, Fifth Monarchy men, Ranters, or Quakers. Of these, only the Friends have survived… The present-day observer…might conclude that* [the Puritan-Quaker] *similarities far out-weighed any differences. And he would be right. Hugh Barbour… argued that the great bitterness of the quarrel between the Puritans and the Quakers stemmed from the closeness of the issues—that is, that the intensity was heightened because it was basically a family dispute."*[153]

Of course, the two sides disagreed on man's predestination, but so what? —everybody disagreed with the Puritans on that, except other Calvinists. The true disagreement lay in the Scriptures. Frost continues, *"The Puritans claimed…that 'the whole counsel of God' was either 'expressly set down' or 'may be deduced from Scripture.'… The Quakers denied that 'the whole counsel of God' was in the Bible. No man reading it could learn directly his inward calling, … or* [if he was] *called to minister, or told to pray. The Bible, in short, did not contain 'the whole Mind, Will, and Counsel of God.' Revelation had not ceased."* [154] In other words, the Puritan wrath upon the Quaker lay in the Puritan's insistence that the Bible contained every Truth, and the Friend's claim that he could find Truth directly from God. It is a very curious twist that (roughly) 175 years later the Gurneyite Quaker would become the Puritan, and it would indeed be 'a family dispute.'

I can only say that Gurney's visit to the states was a non-stop eye-popping extravaganza, taking all of the orthodox American yearly meetings by storm. Hicksite yearly meetings ignored him; he simply did not speak their language. Jonathan Evans, formerly a clerk of PYM and at this time clerk of Meeting for Sufferings, was a very weighty member of PYM (O). He wrote, "[Gurney], *because he has written much, is considered very learned, highly polished, and an acute reasoner; and being very rich, and living in high style, is greatly caressed and esteemed as almost a prodigy among us. I have perused a great deal of his writings, and have been sorely*

[153] Frost, J. William, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1973. Page 11.
[154] Frost, *Ibid.*, Page 22.

*distressed at the darkness and confusion which is almost inseparable from their contents.*[155]*"* Evans' sons, however, along with a good many others in PYM (O)—and in all other Orthodox yearly meetings—were swept up onto his train. Among other things, the American Friends' continued dependence on a guarded education meant there was no one with the qualifications to debate with him, no one who could counter his arguments based on his Greek or Hebrew translations of the Bible, for instance. What was critical was Gurney's negative assessment of *That of God Within*. Grubb wrote, "*Just as I believed it true to say that Elias Hicks had 'no sense of historical Christianity,' so I believe it equally true that Joseph John Gurney had no sense of the mystical experience which made the early Friends what they were*…" Grubb continues, "*The presence of a Universal Divine Light in the souls of all men he admitted, but he meant by it, apparently, that there is in all men 'a capacity for salvation*.'" [156]

Coherent opposition to Gurney centered on John Wilbur, a Rhode Island Friend and minister, who felt that more attention needed to be paid to *The Light Within.* Indeed, Brinton comments, "*Among the Wilburites there was opportunity … for a genuine synthesis of the mystical and evangelical elements in Quakerism. It was they who could most clearly lay claim to be the heirs of the original Society of Friends*."

Wilbur's persistent opposition to Gurney resulted eventually in New England Yearly Meeting's finding that Wilbur had defamed Gurney. NEYM reported Wilbur to his monthly meeting in 1842 that they might deal appropriately with him. However, his South Kensington MM found that he was not actually guilty as charged, and refused to disown him. New England YM then reported to Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting that South Kensington MM was "insubordinate." The quarter duly recommended that South Kensington MM be dissolved, and its members attached to Greenwich MM. This was done, and Greenwich MM disowned Wilbur in 1843. This activity led promptly to a split within the Rhode Island Quarter, followed by a split of New England YM into NEYM (G) and NEYM (W). Wilbur continued to be a good member of his MM, QM and YM, although the New England Wilburite Yearly Meeting was very small. PYM Hicksites, learning of this, no doubt told each other *we got out not a moment too soon!* You should note the irony involved that New England was the only northern yearly meeting to resist the Hicksite split, and here it was starting the next one.

Orthodox Friends in Philadelphia appear to have been—at least in leadership—substantially Wilburite. In 1843, in reaction to Gurney's strong pull towards the evangelical, the Meeting for Sufferings of PYM (O) wrote and published a tract which sounds quite Wilburite. It was called *The Ancient Testimony of the Religious Society of Friends commonly called Quakers Respecting some of their Christian Doctrines and Practices.* In its introduction, they review their debt to Robert Barclay. "*The Meeting for Sufferings having been brought under much exercise, on account of the attempts of the enemy of all righteousness to lay waste some of the principles and testimonies of our Religious Society, as set forth in the writings of our early Friends, particularly in the Apology for the true Christian Divinity, written by Robert Barclay, --a work with which we have divers times declared our unity"*[157]. They salute Barclay's main contribution,

[155] From a letter Evans wrote to John Wilbur, quoted by Grubb, Ibid., pg 73.
[156] Grubb, *Ibid.* Pp 68-69.
[157] Meeting for Sufferings, *The Ancient Testimony/ of the Religious Society of Friends/ commonly called Quakers/ Respecting some of their Christian Doctrines and Practices*, Printed by Joseph Rakestraw, Philadelphia, 1843. Pg 1

placing *the light within* in its Christian formulation, as "*the doctrine of the unmediated manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man, and the necessity of submission to his … power there"*. This they credit greatly: *"…we shall be enabled, through the inshining of the light of Christ Jesus … to be endued* [endowed] *with strength and wisdom to escape* [the snares of wickedness]." And "*Under the guidance of this divine light, the holy ancients in all ages …* [could] *overcome the wicked one…*"; and "*,,,witnessing the inward life of righteousness … as the only solid foundation of the hope of everlasting life and happiness …"*

The Meeting For Sufferings then reviewed the recent trauma due to the Hicksites: "*We have seen during a season of trial … the attempts of the grand deceiver to … bring into disrepute the doctrine of immediate divine revelation, by leading many who made profession of it … into a denial of some of the fundamental truths of the Christian Religion, especially in reference to the authenticity and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures."*

But they also anticipate the brewing fight with the Gurneyites: "*Seeing the errors which arose from undervaluing the Holy Scriptures, there has been a tendency to run into the opposite extreme, and to exalt them into a place and office which they do not claim for themselves …".*[158] Indeed, I don't think you can find a better account of the Wilburite position.

The New England split then precipitated Gurney-Wilbur separations of other American yearly meetings, but at a very different pace from the Orthodox-Hicks split in 1827-1828. Rather than a rapid proliferation of splits, the contentiousness spread very slowly. PYM (O)'s Meeting for Sufferings revised its *Ancient Testimonies* (referred to above) into a pamphlet called *An Appeal for the Ancient Doctrines*, which they sent out to all the Orthodox yearly meetings in 1848. This pamphlet highlighted specific statements made by Gurney and showed how they contradicted hallowed historic Quaker testimonies.

