

**Cultivating Inner and Outer Plantations:  
Profit, Industry, and Slavery in Early  
Quaker Migration to the New World<sup>1</sup>**

Kristen Block  
(Florida Atlantic University)

Program in Early American Economy and Society  
Markets and Morality Conference

November 7, 2008

---

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to the staff of Haverford Library, Rutgers University Special Collections, Monmouth County Historical Society, New York State Library, New York Historical Society, the Library of the Society of Friends in London, and Florida Atlantic University Special Collections, and gratitude to Mac Griswold, Diana Franzusoff Peterson, Ann Upton, Richard Veit, Emma Lapsansky-Werner, and Carla Zimmerman for extra assistance in hunting down citations. This paper is a draft prepared exclusively for those attending the November 2008 PEAES conference, "Markets and Morality." Please do not quote or cite without express permission of the author.

In 1682, a pamphlet promoting the settlement of Pennsylvania included the text of two recent letters to the colony's proprietor, William Penn, from a man named Lewis Morris. Col. Morris, "late of Barbados," had recently transferred his residence to the colony of New York. Hearing that Penn had "obtained a grant for the West part of the River Delaware," Morris wrote a short letter of congratulations, encouraging Penn to continue his efforts with "so good a Work on so good a Land as this is."<sup>2</sup> Many English plantation projects had begun and others had failed over the course of the seventeenth century, but by the time Penn received this letter, it finally seemed possible, with good planning, to bring American plantation projects to full fruition. Lewis Morris had been involved in many of those colonial projects, first as an indentured servant on the Moskito Coast with the Providence Island Company (P.I.C), then privateering against Spanish targets in the Caribbean, finally setting himself up as a sugar planter in the midst of Barbados' sugar boom. Though Morris' early religious convictions are unknown, his service to the P.I.C. and puritan privateer William Jackson suggest strong puritan tendencies. Morris would convert to Quakerism while in Barbados, and he remained a steadfast and influential Friend the rest of his life.<sup>3</sup> In his Caribbean endeavors, Morris had had to balance the practical aspects of building a life in the colonies with his faith. The increasing hostility that Barbados

---

<sup>2</sup> William Loddington, *Plantation Work the Work of this Generation: written in true-love to all such as are weightily inclined to transplant themselves and families to any of the English plantations in America: the most material doubts and objections against it being removed, they may more cheerfully proceed to the glory and renown of the God of the whole earth, who in all undertakings is to be looked unto, praised and feared for ever* (London, 1682), pp. 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Sources for biographical information on Col. Lewis Morris include: Samuel Stelle Smith, *Lewis Morris: Anglo-American Statesman, ca. 1613-1691* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1983), pp. 2, 9-23, 27-29, 31-47, 81-84, 110; Eugene R. Sheridan, *Lewis Morris 1671-1746: A Study in Early American Politics* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1981), pp. 2-6. Kupperman, *Providence Island*, pp. 97-99, 387; Penn, *Memorials*, 41-42; *Thurloe State Papers*, iii.158; British National Archives, PRO 31/17/43; Larry Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted: The English Colonization of Barbados, 1627-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 137-38; Robert Bolton, *The History of the Several Towns, Manors, and Patents of the County of Westchester, From its First Settlement to the Present Time* (New York: C.F. Roper, 1881), pp. 455-73; Graham Russell Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North: African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665-1865* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), pp. 1-38; Dean Freiday, "Tinton Manor: The Iron Works," *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society* 74 (1952), p. 256, 258.

governors showed to Quakers—harsher fines and more restrictions—was one of the major reasons why Morris left the island, closing his affairs there to take full control of a provisioning plantation in New York and an iron works in East New Jersey, bringing sixty slaves as part of the relocation.<sup>4</sup>

What did it mean for Quakers to settle plantations? Certainly Morris' reference to "so good a Work... as this" was a tacit approval of Penn's plans to guarantee religious freedom to his colony's settlers, especially for Quakers, who were thrilled to have found a patron who would ensure their haven from persecution in America. However, Morris' remarks as to the quality of the land granted to Penn ("so good a Land") remind us that the colonial plantations were meant to be profitable endeavors. For Friends interested in transatlantic settlement, American plantations promised an ideal marriage of religious and economic goals: Friends there could hope to cultivate both the inner plantation (the planting and nurturing of a healthy spiritual life and community) and the outer plantation (the support of property and profit).<sup>5</sup>

Morris referred elsewhere in his letter to Penn about "the great goodness of God to us in these Parts."<sup>6</sup> Lewis Morris' outer plantation had thrived spectacularly since arriving in the West Indies as an indentured servant, especially once he turned to sugar cultivation and enslaved

---

<sup>4</sup> After several decades of toleration, Barbados Friends made enemies with authorities by refusing to conform to 1676 militia acts, an unforgivable breach since officials were more and more obsessed with security concerns in the face of rising black populations and the threat of rebellion. See Barbara Ritter Dailey, "The Early Quaker Mission and the Settlement of Meetings in Barbados, 1655-1700" *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 39 (1991). Setting up provisioning plantations in the north was a logical next step for Barbadian immigrants like Morris who had already established ties with Friends in places like Long Island producing cheap foodstuffs and items like barrel staves. Morris would serve as one of the executors of the estate of his friend and business associates, Nathaniel Sylvester of Long Island, who ran a provisioning plantation in partnership with Barbados sugar planters (Mac Griswold, "The Sugar Connection: Barbados and Shelter Island," unpublished paper, transcript at <[http://www.easthamptonlibrary.org/lic/lectures/mac\\_griswold\\_lecture.htm](http://www.easthamptonlibrary.org/lic/lectures/mac_griswold_lecture.htm)>; see also <[http://www.shelter-island.org/sylvester\\_dig/index.html](http://www.shelter-island.org/sylvester_dig/index.html)>). For other references to such partnerships between West Indian and Northern planters see April Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia*, pp. 92-94; Pomfret, *Province of East Jersey*, 147; and Richard Pares, *Yankees and Creoles* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956).