Ohio Yearly Meeting (O) adopted the *Appeal* but went on finally to divide in 1854, roughly 2-1 in favor of the Wilburite side. At about this time, New York and Baltimore Yearly Meetings split, each more narrowly favoring Gurney. In 1856, Indiana YM split, very strongly Gurneyite. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (O) was now isolated, the only remaining unsplit Orthodox yearly meeting, exchanging formal letters only with Ohio YM (Wilburite). PYM's leaders, while more or less Wilburite, were strongly opposed to engaging in another division. I think that they were still smarting from the humiliation of their 2-to-1 drubbing by the Hicksites, and did not want to experience another diminution from another separation. But how to avoid a split? They fixed on the fact that the separations occurred following the acceptance of Epistles from other yearly meetings. Rather than accept all epistles equally, each one leading to a floor fight, in 1858 they determined on a policy of accepting no epistles from other yearly meetings at all. Sneaky, but it worked. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (O) never split again. The cost came at a technical isolation from other yearly meetings, with which they no longer shared fraternal greetings, but they already lacked such greetings with all but Ohio YM (W), so it was not a new sensation. PYM's Gurneyites and Wilburites would just have to get along.

After the Civil War, another revivalist wave swept through, especially in the middle west, where mostly Gurneyite YMs again fractured, this time with the result of Quaker meetings being constantly interrupted by revivalist-style exclamations, songs and born-again conversions. There

[158] *Ancient Testimony*, Ibid pg 6-8.

being no one to control these outbreaks, many meetings hired a pastor to regain control.[159] Brinton writes, *"Many new members who were by this means brought suddenly into membership knew nothing of the Quaker meeting for worship. … Through such influences a large proportion of the Society of Friends became removed from its foundation and brought into the full stream of Protestantism."*[160] Interestingly, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, some midwestern and southern Friends Meetings broke away in order to rediscover the "old-fashioned" silent meeting for worship, seeking rapprochement with the eastern Wilburite church—these are now known as "Conservative Friends." In the end, and up to the present day, Quaker meetings with paid ministers and a strong evangelical bent have dominated Quakerism west of Ohio. Now much more in the mainstream of western Protestant churches, they have grown and prospered, as eastern branches of the Society have not. Today, most Quaker meetings in the USA are programmed.

# Reconciliation and reunification

As the nineteenth century drew to an end, Brinton says, *"We can no longer refer only to conflict between the mystical and evangelical … as the key to understanding Quaker history."* By this time, he continues, *"The Society of Friends was now wide open to outside influences."* Education was certainly a major key. When Germantown Friends School was begun in the middle of the century, it was intended to offer a "guarded" education only, and the concept of "academic excellence" was completely foreign.[161] The English Classical education was not offered; the sciences were not on the menu, nor were the arts. Fifty years later this had greatly changed. By 1906 the sciences were emphasized at GFS, and graduates were offered a follow-up college education, especially to the Gurneyite-inspired Haverford College. In the world, the sciences had dramatically matured, explaining phenomena that heretofore had been the province of religion. Bracketing the late nineteenth century in particular were the twin engines of modern science: Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution in 1859 and Albert Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity in 1905.

### Quaker Renaissance

Probably the most important development affecting Friends—eastern Friends especially--was a liberalizing movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries called "the Quaker renaissance." The three strongest proponents were John Wilhelm Rowntree and Edwin Grubb, in England, and Rufus M Jones of Haverford College. These three educators and others brought into focus a marked emphasis on rationalism instead of faith, with humanitarian viewpoints together with social action, and a theology based on following Christ's living example, as opposed to believing in redemption through Christ's death. This is, as you may see, a significant change from the historical Christian tradition, where redemption through faith in Christ's death and resurrection is part of the creed. This movement had most of its influence on

[159] A final split even led to a group of Quaker fundamentalists in the midwest—ultimate evangelicals.
[160] Brinton, Ibid. Page 234.
[161] See *Germantown, the Garden Suburb* for more detail.

English and eastern American Quakers. It appealed directly to Hicksite Friends, as well as to Wilburites. Brinton says, *"Through the early years of the twentieth century the Orthodox Yearly Meeting in Philadelphia still adhered to the Wilburite point of view based on a synthesis of mysticism and evangelicalism with a strong emphasis on the traditional Quaker pattern … The shift to a more modern rationalistic point of view with a strong emphasis on social service occurred within a single generation. The Hicksite group, having less of an evangelical emphasis, had less of a tendency toward outward checks both in doctrine and in practice and so more readily permitted their traditional mysticism to be replaced by the newer rationalism."*[162] That is, in the dimension of the "mystical-evangelical" line, emphasis shifted away from knowing divine intention (which God tells us either directly (H) or through the Bible (O)) toward practicing reasoned compassion in the World, whose needs we can see. Even the Gurneyites, who were generally more academically inclined, were attracted by the philosophical shift to rationalism. This does not mean that we have lost all the mystics or evangelicals—both still exist with us, although they are harder to find.[163]

**Stabilization and Reunification**

It is very evident that, by this time, American Friends had been fragmented into a chaotic stew.[164] The five main yearly meetings of the north-east, New England, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Ohio had, through divisions, become thirteen, most of which could not talk to each other. Efforts in the twentieth century to stabilize the chaos involved the establishment of several outreaching confederations, including Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting and Evangelical Friends Church International. These did not attempt to synthesize a single Quaker faith so much as to bring about forums in which the varieties could interact and communicate with each other. Certain cross-cutting institutions were extremely helpful in providing venues where different sorts of Quakers could actually work together. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), founded in 1917, is probably the most important of these, and itself embodied the new humanitarian and social services approach.

While the different flavors of Friends could work together, it was quite another task to worship together, although perhaps the earliest example of doing that may be found as early as 1912, at Penn State University, at State College. Quaker students there, from both Philadelphia and Baltimore Yearly Meetings (BYM), had no campus meeting. To meet that need, a State College Meeting was authorized under the care of both Hicksite and Orthodox PYMs as well as BYM (it is not clear if this was one or both BYMs).[165] This meeting, however, was very limited: it was not a preparative or monthly meeting, and had no meeting for business (until after 1925). It strictly served the immediate religious needs of transient young Friends who had memberships in other meetings. Nonetheless, at least in PYM, it was a small start at reconciliation of worship. How the two worked it out from here is best seen through the eyes of Chestnut Hill meeting.

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[162] Brinton, Ibid. Page 241. If you wonder about Brinton's use of the present tense, he was writing this in 1950 as it was happening. The "single generation" he mentions is most easily envisaged as the first quarter of the twentieth century (give-or-take).

[163] If you want a modern mystic, read *Creeds and Quakers*, by Robert Griswold, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #377, 2005.

[164] The best source I can recommend for this part of the history is the account *A Brief History of the Branches of* Friends, published online by Earlham College and found at http://www.quakerinfo.org/quakerism/branches/history

[165] See statecollegefriends.org

## Chestnut Hill Meeting[166]

Chestnut Hill United Meeting (CHUM) was the product of the energy and imagination of eight young couples, almost all married recently, including the parents of our member Chris Nicholson, Vincent and Rebecca Carter Nicholson[167]. The Quaker origins of these sixteen pioneers was varied, coming from six different monthly meetings of four yearly meetings. The social background, on the other hand, was rather more homogeneous: twelve of them had worked for the AFSC, mostly in Europe after World War I; some others came from Young Friends. Both institutions strongly supported reconciliation of Hicksite and Orthodox Friends. What was uniform to them all was a conviction that they were led to show a way to reunification of the Society of Friends.

CHUM began in 1924, meeting in an office of the Yarnall-Waring Company Machine Works at 102 Mermaid Lane. This company had been founded by Quakers D. Robert Yarnall and Bernard Waring[168] in 1908, making valves and other fittings for steam-driven machinery. Robert Yarnall was the meeting's first clerk, and was newly married to Elizabeth Biddle. A website, workshopoftheworld.com, contains a brief history of the company, including this comment: *The Chestnut Hill Meeting of the Society of Friends occupies a one-story building on the site. The Yarnalls were instrumental in founding the Meeting which consists of two formerly hostile groups.* Their meeting was to be neither Hicksite nor Orthodox, yet both Orthodox and Hicksite. It was a rocky road they faced.

### The problem of membership

All of the charter members of CHUM were members of other meetings, and retained these memberships. They could declare themselves "members" of CHUM, but knew this was meaningless as far as Philadelphia Yearly Meeting—of either brand—was concerned. They met their first major hurdle in July of the following year, when an attender asked for membership.

Formal ("recorded") membership in the Society of Friends is vested in the monthly meeting, and Chestnut Hill was by no means a monthly meeting. Nor could Chestnut Hill declare itself to be a monthly meeting, as only a quarterly meeting can create a monthly meeting. It existed, then, as an "independent" meeting outside the structure of either yearly meeting. It could, however, become a preparative meeting, by asking a neighboring monthly meeting, such as Germantown Monthly Meeting (GMM), to accept CHUM into its oversight as a preparative meeting, but this would mean completely abandoning its purpose, as it would have to agree to be Orthodox to become part of GMM. Consequently, they wrote letters to both GMM and the nearby Hicksite Green Street Monthly Meeting (GSMM)[169] asking both if CHUM could be admitted to their oversight as an unaffiliated meeting, not as a preparative meeting. It isn't clear

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[166] Most of the information relating to Chestnut Hill Meeting's history is taken from material prepared for its 75th anniversary in 1999, a copy of which is held by Chris Nicholson, who generously loaned it to me for the purpose of this essay. In particular, it includes a "Study of 75 Years of Minutes" of Meetings for Business, a 48-page review carried out by a team led by Shirley Phillips, including Trude Fuchs, Dona Garretson, Mickey Abraham and Roberts Foss. I found it exceptionally useful; thank you Chris.

[167] Both were members of Germantown Monthly Meeting (GMM) at the time.

[168] Although Waring did not join them in the new meeting, as a founder of the AFSC in 1917 it is easy to imagine that he was strongly sympathetic to the venture. He was the husband of Grace Warner as well as father—by his late first wife Midge Whittall—of Ann (Nan) Thompson; all four members of GMM.

[169] To see how Green Street meeting formed, see *The Golden Age of Germantown*, page 3.

if Green Street MM responded, but Germantown MM certainly did, saying that it was quite a problem, but that sort of a precedent existed of an "indulged meeting"[170] at State College, in which model "obvious problems of organization and discipline" might be avoided.

However, both Germantown and Green Street sent the requesting letters upstairs to their respective quarters (GMM to Abington Quarter (Orthodox) and GSMM to Philadelphia Quarter (Hicksite)). At this level the letters apparently encountered recognition: some combined committee had anticipated just this query and had established agreed-upon procedures. Each quarter then appointed three members to a joint oversight committee and offered a choice of membership—the candidate for membership could choose recording membership in either GMM or GSMM—but clearly membership had to be one or the other.

The folk at Chestnut Hill were not very satisfied with this result, and debated for a while about trying a slightly different version of it, where they would be a combined meeting of two preparative meetings, one Orthodox and the other Hicksite, meeting together but reporting as preparative meetings to GMM and GSMM respectively. No one liked that, either, and they concluded that it would in fact be a step backward for them, not forward. They accepted the oversight of the joint quarterly committee as the best of poor choices. Thus, for the moment, newcomers could become recorded members, but not without choosing sides first. Meanwhile, CHUM would report directly to the joint committee of the two quarters, rather than to the two monthly meetings. This proved to be a struggle. Their most regular submissions were obligatory responses to Queries. "*At different times each quarter was upset by our answers*," as their responses tended not to hew closely enough to doctrine and/or accepted terminology, and they frequently received requests for clarification.

In 1932, however, the overall movement of the two PYMs towards reunification had finally led to a first combined, specially-called yearly meeting at the end of the year, well attended by both. This, together with the fact that the number of "independent" meetings was growing, giving CHUM company, led the yearly meetings to conceive of and formalize an administrative "joint" yearly meeting committee which could hold responsibility for these nonconforming meetings. This joint yearly meeting committee then worked out administrative measures that independent meetings could follow. These greatly eased the regular frustrations that CHUM had experienced in reporting to the quarters. Now, if a quarter had an objection, CHUM simply said it was following rules given by the joint yearly meeting committee. More importantly, attenders who wanted membership now had three choices: Germantown MM, Green Street MM, or Joint PYM. While this was a definite improvement, CHUM still felt it didn't go far enough.

In 1933 CHUM appeared to be losing patience with the two PYMs' apparently being poster children for the worst of Hegel's dialectical argumentation—unable to move forward without the pendulum wildly swinging backwards. In June of that year CHUM decided, "Membership in Chestnut Hill is adequate. There is no necessity for choosing one or the other meeting and it is the unity of our Quaker faith that has led [new members] to us."[171] By the end of the year, however, they must have been very gratified when both of their overseeing quarterly

[170] I had a good deal of difficulty in finding any reference at all to the term "indulged meeting", which appears possibly to mean a meeting of special purpose (but not a preparative meeting). I found it in http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~mygermanfamilies/family/QuakerMeet.html..

[171] "75 Years of Minutes". Page 7.

meetings finally approved that the independent meetings might offer only the "joint" membership, presumably under the oversight of the joint committee of the two quarters, at last removing any need to identify individual fidelity to either the Orthodox or Hicksite flavor.

I find it especially interesting that immediately following upon that opening-of-the-way CHUM met in a specially-called session in January 1934 and renamed itself Chestnut Hill Meeting (CHM). Why drop the "United"? No comment by the committee that reviewed all the minutes explains this event, so we are left to our own speculations. My best guess is that they concluded that the word "united" underscored the fact that there were two sorts of Friends, hostile to each other, and that they at CHUM were better than this through their being "united." And, in that case, "united" was a Friendly form of bragging, which they could and should do without.