<sup>5</sup> Fox first used this phrase in reference to plans to settle Pennsylvania. See Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, p. x.

<sup>6</sup> Loddington, p. 9.

African labor. A long line of scholars have noted the remarkable collective wealth of the Society of Friends, who developed trustworthy banking and credit practices, reliable accounting practices, and wide-ranging inter- and intra-denominational trade partners throughout the circum-Atlantic.<sup>7</sup> From the 1660s on, prominent Friends had critiqued the ostentation, greed, and lack of concern for one's fellow man that they witnessed in Britain and the colonies, trends due in no small part to changes in the proto-capitalist transatlantic economy. They preached against the corrupting influence of "filthy lucre"—money was the gateway to lust, pride, greed, and general wickedness.<sup>8</sup>

Friends in the American colonies generally claimed that for them, prosperity was a spiritual blessing, not a temptation. But slavery was the foundation for the prosperity of nearly all Barbados' prominent Quakers, and this new brand of coerced labor, so much more sweeping in its exploitation compared to traditional British forms of labor, suggested that there may be more to monitor about the line between greed and godliness in the colonies. From early in the Society's existence, Friends struggled to define an ethical approach to wealth and proto-capitalist activity, and Morris was an exemplar of the quest to develop definitions of godly stewardship.

---

<sup>7</sup> See Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1948), esp. Ch. 4, "The Quaker Economic Ethic"; James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1997); April Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia*, Ch. 5, "English Atlantic Networks and Religion in Virginia," pp. 110-36; and S. D. Smith, "A Test of Faith: The Account book of Richard Poor, Quaker Merchant of Barbados," Centre for Historical Economics and Related Research at York (CHERRY) Discussion Papers, Department of Economics, University of York, 2007, p. 15-17 <<http://ideas.repec.org/p/yor/cherry/07-01.html>>. For a broader theological perspective, see Douglas Gywn, *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism* (Wallingford, Penn.: Pendle Hill, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> George Fox, *Line of Righteousness and justice stretched forth over all merchants, &c.: and an exhortation to all Friends and people whatsoever who are merchants, tradesmen, husbandmen or sea-men, who deal in merchandize, trade in buying and selling by sea or land, or deal in husbandry, that ye all do that which is just, equal and righteous in the sight of God and man...* (London, 1661), p. 5. This tract was reprinted in 1674, and ordered to be read "in all the Men & Women's Meetings," adding postscripts to Friends who were "Shop-keepers or Merchants, or Factors, or any other trades." See also Mudd, *A Cry, A Cry*, p. 2; Pinder, *A Loving Invitation*, p. 11; John Rous, *A warning to the inhabitants of Barbadoes*, p. 1; Taylor, *A Loving and Friendly Invitation*, pp. 7-9, 12; Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-century England* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992), pp. 293, 299.

He and other Friends actively cooperated in an effort to define their relationships to the enslaved and the institution of slavery in moral terms—terms that comforted individual masters and could be supported by other members of the Society, terms that upheld Friends’ self-image as uniquely righteous Christians. As the Society of Friends worked to establish a reputation for moral benevolence, they hoped to accumulate moral capital useful for future exchanges with their peers.<sup>9</sup>

Following the migratory patterns of wealthy Barbadian Friends like Col. Morris to the North American mainland helps us see how profound their influence was in spreading labor and cultural norms from the West Indies to northern colonies: the culture of the plantation, gang slavery, and related needs for strict discipline. Studies on the idealism and tolerance of Penn’s Great Experiment, an admirable blending of faith and fortune, need to be reframed in a larger context—first recognizing that Pennsylvania was a relative late arrival on the colonial scene, and that communities of Friends had been involved in plantation experiments of their own for several decades by the time Penn got his land grant. Colonists like Lewis Morris, merchants and planters actively working to transfer their colonial expertise to mainland colonies since the 1660s, had proven such examples of success that proprietors like William Penn, Robert Barclay and others put great stock in their opinions and experience.<sup>10</sup> Even though the mid-Atlantic colonies

---

<sup>9</sup> See Christopher L. Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006). One example of this urge to create moral capital comes from George Fox’s sermon encouraging Barbados Quakers to engage in benevolent slaveholding (more to be discussed later). At one point in his text, Fox went beyond a simple admonition to educate slaves in Christian behavior, relating how ancient Hebrews freed servants “of their own Nation and People” after seven years’ service and gave them land and herds to start their new lives. Reminding Friends they were not long ago “Bond m[e]n in the Land of Egypt,” Fox urged patriarchs “here in this Island or elsewhere” to “outstrip the Jews” by following the same example not only with their “Servants and Apprentices, that are of their own Nation or People,” but also “with their Servants, the Negroes and Blacks, whom they have bought with their Money, to let them go free after a considerable Term of Years, if they have served them faithfully.” Fox, *Gospel Family Order*, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis Morris enjoyed the esteem of important men in the secular world. Barbados governor William Willoughby called Lewis “my very good friend (but a severe Quaker),” and in 1668 wrote to the Colonial Office that although he would have liked to have trusted Morris with a peace treaty contingent with the French, he was “confident [Morris] will not accept the employm<sup>t</sup>” because of his religious scruples—even if they were friends,

included few settlers who could afford to maintain significant numbers of indentured servants or slaves to work on their large estates, large slaveholders like Lewis Morris used their positions of authority and regard to silence any reproach from other settlers who may have been less familiar, or less comfortable, with African slavery.

Seventeenth-century Friends knew that profit and prosperity was a matter of survival for their sect. Economic activity nurtured the Society of Friends, protecting its members from persecution (absorbing the loss of income due to fines and imprisonment), and providing the economic stability necessary for the Society to last for many generations.<sup>11</sup> From Barbados to Pennsylvania, the greatest imperative for godly “Plantation Work” was to build a strong foundation for future generations. Of course, to attract Quaker families to a utopian community of like-minded settlers would doubtless foster healthy, lasting inner plantations. But as the seventeenth century progressed, the Society’s leaders were increasingly concerned with governmental obstacles to their economic survival, and projects like Pennsylvania promised freedom from such worries. To build solid plantations (in the outward sense) not only required industry and diligence across the generations—it required many, many laborers to do the heavy lifting.

Even though the enslavement of Africans was in many ways an “unthinking decision” for British settlers throughout the English colonies, Quakers found that their reliance on profits from

---

Willoughby allowed himself and his correspondent a chuckle, imagining how the flighty French “Mon[sieu]rs would be astonisht at thee & thou” (British National Archives, CO 1/22, No. 60, f. 101v). For the influence of Morris and other Barbadian Quakers in mid-Atlantic colonies, see Pomfret, *The Province of East New Jersey*, 153-54, 210-11, 149; *The Journal of the Procedure of the Governor and Council of the Province of East new Jersey from and after the first Day of December Anno Dmni-1682* (Jersey City: John H. Lyon, 1872), p. 8; New Jersey Archives (First series), i.299-300. Little evidence suggests that settlements in West Jersey were heavily influenced by Barbados migrants, but surnames familiar to leading Quaker families in Barbados (Kendall, Biddle, Sutton and Foster) show up on turn-of-the-century grand jury lists (Index to Reed and Miller, *The Burlington Court Book*).

<sup>11</sup> Emma Jones Lapsansky has noted that Quakers needed land, an economic base, with which to support piety and do good works, and that large amounts of land were needed to provide sufficient bequests to sons and daughters in often large Quaker families. Lapsansky, “Into the Modern World: Quakerism, Capitalism and Development in Early Pennsylvania,” conference paper delivered at “New Sweden and its European Neighbors,” November 5, 2005.

slavery created a basic conflict of interests between their inner and outer plantations. Such conflict between economic dictates (the daily reality of “Plantation Work”) and a moral mission took the form of three troubling moral questions. First, what place should Africans have in the worldview of devoted Christians? Next, should they be integrated into the Quaker community, and if so, how? Finally, how might enslaved men and women prove their readiness to live as industrious, diligent, and faithful Christians? To be sure, none of these questions required or even solicited the input of Africans or their offspring in the Americas. Even as Quakers tried to build a sense of moral certainty that would give them peace to enjoy slave-produced profits, disagreements, debates, and silent struggles multiplied. Could it be true that the need for economic survival, the desire for profits, had vitally compromised their entire endeavor?

### **“He hath made all Nations of one blood”: Universalism, Difference, and Hierarchy**

In 1657, George Fox sent to the Americas an Epistle “To Friends beyond Sea, that have Blacks and Indian Slaves.” In it, he called on Friends to remember that God “hath made all Nations of one Blood,” urging them “to love all Men, for Christ loved all.”<sup>12</sup> In the heady early years of Quakerism, such statements of universalism flourished. The idealistic, even millenarian climate of the 1640s-50s allowed early Friends to believe that their discovery of the Light within could bring the whole world in brotherly love and friendship. Ordinary Friends were moved to spread their new Truth from Holland to Ireland, from the Levant to Constantinople.<sup>13</sup> Why not continue with Indians and Africans in the American colonies? After all, William Penn was said to have felt his first religious stirrings as an adolescent after listening to a sermon so evocative

---

<sup>12</sup> Fox, Epistle 153: “To Friends beyond Sea, that have Blacks and Indian Slaves” (1657) in *A collection of many select and Christian epistles, letters and testimonies, written on sundry occasions, by that ancient, eminent, faithful Friend and minister of Christ Jesus, George Fox* (London, 1698), p. 117.

<sup>13</sup> Citations; For John Perrot’s visits to Italy and the Turkish coast, see Mack, pp. 169-70; Kenneth L. Carroll, *John Perrot: Early Quaker Schismatic* (London, Friends’ Historical Society, 1971), pp. 14-34.

that “a black servant of the family could not contain himself from weeping aloud.”<sup>14</sup> One biography asserts that this servant was Anthony, an African who Penn’s father had bought in Barbados on his return from Jamaica, impressed by the fact that Anthony “seemed to have a desire to become a Christian.”<sup>15</sup> The Admiral no doubt had noted the brutality of life in Barbados sugar fields during his brief sojourn on that island, and by purchasing Anthony, Penn could combine his desire to show off a new exotic status symbol in England with a feeling of self-satisfaction that he had acted as a Christian should toward a potential convert. English colonists had long flattered themselves that they would be more Christian in their dealings with Indians and blacks than their Spanish competitors, who massacred Indians and cruelly mistreated slaves of both races.

Perhaps Fox wrote his 1657 appeal to Friends after meeting and speaking with the young Barbadian convert John Rous, or with other Quaker missionaries recently returned from America,<sup>16</sup> and had been made aware through them of the reality that in the West Indies, non-

---

<sup>14</sup> Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p. 55-56. The Society’s early popularity in England had stemmed in part from the millennial, ecstatic and visionary aspect of meetings, in which those participating might fall down, overcome by a sense of sin, or be “raised up” by the Spirit to preach and prophesy in voices that seemed not to be their own—these phenomenon brought the supernatural close at hand for participants and onlookers. Quakers who witnessed Africans share in similar out-of-body experiences at Friends’ meetings seemed greatly impressed. The common importance of spontaneous “dissociative” experiences to many West African religions and to early Quakerism must have had a powerful impact, and might have encouraged the sense of a possibility for shared bonds. See Ann Taves, “Knowing Through the Body: Dissociative Religious Experience in the African- and British-American Methodist Traditions” *Journal of Religion* 73,2 (1993): 200-222.