By this time everyone was pretty sure that the roadway to reunification was clear, although all acknowledged that there were still a lot of pot-holes in the road. One of these pot-holes opened in April 1939 when Arch Street Yearly Meeting abruptly reversed itself and again required all members to identify their allegiances. This seems to have been a hiccup rather than a full stop, however, and we hear no more about it. Nonetheless, forward progress was slowed considerably by two overarching events that dominated the next dozen years: the Great Depression and then World War II.

Still, even during the depression and war years, joint committees on various topics formed: Peace, Marriage, and Race Relations, for instance, as well as joint Meetings for Ministers and Elders. In the post-war years, however, the move to reunification entered its final phase.

## The Last Hurdle

At the time of the split back in 1827, one of the major contentions had been that the Hicksites felt that the Orthodox were too concerned with authority and control. After the separation, as Brinton said (mentioned earlier), Hicksites moved to "*reduce the authority of elders and overseers.*" In fact, the wording of the Hicksite description of the role of Overseers is essentially identical to that of the Orthodox. Thus, the authority remained unchanged, but the rules themselves were changed, the Hicksites removing those sections which instructed Overseers to act (see example below). On the other hand, the Hicksite *ROD* has one innovation, adding "*It is further advised that the overseers of a Monthly Meeting meet frequently together, at least once in three months, to consider carefully the welfare of the flock, and to strengthen, encourage and aid each other in the faithful performance of their responsible duties."*[172] That is, they added language that gave Overseers a pastoral duty as well as a regulatory one. This pastoral duty was the only duty of Overseers to make it into the future *Faith and Practice*. In addition to removing the triggering language of disownment, Hicksites also did away with many of the offenses that led to disownment.

At the same time, the Orthodox on their side increased central authority, adding the power, for instance, of a quarterly meeting to dissolve a monthly meeting if it was acting badly (e.g., not disowning members it was told to). This meant that the ensuing *Rules of Discipline* after the split were significantly disparate between the two flavors of Friends.

[172] Rules of Discipline (Hicksite), 1893. Page 28.

The issue of disowning was central. In the introduction of the 1806 *Rules* a paragraph states (in part): *This is the extent of the society's censure against irreclaimable offenders, they are disowned as members of our religious community.* This paragraph is reproduced exactly so in every subsequent edition of the orthodox *ROD*. In the Hicksite *Rules*, on the other hand, the introduction is remarkably similar to the orthodox except that this paragraph is omitted. Furthermore, in every section of the orthodox *Rules* which incorporates a specific instruction for disownment, the disownment is missing from the Hicksite equivalent.

An example of the softening changes made by the Hicksites is the section dealing with "blasphemy" previously discussed. The 1806 *ROD* text reads:
*If any in membership with us shall blaspheme, or speak profanely of Almighty God, Christ Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, he or she ought early to be tenderly treated with for their instruction, and the convincement of their understanding, that they may experience repentance and forgiveness; but should any, notwithstanding this brotherly labour, persist in their error, or deny the divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the immediate revelation of the Holy Spirit, or the authenticity of the Scriptures; as it is manifest they are not one in faith with us, the monthly meeting where the party belongs, having extended due care for the help and benefit of the individual without effect, ought to declare the same, and issue their testimony accordingly.* That is, disown them in Quaker-speak.

This was retained exactly as written in the subsequent (1834 and beyond) Orthodox *Rules* (and, incidentally, according to Brinton, this rule was used frequently in the following century to disown errant members. The 1893 Hicksite text reads:
*If anyone in membership with us blaspheme, or speak profanely of Almighty God, Christ Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, or shall deny the divinity of Christ, the immediate revelation of the Holy Spirit, or the inspiration of the Scriptures, he ought to be tenderly treated with for his instruction, and the convincement of this understanding, that he may experience repentance and forgiveness."*

It is not that the Hicksites would not disown anyone. Under the heading *MEMBERSHIP* they have a subheading "*Disownment*" in which they acknowledge that there are circumstances in which disownment is a sad necessity, commenting: *"It is the desire of the Society that no one be disowned except when his retention would be to weaken our testimony for the Truth, impair the good example which we desire to set, or confuse our sense of right living."*

A last major task before reunification was to reconcile these two sets of rules. The joint committee assigned this task must have been one of the most challenging of all. The differences here each represented the most sensitive aspects of the separation. Writing just at this time (in 1950), Howard Brinton comments, *At the middle of the twentieth century there is little to distinguish the majority of the Orthodox from the majority of the Hicksites, although each group possesses a minority which perpetuates older traits* "[173] These minorities had plenty of opportunity to express their displeasure, and no doubt this was the source of the reversal in 1939 spoken of above. Thomas Ambler, the last recorded minister of Germantown Monthly Meeting, who died at the age of 96 in 2013, was interviewed a few months before he died by Leanna Whitman. In conversation with his interviewer, he made it clear that he had not been opposed to

[173] Brinton, Howard. *Friends for 350 Years, Ibid*, Page 241.

reunification. However, he had felt, at the time of the merger, outraged by how much the clerk of Arch Street yearly meeting had "given away" in pursuing it.[174]

In any case, in 1951 the committee reconciling the *Rules of Discipline* completed its task. The new and renamed *Faith and Practice (F&P)* had to circulate, and after three more years was finally approved by both yearly meetings, and was published in 1954. The most remarkable feature of this first *F&P* is the complete absence of the word "disown" – especially since that word was used in both sets of *Rules*. The reconciled formulation paralleled the Hicksite in that the discussion of "discontinuation of" or "removal from" membership, culminating in a "minute of removal from membership" all occurred in one section about membership. The committee avoided many of their potential arguments by abandoning the old format of focusing on arenas of behavior (such as CONDUCT and CONVERSATION), thus removing from discussion questions like "well, what is blasphemy?" and centering on Quaker organization, as *Faith and Practice* continues to do today. Blasphemy is not mentioned at all in *F&P*.

In April 1955, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, without a qualifying identifier, met as a unified body, one of its constituent monthly meetings being Chestnut Hill MM. Finally, they could be members of their own meeting, recorded in the Society of Friends.

[174] Unfortunately, this topic was not part of his formal interview, and his opinion is recorded only in the recollection of his interviewer.

# APPENDICES

## A. **Grubb's account of the April 1827 yearly meeting**

**The whole of this below is a single extended quotation from Grubb, pp 32-37, except for footnotes, which I have added**.

"Elias Hicks himself took little if any part in the preparations for separation in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. The real leader of the movement there was John Comly, a recorded minister, and a man of tender spirit. He had long been convinced that only by separation could peace be restored, and as the Yearly Meeting drew on in the spring of 1827, he held numerous private meetings with Friends of his own way of thinking, to consider what should be done. Many of them held that, before any steps toward separation were taken, a fresh attempt should be made to obtain a controlling voice in the Yearly Meeting. To this end, it was necessary to secure, if possible, a Clerk favorable to their views; for the recognized practice was that the Clerk should decide "the sense of the meeting" not by the numbers, but by the "weight" of those who spoke. This practice was carried to such lengths that Samuel Bettle publicly stated that as Clerk he did not consider most of the Friends who objected to the Declaration of Faith[175] were entitled to any "weight" or influence at all. The friends of Elias Hicks urged with reason that this meant denying them any voice in the counsels of the Society. It seems clear that a method, which in ordinary times works well, was, in a period of acute division, strained to the breaking point.