<sup>15</sup> Harry Emerson Wildes, *William Penn* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 322.

<sup>16</sup> Quaker missionaries Anne Austin and Mary Fisher arrived in Barbados in 1656 (just as the “sugar revolution” had almost completely transformed the island into a slave-majority plantation complex), and other Friends like Henry Fell followed in their trail to solidify the group’s spiritual gains. Young convert John Rous, the son of a well-connected planter on the island, followed Austin and Fisher to preach in New England, where authorities in Boston cut off his ear for unruly and disrespectful speech. Afterwards, he returned to London, where he published *A warning to the inhabitants of Barbadoes: who live in pride, drunkenness, covetousness, oppression and deceitful dealings; and also to all who are found acting in the same excess of Wickedness, of what Country soever, that they speedily repent...* ([London, 1657]). Rous remained in London, in part to set up a mercantile business for his family, but he contributed greatly to Quaker propaganda, publishing or contributing to four tracts in 1659: *The Sins of a Gainsaying and Rebellious People; New England, a Degenerate Plant; New England’s Ensign*; and *Secret Works of a Cruel People Made Manifest*. Sometime during this period John met and married Margaret Fell the younger, uniting the wealthy Rous family in Barbados to English leaders George Fox and Margaret Fell Fox. Fox



Europeans were most definitely not thought of or treated with any sense of common humanity. Quaker tracts, no less than other contemporary accounts, made it clear that cruelty and “hard-heartedness”—akin to that of Pharaoh towards his Israelite slaves—pervaded the actions of English planters in Barbados, who denied basic human comforts not only to Africans but servants and underlings of all races.<sup>17</sup> The few Quakers who published early tracts aimed at reform in Barbados seemed interested to promote universal human rights in a space in which the brutalizing effects of plantation slavery and a thirst for quick profits were at their worst. One piece published in 1660 by Richard Pinder’s warned wealthy Barbadians not to “provoke the Lord, by letting them, who are your Slaves, be wrongfully entreated, and unmercifully used,” suggesting that cruelty towards exploited servants and slaves would be avenged when God heard the “the cry of their blood.”<sup>18</sup>

But the death and dehumanization of the transatlantic slave trade did not abate in Barbados, and Quaker leaders in England felt bound to address the situation. In 1671, George Fox and a group of eminent Quakers traveled to the West Indies and North American colonies, beginning first in Barbados, extolled in England as the “cradle of Truth” because of the more than 1,000 Friends who were gathered there. Wealthy slaveowners like Col. Morris and Col. Thomas Rous hosted the visitors in their homes, and when Fox addressed them in one of his newly-formed Men’s Meetings, he reminded those who might have forgotten, that “Christ dyed

---

contributed a post-script to his son-in-law’s *Sins of a gainsaying and rebellious people*, and in *Secret Works*, and co-authored a warning to Boston. Barbara Ritter Daily, “The Early Quaker Mission...,” p. 28-29.

<sup>17</sup> Henry Whistler, “A Journal of a Voaidg from Stokes Bay... 1654,” in *The Narrative of General Venables*, Appendix E, pp. 144-169; Richard Pinder, *A Loving Invitation (to Repentance and Amendment of life) unto all the Inhabitants of the Island of Barbados... With something [sic] more particularly to the Heads, and Owners, of the several Plantations* (London, 1660), pp. 15, 4, 9, 12. Exodus Chapters 7-11. Rous uses some variation of the phrase “hard-hearted” on nearly every page of his 1657 *Warning*; Pinder employs the term when referring to the cruel usage of slaves (*Loving Invitation*, p. 11).

<sup>18</sup> Pinder, *A Loving Invitation*, 11-12.

for the Tawne[y]s and for the Blacks, as well as for you that are called whites.”<sup>19</sup> Fox addressed this gap between theory and practice not only because of his growing realization of the double standard in the practice of Christianity in the Caribbean. The 1660s had brought new challenges to the Quaker’s universalist vision, as the Restoration of Charles II was accompanied by the restoration of traditional hierarchies after two decades of war and the “world turned upside down.” To ensure its religious liberties and economic future, the Society of Friends in Britain and abroad had to prove that it was capable of demurring to the social norms of the world in which it lived—worlds that without question accepted women’s natural subservience to men, and in the colonies, accepted African slavery as natural, even ordained by God.<sup>20</sup> Western Europe’s strongly-held cultural beliefs in the intrinsic values of hierarchy within God’s creation—women below men, children and dependents below parents and masters—shaped Fox’s solution for blending universalist and hierarchical strains of thinking in the post-Restoration era.

Fox’s advice to the leading male Friends of Barbados was to set up a framework for the “Government of Families according to the Law of Jesus” modeled on the extended households of biblical patriarchs, especially the biblical Joshua, who declared with authority, “As for me and

---

<sup>19</sup> Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, p. 386; Winkelman, p. 202; George Fox, *Gospel Family Order, being a Short Discourse concerning the Ordering of Families, both a Whites, Blacks, and Indians* ([London], 1676), p. 14. This journey to Barbados and other American colonies was not focused in whole, or even in large part, on the issue of Christianizing slaves; rather, it was an effort to standardize and unify the practices of Friends scattered across the Atlantic. Nonetheless, Quaker historians have highlighted this aspect of the mission trip as particularly important. Frederick B. Tolles estimated the numbers of the transatlantic Quaker community in the seventeenth century to be as high as 50,000 in the British Isles, and at least 40,000 in the American colonies (“The Transatlantic Quaker Community in the Seventeenth Century,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 14,3 (1951): 239-58). For studies of Quakerism in Barbados, see L. Brett Brinegar, “Radical Politics and Civil Disobedience: Quaker Resistance in Seventeenth Century Bridgetown” *JBMHS* 49 (Nov. 2003): 150-66; Kenneth L. Carroll, “George Fox and Slavery” *Quaker History* 86,2 (1997): 16-25; Barbara Ritter Dailey, “The Early Quaker Mission and the Settlement of Meetings in Barbados, 1655-1700.” *JBMHS* 39 (1991): 24-46; Harriet Frorer Durham, *Caribbean Quakers* (Hollywood, Fla.: Dukane Press, 1972); George Vaux, “Friends in Barbados” *The Friend* 60,23 (1887); and Winnifred V. Winkelman, “Barbadian Cross-currents: Church-state confrontation with Quaker and Negro, 1660-1689” (Ph.D. Thesis, Loyola University of Chicago, 1976).

<sup>20</sup> As leaders like Fox and his influential wife, Margaret Fell Fox, guided the nascent Quaker movement towards stability in the post-Restoration years, they tried to maintain a balance between respecting the equality of Spirit in every believer, while containing internal dissent and quelling external fears of anarchy and social deviance.

my house, we will serve the Lord.” Fox charged “Elders and Masters of Families” to ensure “that your Wives, your Children and Strangers that are within your Camps, yea, to the Hewers of your Wood and Drawers of your Water” would be brought “into the new Covenant, Christ Jesus.”<sup>21</sup> In this world, Fox’s call to recognize enslaved Africans’ humanity did little to upset the *status quo*, merely put them in their “rightful” place in the holy household.

Nonetheless, island officials were wary. Wouldn’t telling slaves about their inherent worth as Children of God lead them to violence against masters whose every order demeaned and degraded them? Fox assured Barbadian officials that his intent was quite the opposite:

that which we have spoken and declared to them is, to exhort and admonish them, To be Sober, and to Fear God, and to love their Masters and Mistresses, and to be Faithful and Diligent in their Masters Service and Business; and that then their Masters and Overseers will Love them, and deal Kindly and Gently with them...<sup>22</sup>

This new universalism placed special emphasis on social order, at least in the secular realm. The Society had already reigned in those individuals who aggravated church and secular authorities with their ostentatious, self-righteous challenges. Women were allowed their separate sphere of influence in the Society, but men were to take the helm in public actions.<sup>23</sup> Confrontations with secular authorities were to be limited to sober, reasoned petitions by men held in respect by their communities. Lewis Morris was one of six leading Barbados Friends designated “to hold a

---

<sup>21</sup> Fox, *Gospel Family Order*, p. 4-5, 7; Joshua 24:15.

<sup>22</sup> Fox, *To the Ministers*, p. 69. Mack writes that Fox made similar claims for the importance of social hierarchy in England, “The Word of the Lord God to all Families, Masters, and Servants,” p. 287.

<sup>23</sup> For instance, female Friends had always been more subject to public criticism than men; therefore, in the settlement of the Society, women were encouraged to leave off the sexualized mysticism of their earlier ecstatic prophesies and channel their spiritual energies into the role of “Mothers in Israel.” See Mack, *Visionary Women*, esp. Ch. 8-9. Mack argues that the settlement period was a move towards “separate spheres” for men and women, allowing women to oversee “matters involving charity, marital problems, discipline of women, and healing... while problems dealing with censorship, business, organization of the ministry, and debates with non-Quakers were viewed as men’s work” (p. 286).

Correspondency w<sup>th</sup> all ye Governours, Major Generalls, Judges & Justices in America” and represent the group’s grievances to authorities.<sup>24</sup> Slavery was never questioned.

In fact, although some Barbados Quakers agreed to Christianize their slaves, it was an evangelization mainly focused on reforming and disciplining the black population—by then commonly seen as a “heathenish, brutish and an Uncertaine dangerous Kinde of people.”<sup>25</sup> Racialized stereotypes dominated efforts to control black members of Quaker “families”: Fox and other missionaries decried the tolerance of polygamy among the enslaved, saying that such attitudes were turning the island into a “Sodom and Gomorrah.” Ignoring the potential for self-interested profit that “breeding” offered to slaveowners who held bondswomen and their offspring for life,<sup>26</sup> Fox spoke in disparaging terms of slaves who took “Husbands and Wives at their Pleasure, and then leave them again when they please, and then take others again as fast and suddenly as they will; this is not well, this may bring the Judgments of God upon you; yea, this manifests your Families to be unclean and adulterous Families.”<sup>27</sup> Other missionaries active in the evangelization effort attested that they were hard at work trying to “restrain” slaves from their “wicked Practices... as Whoring, Stealing, Swearing, Lying, Drunkenness, and such like...”<sup>28</sup> Annual epistles sent to regulate and standardize Friends’ meetings in the Americas began to include instructions that during “Family meetings among your servants... every Master & Mistress warn, & strictly admonish ym from all Plots, & Conspiracies, w<sup>ch</sup> is out of ye

---

<sup>24</sup> Haverford Special Collections, Richardson MSS, pp. 112-13.

<sup>25</sup> From the 1661 Barbados slave code, cited by David Barry Gaspar, ‘With a Rod of Iron: Barbados Slave Laws as a Model for Jamaica, South Carolina, and Antigua, 1661–1697’, in *Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 346.

<sup>26</sup> See Morgan, *Laboring Women*, pp. 82-87.