The Yearly Meeting opened on the 16th of Fourth Month, the former Clerk Samuel Bettle, and the assistant Clerk, John Comly, officiating during the first sitting. The list of representatives being called over, it was found that the three Quarterly Meetings in which E. Hicks had the strongest support had sent more than the usual number—though not, it was claimed, more than

[175] A highly evangelicalistic document objected to by many, including certainly all Hicksites.

they had a right to send, no maximum being laid down in the Discipline. After the first sitting the representatives met to choose a Clerk. Their meeting was very stormy, some supporting John Comly and others Samuel Bettle. After some hours of acute dissension, all they could manage to report was that they were not agreed—and this resulted in the former Clerks retaining their places. John Comly strongly objected to continuing as assistant, but eventually submitted to the entreaties of Friends of both parties. On the second day of the meeting, he adverted[176] feelingly to the state of division that existed, and proposed that, as the Meeting was not in a condition to discharge its duties, it should be adjourned til it could come together in love. No date being suggested, this was regarded by many as a proposition for the dissolution of the Yearly Meeting, and after some discussion the proposal was withdrawn.

The Yearly Meeting proceeded, under difficulties, with its business, its last united act being to vote a sum of 3,000 dollars, to be raised according to the usual quotas in the different Quarterly Meetings, for the relief of certain freed slaves in North Carolina. This sum was duly raised and paid over to the treasurer of the Yearly Meeting.

Meanwhile John Comly and his friends, having failed to control or dissolve the Yearly Meeting, had met on several occasions, and after the Yearly Meeting had adjourned, they agreed upon an address to Friends, from which it may be well to quote freely. They state that the "glorious truth" for which the Society stands is that "GOD ALONE IS THE SOVERIGN LORD OF CONSCIENCE, and that with this inalienable right no power, civil or ecclesiastical, should ever interfere." This heritage they "feel bound to endeavor to preserve, unfettered by the hand of man, and unalloyed with prescribed modes of faith, framed in the will and wisdom of the creature." The ancient unity they declare to have been destroyed. "Doctrines held to be sound and edifying, are pronounced by the other part to be unsound and spurious. … Measures have been pursued which we deem oppressive," and destructive of religious association. Therefore they believe "*that the period has been fully come when we ought to look towards making a quiet retreat from this scene of confusion."* The address concludes: "We think proper to remind you that we have no new gospel to preach, nor any other foundation to lay than that already laid and proclaimed by our forefathers, even 'Christ within, the hope of glory', 'the power of God, and the wisdom of God.'

The signatures are appended of John Comly and nine others.

The gathering at which this address was adopted is called by Janney a "General Meeting," and it adjourned until Sixth Month, 1827, when it met again and adopted an "Epistle to Friends of the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings." In this it is said the "desolating spirit," which at first was "confined to individuals acting as officers in the church," has spread, and "unfounded charges have been made against Friends travelling in the ministry. The spirit of discord and confusion has gained strength; and to us it now appears no way to regain the harmony and tranquility of the body, but by withdrawing ourselves—not from the Society of Friends, nor from the exercise of its salutary Discipline—but from religious communion with those who have introduced, and seem disposed to continue, such disorders among us. The quiet and solemnity of our meetings for Divine worship—the meetings of a Gospel ministry unshackled by human authority—the preservation of our religious liberty—the advancement of

[176] Refer, allude, assert.

our Christian testimonies—and the prosperity of truth, so far as it is connected with our labours, we believe very much depend upon the early adoption of this measure."

Therefore, they ask the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings to send representatives to meet "in company with other members favourable to our view," at a Yearly Meeting to be held in Philadelphia in Tenth Month, 1827.

Thus was accomplished the separation in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting."

## B. GREEN STREET ADDRESS

ADDRESS TO FRIENDS WITHIN THE COMPASS OF THE
YEARLY MEETING HELD IN PHILADELPHIA

At a meeting of a large number of Friends, from the different branches of the Yearly Meeting held in Philadelphia, convened at Green-street meeting-house, on the 19th of the fourth month, 1827, to confer together on the present unsettled state of the Society of Friends, and to consider what measures it may be proper to take, in the openings of Truth, to remedy the distressing evil; after a solemn pause, and under a deep sense of the weighty subject, it was unitedly concluded to address the members of this Yearly Meeting on the affecting occasion; for which purpose an essay being produced, and some progrerss made in the consideration thereof, the meeting adjourned, to meet again, dy Divine permission, tomorrow evening.

Fourth month 20th.—Friends again met, and resumed the consideration of the aforesaid address; which, after deliberate attention. Was. With spome alterations, unanimously adopted, when the meeting adjourned, to meet again tomorrow.

Fourth month 21st.—Friends assembled, pursuant to adjournment. The essay of an Address being again read, and weightily considered, it was agreed that it be signed on behalf of this meeting, and that a suitable number of copied thereof be printed for distribution.

*To Friends within the compass of the Yearly Meeting held in Philadelphia.*

Dear Friends:--The members of the Society of Friends have been permitted, in time past, to be partakers together, under the Divine blessing, of the excellent effects produced by the power of that gospel which was professed and lived in by the apostles; and which after a long night of apostacy, was embraced by our worthy ancestors. We are prepared to record our full conviction that this same gospel continues to be open to us, and to all men, and is "the power of God unto salvation" to those that believe in and obey it. Its blessed fruits are love to God and

love to man, manifested in life and conduct: and our early Friends gave ample proofs of the tendency and influence of the “new commandment” which Christ gave to his disciples when he said: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Through an obedience to it, they became known and distinguished; acting under its sacred influence and government, they were made powerful instruments in opening the door of gospel liberty, and removing many of ther fetters that had been formed in the dark night of superstition and error that had preceded them. Hence they were prepared to promulgate the glorious truth, that GOD ALONE IS THE SOVEREIGN LORD OF CONSCIENCE, and that with this unalienable right, no power, civil or ecclesiastical, should ever interfere. This blessed liberty was amply enjoyed among themselves; and through faithfulness—not to speculative opinions, but to the light of CHRIST within—they were thus united in the one eternal unchangeable spirit, and by it became of one heart and of one mind. In this truly Christian state, they were lights in the world, and as a city set on an hill which cannot be hid. Through their instrumentality, with the blessing of the Almighty upon their labours, our religious society became possessed of this very important spiritual inheritance; and we feel bound to endeavor to preserve it, unfettered by the hand of man, and unalloyed with prescribed modes of faith, framed in the will and wisdom of the creature.