<sup>27</sup> Fox, *Gospel Family-Order*,

<sup>28</sup> Edmundson, “To the Governour and Council...” in Besse, *Sufferings*, ii.307.

peaceable Truth of God,” and such instructions were duly copied as they reached farther-flung meetings throughout the North American colonies.<sup>29</sup>

Quaker heads of households attempted to bolster their sense of godly authority, and distinguish themselves from their less faithful neighbors, by adhering to several unwritten rules of paternalism. Some took it upon themselves to honor the integrity of black families. In a petition to the Barbados government in 1683, Friends expressed outrage that officials confiscating goods from Friends would seize “our black Servants in an unnatural Way and Manner, viz. Husband from Wife, Wife from Husband, Father and Mother from children, and Children from parents.”<sup>30</sup> Evidence from several Barbados wills shows that numerous families hewed to this ideal of not breaking up family bonds, others stipulating that their slaves should stay in the hands of Quaker friends or family members and not be sold away from the faithful.<sup>31</sup> Scholars who remarked on Lewis Morris’ relocation north have often assumed that he was acting out of paternalistic concern by bringing his slaves with him out of Barbados.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Epistles originally sent to the “Generall, Monethly, Quarterly & Six Weeks Meetings in Barbados” were copied and resent to Friends meetings throughout the North American mainland. Copies have been located in surviving Women’s Meeting records from Shrewsbury, NJ, and Rhode Island. Monmouth County Historical Society, Shrewsbury Monthly Meeting, Women’s Meeting register book, 1680-1732 (microfilm); Haverford Library Special Collections, Richardson MSS, 136-37.

<sup>30</sup> “To the Governour of Barbadoes, called Sir Richard Dutton” (delivered 28.ii.1683). Besse, ii.239. Though disrupting conjugal ties also jeopardized the reproductive potential for owners looking to economically increase their human “stock,” the emotional descriptions of family connection suggests that at least some Friends hoped to preserve their slaves’ humanity as much as their commodity value. See Morgan, *Laboring Women*, pp. 82-87.

<sup>31</sup> Planter John Loftus bequeathed his “three small negroes by name little Kuther, Mods and Billy” to his beloved wife Frances, “provided she shall give the said negroes at her death... unto her grandchildren.” Will of John Loftis (d. 1681), BDA, RB6/14, 297-300. George Foster of St James (d. ca. 1670-1672) made similar restrictions, saying that it was his “full mind, will, and intent that noe part of the Land or Negroes whatsoever hereby bequeathed to any pson: or psons whatsoever shall not be by any of them sold, mortgaged or alienated” (BDA, RB6/8, 330-41). Schoolmaster John Frank (d. 1719) desired that his slaves, “vizt. Cate an old negro Woman and her three Children viz. Anthony a Negro boy Phillis a Negro Girle and Quashee a young negro boy... may not be with my son Cole or wife [defectors from the Quaker community] but may be wholly Left to the ordering of and as my Execrs: shall think meet and convenient” (BDA, RB6/4, 571-72).

<sup>32</sup> It is unlikely that the sixty he brought with him all the enslaved laborers he had purchased to run his booming sugar works in previous decades, but rather consisted of a select, though substantial, number of workers who seemed beneficial for northern capital endeavors. Perhaps it was less expensive to bring his work force with him than to hire servants or buy slaves in New York, but is also possible that he acted out of a paternalist desire to control and protect his large “family.” A few of the same historians also found evidence of Morris’ intervention in restoring

However, despite the group's almost obsessive fascination with African's assumed lack of marital fidelity, wills show that slaveowning Friends themselves tended not to honor conjugal bonds nearly as often as they made reference to the ties between enslaved mothers and children.<sup>33</sup> Of course, laws by the late seventeenth century had decreed that the relationship between mother and child (not father and child) marked those eligible for enslavement. Morris may have fostered family ties by bringing a large group of "his" slaves to his new residences, but he benefited financially from this action, as the total number of slaves on his plantation (including youths and very young children) had nearly doubled by the time of his death, whether from consolidating his and his brother's holdings or through the benefits of "natural increase."<sup>34</sup> In addition to giving Friends a sense of moral superiority over their neighbors, maintaining continuous ownership of a group of enslaved individuals whose numbers and personalities did not change significantly over time promised financial benefits. Refusing to separate black families doubtless also engendered some relief, perhaps even gratitude, among those that knew that legally, their lives and affections could be shattered at the whim of their masters.

How else might one justify one's reputation as a "kind" master? Friends had begun to experiment with different child-rearing techniques than perhaps were the norm in British society, emphasizing carrots rather than sticks, persuasion over punishment. Wills of Barbados Quakers

---

ownership of Anthony and Susannah, two of his brother Richard's slaves sold off the estate during the Dutch interlude. The pair had run away from DuBois when the English regained control, and headed back to the Morris estate. One New York historian attributes the two runaways' motives to an assumption that "they were treated better under Morris' ownership than that of DuBois," Ultan, 174-75; Garrison, 10; see also Freiday, 258; Bolton, 469. However, by looking at the original court cases, the only thing that seemed certain was that DuBois and Morris were engaged in a struggle over property rights. See *Third Annual Report of the State Historian of the State of New York, 1897*. (New York & Albany: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., 1898), Appendix L. Transcripts of New York's Colonial Archives, pp. 288, 364, 381-82, 385, 400, 403, 421.

<sup>33</sup> For relationships between mothers and children, see Barbados Department of Archives, RB6/40, 343-45, RB6/4, 151-52, others; for conjugal and/or family ties, see BDA, RB6/11, 418-22, RB6/4, 95-101). Nathaniel Sylvester, a Quaker operating a provisioning planter in Long Island for trading partners in Barbados, also listed his slaves in complete family groupings in his will.