With this great object in view, our attention has been turned to the present condition of this Yearly Meeting and its different branches; and, by evidence on every hand, we are constrained to declare that the unity of this body is interrupted—that a division exists among us, developing in its progress, views which appear incompatible with each other, and feelings avers to a reconciliation. Doctrines held by one part of society, and which we believe to be sound and edifying, are pronounced by the other part to be unsound and spurious. From this has resulted a state of things that has been that has proved destructive of peace and tranquility, and in which the fruits of love condescension have been blasted, and the comforts and enjoyments even of social intercourse greatly diminished. Measures have been pursued which we deem oppressive, and in their nature and tendency calculated to undermine and destroy those benefits, to establish and perpetuate which should be the purpose of every religious association.

It is only under the influence of “the peaceable spirit and wisdom of JESUS” that discipline can be properly administered, or the affairs of the church transacted “with decency” and in order. This blessed influence is a wall of defense, on the right hand and on the left, protecting all, even the weakest of the flock; and within this sacred enclosure our rights and privileges repose, as in the bosom of society, in perfect security. On this foundation has rested that excellent order which the Society of Friends has been favoured, in a good degree, to maintain in its transaction; this is the bond that has united its members together, and enabled them to manage all their concerns in “forbearance and love of each other.” But this blessed order has been infringed, both in the present Yearly Meeting, (producing unexampled disorder in some of the sittings,) and in many of its subordinate branches, and hasa proved a fruitful source of the difficulties that now exist.

It is under a solemn and deliberate view of this painful sdtate of our affairs, that we feel bound to express to you, under a settled conviction of mind, that the period has fully come in which we ought to look toward making a quiet retreat from this scene of confusion, and we therefore recommend to you deeply to weigh the momentous subject, and to adopt such a course

as Truth. Under solid and solemn deliberation, may point to, in furtherance of this object, that our society may again enjoy the free exercise of its rights and privileges. And we think proper to remind you that we have new gospel to preach, nor any other foundation to lay than that already laid and proclaimed by our forefathers, even “Christ within, the hope of glory”—“the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” Neither have we any other system of discipline to propose than that which we already possess, believing that whilst we sincerely endeavor to live and walk consistently with our holy profession, and to administer it in the spirit of forbearance and love, it will be found sufficiwent for the government of our church. And whilst we cherish a reasonable hope to see our Zion, under the Divine blessing, loosen herself “from the bands of her neck,” and put on her strength, and Jerusalem her “beautiful garments,” and our annual and other assemblies again crowned with that quietude and peace which become ourt Christian profession, we feel and ardent desire that in all our proceedings tending to this end, our conduct toward all our brethren may, on every occasion, be marked with love and forbearance; that when reviled, we bless; when defamed, we entreat; and when persecuted, we suffer it.

Finally, brethren, we beseech you, “by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together, in the same mind, and in the same judgment.” And now, we “commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them who are sanctified.”\

Signed by direction and on behalf of the meeting by—

| | |
|---|---|
| John Comly | Joshua Lippincott |
| Robert Moore | John Hunt |
| William Mode | Stephen Stephens |
| Richard Barnard | Joseph G. Rowland |
| John Watson (Buckingham) | William Wharton |

Having experience, in the several sittings of this conference, a comfortable evidence of Divine regard, imparting strength and encouragement to look forward to another friendly meeting together, this meeting agrees to adjourn to the first second-day in the sixth month next, at ten o’clock in the morning at Green-street meeting-house, Philadelphia, if the Lord permit.

# C. EPISTLE INVITING FRIENDS TO THE HICKSITE YEARLY MEETING

At a general meeting of Friends, held by adjournments, at Green-street meeting-house, in the city of Philadelphia, on the fourth and fifth days of the sixth month, 1827, pursuant to an adjournment in the fourth month last, the following epistle was adopted:--

AN EPISTLE TO FRIENDS OF THE QUARTERLY AND MONTHLY MEETINGS WITHIN THE COMPASS OF THE YEARLY MEETING HELD IN PHILADELPHIA

Dear Friends:-- Having, through Divine favour, been permitted to meet together, pursuant to adjournment in the fourth month last, the state of our religious society was again brought into view. The wing of Ancient Goodness being sensibly extended over the several sittings of this meeting, we have been enabled weightily to consider the subjects that came before us. After solemn deliberation, and a free interchange of sentiment, it was, with much unanimity, agreed to recommend the following views and propositions for your serious consideration.

The principal objects of our religious association, are the public worship of God; the edification and comfort of each other; the strengthening of the weak; and the recovery of those who have wandered from the way of peace and safety.

It is only under the blessed influence of gospel love that these objects can be attained. Whenever any among us so far forsake this *fundamental principle* of our union as to act in the spirit of strife and discord, and to oppose and condemn their brethren who may conscientiously differ from them in opinion, they break the bond of gospel fellowship, and, as far as their influence extends, frustrate the design of religious society. If such, after the use of proper means, cannot be reclaimed, the peace, and harmony, and welfare of the body require that they should be separated from our communion.

The apostle, aware of the evils arising from the contention in religious communities, warned his brethren against it, declaring that “where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work;” and they were exhorted to withdraw every brother who walked disorderly. And we know from experience, that wherever this evil spirit has appeared in any of our meetings, weakness, and jealousy, and divisions have been introduced; and that excellent order has been subverted which has not only preserved us in love and concord, but protected the rights and privileges of all our members.

With deep concern and sorrow we have observed the introduction and increase of this desolating spirit. It is now about five years since it made its appearance in our hitherto favored society, so as to become a subject of general concern. For some time it was mostly confined to individuals acting as officers in the church. In this stage of its progress its consequences were grievous. Some who became infected by it, disregarding the wholesome order established by our Yearly Meeting, which directs, in the first place, *private* labour with such as give cause of concern, and afterward that *monthly meetings* should treat with them, formed combinations among themselves, unauthorized by the society, and unknown to its discipline. Friends travelling in the ministry, were unjustly charged with preaching infidel doctrine, denying the Divinity of Christ, and undervaluing the Scriptures; together with divers other things, generally known to you and equally unfounded.

It was not long, however, before the contagion spread, and made its appearance in some of our meetings for discipline, opening to the exercised members of the society scenes of the most painful nature. Measures of a party character were introduced, and the established order of the society was infringed, by carrying those measures into execution, against the judgment and contrary to the voice of the larger part of Friends present.

At length the infection, taking a wider range, appeared in our Yearly Meeting, where its deplorable effects were equally conspicuous. Means were recently taken therein the greater part of the representatives, and a clerk was imposed upon the meeting without their concurrence or consent. A committee was there appointed to visit the quarterly and monthly meetings, without the unity of the meeting, and contrary to the solid sense and judgment of much the larger number of the members in attendance; and several important subjects were necessarily dismissed, owing to the disunity and discord prevalent in that body.

Friends viewed this state of things among us with deep concern and exercise, patiently waiting in the hope, that time and reflection would convince our brethren of the impropriety of such a course, and that, being favored to see the evil consequences of such conduct, they might retrace their steps. But hitherto, we have waited in vain. Time and opportunity for reflection have been amply afforded, but have not produced these desirable results. On the contrary, the spirit of discod and confusion has gained strength; and to us there now appears no way to regain the harmony and tranquility of the body, but by withdrawing ourselves—not from the Society of Friends, nor from the exercise of its salutary discipline—but from religious communion with those who have introduced, and seem disposed to continue, such disorders among us.

The quiet and solemnity of our meetings for Divine worship—ther blessing of a gospel ministry unshackled by human authority—the preservation of our religious liberty—the advancement of our Christian testimonies—and the prosperity of Truth, so far as it is connected with our labours, we believe, very much depend upon the early adoption of this measure.

We therefore, under a solemn and weighty sense of the importance of this concern, and with ardent desires that all our movements may be under the guidance of Him who only can lead us in safety, have agreed to propose for your consideration, the propriety and expediency of holding a Yearly Meeting for Friends in unity with us, residing within the limits of those quarterly meetings, heretofore represented in the Yearly Meeting held in Philadelphia, on the third second-day in the tenth month next, at ten o'clock in the morning, in company with other members favorable to our views, there to hold a Yearly Meeting of men and women Friends, upon the principle of the early professors of our name, and for the same purposes that brough them together in a religious capacity—to exalt the standard of Truth—promote righteousness and peace in the earthy—edify the churches—and generally to attend to all such concerns as relate to the welfare of religious socity, and the cause of our holy Redeemer, who is God over all, bessed for ever. Amen.

Extracted from the minutes of the aforesaid meeting.

William Gibbons and Benj. Ferris, Clerks

**Excerpts from Woolman, John, *Consideration of Keeping Negroes*, privately published with the approval of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1754**

. . Men may pursue means which are not agreeable to perfect purity, with a view to increase the wealth and happiness of their offspring, and thereby make the way of virtue more difficult to them. And though the ill example of a parent, or a multitude, does not excuse a man in doing evil, yet the mind being early impressed with vicious notions and practices, and nurtured up in ways of getting treasure, which are not the ways of truth; this wrong spirit getting first possession, and being thus strengthened, frequently prevents due attention to the true spirit of wisdom, so that they exceed in wickedness those before them. And in this channel, though parents labor, as they think, to forward the happiness of their children, it proves a means of forwarding their calamity. . .

. . . . To suppose it right, that an innocent man shall at this day be excluded from the common rules of justice; be deprived of that liberty, which is the natural right of human creatures; and be a slave to others during life, on account of a sin committed by his immediate parents; or a sin committed by Ham, the son of Noah; is a supposition too gross to be admitted into the mind of any person, who sincerely desires to be governed by solid principles.

. . . That the liberty of man was, by the inspired Lawgiver, esteemed precious, appears in this; that such who unjustly deprived men of it, were to be punished in like manner as if they had murdered them. He that stealeth a man, and selleth him; or if he be found in his hand, shall surely be put to death. This part of the law was so considerable, that Paul, the learned Jew, giving a brief account of the uses of the law, adds this, It was made for men-stealers, I Tim. 1:10. . .

Some who keep slaves, have doubted as to the equity of the practice; but as they knew men, noted for their piety, who were in it, this, they say, has made their minds easy. To lean on the example of men in doubtful cases, is difficult: For only admit, that those men were not faithful

and upright to the highest degree, but that in some particular case they erred, and it may follow that this one case was the same, about which we are in doubt; and to quiet our minds by their example, may be dangerous to ourselves; and continuing in it, prove a stumbling-block to tender-minded people who succeed us, in like manner as their examples are to us.

But supposing charity was their only motive, and they not foreseeing the tendency of paying robbers for their booty, were not justly under the Imputation of being partners with a thief, Prov. 29:24, but were really innocent in what they did, are we assured that we keep them with the same views they kept them? If we keep them from no other motive than a real sense of duty, and true charity governs us in all our proceedings toward them, we are so far safe: But if another spirit, which inclines our minds to the ways of this world, prevail upon us, and we are concerned for our own outward gain more than for their real happiness, it will avail us nothing that some good men have had the care and management of negroes.

Since mankind spread upon the earth, many have been the revolutions attending the several families, and their customs and ways of life different from each other. This diversity of manners, though some are preferable to others, operates not in favor of any, so far as to justify them to do violence to innocent men; to bring them from their own to another way of life. The mind, when moved by a principle of true love, may feel a warmth of gratitude to the universal Father, and a lively sympathy with those nations, where Divine Light has been less manifest. This desire for their real good may beget a willingness to undergo hardships for their sakes, that the true knowledge of GOD may be spread amongst them: But to take them from their own land, with views of profit to ourselves, by means inconsistent with pure justice, is foreign to that principle which seeks the happiness of the whole Creation. Forced subjection, on innocent persons of full age, is inconsistent with right reason; on one side, the human mind is not naturally fortified with that firmness in wisdom and goodness, necessary to an independent ruler; on the other side, to be subject to the uncontrollable will of a man, liable to err, is most painful and afflicting to a conscientious creature.

It is our happiness faithfully to serve the Divine Being, who made us: His perfection makes our service reasonable; but so long as men are bluffed by narrow self-love, so long an absolute power over other men is unfit for them.

Men, taking on them the government of others, may intend to govern reasonably, and make their subjects more happy than they would be otherwise; but, as absolute command belongs only to him who is perfect, where frail men, in their own wills, assume such command, it hath a direct tendency to vitiate their minds, and make them more unfit for government.

Placing on men the ignominious title SLAVE, dressing them in uncomely garments, keeping them to servile labor, in which they are often dirty, tends gradually to fix a notion in the mind, that they are a sort of people below us in nature, and leads us to consider them as such in all our conclusions about them. And, moreover, a person which in our esteem is mean and contemptible, if their language or behavior toward us is unseemly or disrespectful, it excites wrath more powerfully than the like conduct in one we accounted our equal or superior; and where this happens to be the case, it disqualifies for candid judgment; for it is unfit for a person to sit as judge in a case where his own personal resentments are stirred up; and, as members of society in a well framed government, we are mutually dependent. Present interest incites to duty, and makes each man attentive to the convenience of others; but he whose will is a law to others,

and can enforce obedience by punishment; he whose wants are supplied 3 without feeling any obligation to make equal returns to his benefactor, his irregular appetites find an open field for motion, and he is in danger of growing hard, and inattentive to their convenience who labor for his support; and so loses that disposition, in which alone men are fit to govern. . . .

It is a happy case to set out right, and persevere in the same way: A wrong beginning leads into many difficulties; for to support one evil, another becomes customary; two produces more; and the further men proceed in this way, the greater their dangers, their doubts and fears and the more painful and perplexing are their circumstances; so that such who are true friends to the real and lasting interest of our country, and candidly consider the tendency of things, cannot but feel some concern on this account.

There is that superiority in men over the brute creatures, and some of them so manifestly dependent on men for a living, that for them to serve us in moderation, so far as relates to the right use of things, looks consonant to the design of our Creator.