<sup>34</sup> Freiday, 258; Bolton, 469. See Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 82-87.

are full of (non-violent) threats and judgments on unfaithful children—even occasionally directed to slaves.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, they tried applying the same rationale to their dealings with slaves in their household. However, masters could only use financial and social incentives and penalties in a limited way to press the enslaved to bend to their moral authority, so they in turn likely ignored their masters' definition of morality, rejecting their thinly-veiled attempts to relegate them to the status of perpetual children.<sup>36</sup> It goes without saying that men and women condemned with their offspring to a life of perpetual slavery might not have the same desire to please their masters that a child has to please his parents.

---

<sup>35</sup> See J. M. Frost, *The Quaker Family in Early America*. Wills of Barbadian Quakers are replete with attempts to impose discipline through persuasion. Obedient children could expect to be rewarded for their faithfulness with land and other valuable goods; a prodigal son or daughter might even be brought back into the fold with enticements of financial gain. For example, John Grove used the threat of disownment against his children in his will, explaining his “Fatherly charge & command to all my children to be very obedient and dutiful to their mother.” He first used a “stick” to discipline those who “fail[ed] therein” (they would see their legacies “Revoak[ed], disannul[ed] & ma[d]e void...”); however, he also implied a “carrot” in the form of an obedience competition, for Grove instructed executors to redistribute any confiscated portion among the “child or children as shall be most obedient & dutifull.” Will of John Grove (d. 1717), BDA, RB6/4, 151-52. Barbados merchant Henry Feak’s will gives remarkable detail into the problems of godly discipline for West Indian patriarchs. Instead of bequeathing his estate to only son Frederick Feake (or even dividing the estate among his son and two married daughters Fidelity Pulman and Henrietta Knight), Henry unequivocally disowned Frederick “from receiving or having all or any part of my Estate more than what I have...given and appointed unto him.” Beyond the standard marker of disownment (five pounds current money) Henry’s other bequests—“my large eschulchion [sic] of arms, my two seales of arms... one of silver the other of steel... the gold buckles I usually wered [sic] in my shirt, my large bible in folio, my lattan bible in quarto and my brass ring...” —sent a clear message to his prodigal son. These items would serve as constant visual reminders to young Frederick of his father’s lessons, oft told but little heeded—though he might have a storied lineage and luxuries like gold buckles and brass rings, he was lacking in the gospel truth, and thereby wealth would also be denied him. Henry Feak (d. ca. 1713-1716) is highlighted in my dissertation as one of the local Quakers who remembered slaves in his will and followed through with the most dramatic of Fox’s suggestions—manumitting three of his slaves Peter, Bess, and Paralie, and providing Peter with the goods necessary for the family’s sustenance (BDA, RB6/4, 95-101). Bridgetown merchant and apothecary John Smith echoed language of filial fidelity when he wrote in his will that, “in case any of my Negroe or Negroes shall disoblige my said wife Sarah Smith that then in such case I do hereby give her full power and authority to dispose or sell or ship off this Island Each and every such negroe or negroes so offending notwithstanding any clause in this my will seeming to the contrary...” Will of John Smith (d. 1719), BDA, RB6/4, 523-25.

<sup>36</sup> The gift of freedom was probably the greatest reward proffered to slaves, but this was uncommonly rare (for reasons I will speculate about later in this paper). There were also lesser incentives, such as the stability of home and the opportunity for financial security. Barbadian Thomas Foster added a codicil to his will in 1684 that protected “One Negroe Mann named Ockro, a Smith by Trade” from being considered part of his general estate. Though he stopped short of manumission, Foster promised Ockro that he and “his tooles... [would] belong to the Plantacon whereon I now reside dureing his Life.” Will of Thomas Foster (d. 1685), BDA, RB6/10, 349-52.

Contemporaries knew as well as scholars today that “subjugation by violence or threat of violence... was the only way blacks could be enslaved.”<sup>37</sup> Indeed, maintaining the social order required physical violence and psychological controls. When news came to Lewis Morris of his brother Richard’s death, Matthias Nicoll, then Secretary of the Colony of New York, told him about a recent visit he had made to Richard’s estate, where he witnessed the “public correction of two or three negroes” on the plantation for “stealing and receiving stolen goods” as well as punishment for those involved in “a mutiny among the white men.” Nicoll believed that the overseer Mr. Gibbs had restored his authority over the white men, but could not vouch for the measures taken to curb the black offenders, calling “the crime of the negroes [theft] is... so natural to them” that it would be necessary to follow up with more surveillance and castigation.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, before Col. Morris personally relocated to New York, he worked with his agent to procure an additional grant of unclaimed land adjoining his property, for he worried that “should ill neighbours settle thereupon, it might greatly damage yo<sup>r</sup> peticon<sup>rs</sup> Employer by ye sheltering servants & slaues improving opportunities thereby to desert his worke and flye from him, as alsoe for that hee hath 14 hands already upon his land & more dayly expected.”<sup>39</sup>

Little evidence remains of the everyday violence Quakers and their contemporaries used to discipline “disorderly” laborers. One small glimpse of possible attitudes towards physical violence can be seen in early surviving court records of Burlington County, a West Jersey county dominated by Quakers. In 1686, several witnesses were called to testify in court in relation to an enslaved African woman who died under suspicious circumstances. Katherine Greene said the

---

<sup>37</sup> Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>38</sup> New York, 29 Oct. 1672. Letter from Matthias Nicholl to Col. Lewis Morris at the Island of Barbadoes. In Bolton, p. 459

<sup>39</sup> New York State Library, Albany, New York. Colonial Era Manuscripts, Vol. XXIV. Petition by Walter Webley, agent of Lewis Morris, for a Grant of Land. [n.d.]. Also in the *Third Annual Report of the State Historian of the State of New York, 1897. Transmitted to the Legislature March 14, 1893* (New York & Albany: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., 1898). “Appendix L. New York’s Colonial Archives,” p. 218-19.



woman had some time before come to her house complaining of mistreatment meted out by her master, Quaker James Wills. Green testified that she saw that the woman's "back [was] very sore, and that the Negro woman told her it was with Fum, fum, which is (beating) and that further shee... found a small Scarr upon her Belly which was sore." Other neighbors admitted that they had been "grieved" by Wills' frequent and open abuse of his female slave, having heard her almost daily cries as Wills administered "stripes or lashes"—as many as one hundred lashes in one afternoon, according to a witness.