There is nothing in their frame, nothing relative to the propagating their species, which argues the contrary; but in men there is. The frame of men's bodies, and the disposition of their minds are different; some, who are tough and strong, and their minds active, choose ways of life requiring much labor to support them; others are soon weary; and though use makes labor more tolerable, yet some are less apt for toil than others, and their minds less sprightly. These latter laboring for their subsistence, commonly choose a life easy to support, being content with a little. When they are weary they may rest, take the most advantageous part of the day for labor; and in all cases proportion one thing to another, that their bodies be not oppressed.

Now, while each is at liberty, the latter may be as happy, and live as comfortably as the former; but where men of the first sort have the latter under absolute command, not considering the odds in strength and firmness, do, sometimes, in their eager pursuit, lay on burdens grievous to be borne; by degrees grow rigorous, and, aspiring to greatness, they increase oppression, and the true order of kind Providence is subverted.

There are weaknesses sometimes attending us, which make little or no alteration in our countenances, nor much lessen our appetite for food, and yet so affect us, as to make labor very uneasy. In such case masters, intent on putting forward business, and jealous of the sincerity of their slaves, may disbelieve what they say, and grievously afflict them.

Action is necessary for all men, and our exhausting frame requires a support, which is the fruit of action. The Earth must be labored to keep us alive: Labor is a proper part of our life; to make one answer the other in some useful motion, looks agreeable to the design of our Creator. Motion, rightly managed, tends to our satisfaction, health and support.

Those who quit all useful business, and live wholly on the labor of others, have their exercise to seek; some such use less than their health requires; others choose that which, by the circumstances attending it, proves utterly reverse to true happiness. Thus, while some are diverse ways distressed for want of an open channel of useful action, those who support them sigh, and are exhausted in a stream too powerful for nature, spending their days with too little cessation from labor.

Seed sown with the tears of a confined oppressed people, harvest cut down by an overborne discontented reaper, makes bread less sweet to the taste of an honest man, than that

which is the produce, or just reward of such voluntary action, which is one proper part of the business of human creatures. . . .

He who reverently observes that goodness manifested by our gracious Creator toward the various species of beings in this world, will see, that in our frame and constitution is clearly shown that innocent men, capable to manage for themselves, were not intended to be slaves. . . .

Through the force of long custom, it appears needful to speak in relation to color.—Suppose a white child, born of parents of the meanest sort, who died and left him an infant, falls into the hands of a person, who endeavors to keep him a slave, some men would account him an unjust man in doing so, who yet appear easy while many black people, of honest lives, and good abilities, are enslaved, in a manner more shocking than the case here supposed. This is owing chiefly to the idea of slavery being connected with the black color, and liberty with the white:—And where false ideas are twisted into our minds, it is with difficulty we get fairly disentangled. . . .

Selfishness being indulged, clouds the understanding; and where selfish men, for a long time, proceed on their way, without opposition, the deceivableness of unrighteousness gets so rooted in their Intellects, that a candid examination of things relating to self-interest is prevented; and in this circumstance, some who would not agree to make a slave of a person whose color is like their own, appear easy in making slaves of others of a different color, though their understandings and morals are equal to the generality of men of their own color.

The color of a man avails nothing, in matters of right and equity. Consider color in relation to treaties; by such, disputes between nations are sometimes settled. And should the Father of us all so dispose things, that treaties with black men should sometimes be necessary, how then would it appear amongst the princes and ambassadors, to insist on the prerogative of the white color? . . .6

Negroes are our fellow creatures, and their present condition amongst us requires our serious consideration. We know not the time when those scales, in which mountains are weighed, may turn. The Parent of mankind is gracious: His care is over his smallest creatures; and a multitude of men escape not his notice: And though many of them are trodden down, and despised, yet he remembers them: He sees their affliction, and looks upon the spreading increasing exaltation of the oppressor. He turns the channels of power, humbles the most haughty people, and gives deliverance to the oppressed, at such periods as are consistent with his infinite justice and goodness. And wherever gain is preferred to equity, and wrong things publicly encouraged to that degree, that wickedness takes root, and spreads wide amongst the inhabitants of a country, there is real cause for sorrow to all such, whose love to mankind stands on a true principle, and wisely consider the end and event of things.

The following is copied from *Rules of Discipline of the Yearly Meeting in Philadelphia, 1806.*

## D. MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS

In order that this yearly meeting with its several branches, might be properly represented in the intervals thereof, on emergent occasions, a meeting was instituted anno 1756, by the name of the "Meeting for Sufferings;" which it was agreed should consist of twelve Friends appointed by the yearly meeting (living in or near Philadelphia, for the convenience of getting soon together) and also of four Friends chosen out of each of the quarterly meetings; who were directed to meet together in Philadelphia forthwith, for the regulation of its future meetings, which are subject to the following rules:

First. The said meeting shall keep fair minutes of all its proceedings, and annually lay them before the yearly meeting.

Second. No less number than twelve of the members attending shall constitute a meeting capable of transacting any business.

Third. On all occasions of uncommon importance, previous notice thereof shall be given or sent to all the members.

Fourth. In case of the decease of any Friend or Friends, nominated either by the yearly meeting or quarterly meetings, or of their declining or neglecting their attendance for the space of twelve months, the meeting for sufferings (if it be thought expedient) may choose others in his or their stead, to serve to the time of the next yearly meeting, or till the places of those who have represented the quarterly meetings shall be supplied by new appointments.

Fifth. The said meeting may sit on its own adjournments, and order these, as well as the times of its stated meetings (if these do not exceed three months) according to the business before them.

Sixth. The said meeting is not to meddle with any matter of faith or discipline, which has not been determined by the yearly meeting.

The further services confided to the said meeting for sufferings, are:

First. In general to represent this yearly meeting, and to appear on its behalf in any cases where the interest or reputation of our religious society may render it needful.

Second. To take the oversight and inspection of all writings proposed to be printed relative to our religious principles or testimonies; and to promote or suppress the same at their discretion; also to print and distribute any writings already published by the society, or which may be offered for inspection as aforesaid, and approved.

Third. To inspect and explain titles to land, or other estate, belonging to any of our meetings; also charitable legacies and donations; and to give such advice respecting the same as may appear to be necessary.

Fourth. To receive from the several quarterly meetings their annual accounts of sufferings, and also such memorials concerning deceased Friends as those meetings may have concurred with: that when examined and approved they may be laid before the yearly meeting.

Fifth. To extend such advice and assistance to any individuals under sufferings for our testimonies, as their cases may require; and, if necessary, to apply to the government, or persons in authority, on their behalf.

Sixth. To correspond with the meeting for sufferings in London or elsewhere, on the common concerns of the society.

On solid consideration it is agreed that though none are properly members of the meeting for sufferings, but such who are appointed by this yearly meeting, or by the several quarterly meetings; yet, that approved ministers, and members of any other meeting for sufferings corresponding with this, be permitted to attend when they be inclined so to do.

Note: By the late nineteenth century, most Meetings for Sufferings, including that of PYM(O), had changed their name to Representative Meeting.