But although non-violence was a Quaker virtue, these Burlington County Friends were unwilling to denounce one of their own. When asked if they thought the enslaved woman's untimely death was caused by Wills' brutalities, witnesses refused to take the part of the dead woman. Katherine Greene said "shee did not perceive any blowes that in her judgment might be the cause of death"; another man averred that "the Negro was soe stubborne and willfull that might well provoke any Master to use her sharply," and that she must have been "unsound." The court proceeded to acquit Wills on the premise that he had bought faulty merchandise, but did order him to pay court costs, arguing that if "the said Negro was unsound, it was a fault, that hee did not therefore be the more spareing."<sup>40</sup> Non-violence was a principle that seemed open to interpretation. Quakers on the island of Nevis, following the example set by Barbados Friends, conceded to unarmed participation in patrols of the islands to "watch" for conspiracies or rebellions.<sup>41</sup> It is doubtful that those patrolmen would have abstained from all violence if, on a dark and lonely road, they encountered an enslaved man travelling without a pass.

---

<sup>40</sup> Reed & Miller, *Burlington Court Book*, pp. 56-57. Case against James Wills for the murder of his slave woman, 8.6mo.1686.

<sup>41</sup> Fox had approved of this move, responding to their query about the morality of taking part in such patrols with an argument about universal rights to protection and self defense, reminding them that if anyone would come on their property "to burn your house, or rob you, or come to ravish your wives or daughters, or a company should come to fire a city or town, or come to kill people, don't you watch against such actions? And won't you watch

In Barbados as in northern colonial projects like New Jersey and New York, patriarchal values remained firmly in place. Colonial Quakers erased very few social boundaries, especially where Africans were concerned, many doubtless sharing local authorities' concerns that religious communion would blur too many boundaries. Like the strict hierarchies of Barbados, in East Jersey, too, Quaker proprietors hailed from the landed gentry in Scotland—who, according to Ned Landsmen, were even more dedicated to hierarchy and social stratification than would be promoted later in Pennsylvania. East Jersey proprietors also made it clear that they were more concerned with profit than utopianism, and spent their time fostered multi-denominational friendships with advantageous investors, leaving religious posturing for others.<sup>42</sup>

Even though Fox had briefly alluded to the Golden Rule in his address to planters—“Consider with your selves, if you were in the same Condition as the Blacks”—it seemed impossible to overcome the persistent denial of African's common humanity. Looking back at the world Quakers lived in, we protest that it should not have been so hard for Europeans to follow this maxim, as Europeans travelling through Mediterranean and Atlantic waters throughout the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries faced their own threats of captivity and enslavement in North Africa. Lewis Morris was travelling on a ship that was attacked by Barbary corsairs in 1639, and he and other passengers languished in Algiers until their ransom arrived several months later.<sup>43</sup>

The ship on which Fox came to Barbados in 1671 was briefly pursued by Moroccan man-of-war,

---

against such evil things in the power of God in your own way? ... [You should] discover to the magistrate such as would destroy your lives or plantations or steal...” (Braithwaite, *Second Period*, pp. 620-21).

<sup>42</sup> Landsman argues that Scots “First Purchasers” were used to wielding a lot of power over their tenants, on and off the estate. See “William Penn’s Scottish Counterparts: The Quakers of ‘North Britain’ and the Colonization of East New Jersey,” in Dunn & Dunn, *The World of William Penn*, 1986, pp. 241-57, esp. 244-46.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, 6-8; Kupperman, 283. We do not know what happened to the Lewis Morris during his tenure as a captive in Algiers, one of many English held in the city at the time. He might have been put at hard labor in the city’s public works or as an oarsmen in the coastal galleys; he might have been purchased by a wealthy master for service in the household; he might have feigned interest in Islam so as to please his masters; he might have seriously considered adopting the life of the “Moor” so as to participate in the lucrative corsair raids often headed by European *renegados*. For these and other possibilities, see Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*; Linda Colley, *Captives*; and Roslyn L. Knuston, “Elizabethan Documents, Captivity Narratives, and the Market for Foreign History Plays,” *English Literary Renaissance* 26 (1996): 75-110.

leading everyone aboard to fear they might be captured and killed or sold as slaves. In the 1670s-80s, the London Meeting for Sufferings collected donations from Friends all over the Atlantic to redeem Quakers held in Algiers.<sup>44</sup> While contemplating death and how to dispose of his worldly estate, Barbados Quaker Dr. Henry Byrch made sure that twenty pounds sterling each year would be sent to England “for ye Redemption of Captives out of Slavery.” He seemed oblivious to the parallels between the plight of those Christian captives in Barbary and the physical or spiritual redemption of the African slaves of his own household—Dickey, Jack, Nancy, Hannah, Nancy Wood, Rose and Isabell—all held in lifelong captivity by Christians.<sup>45</sup> To have experienced enslavement and not view African slaves as mirrors of that dehumanizing experience seems, to modern readers, a huge blind spot. By categorizing Africans as chattels necessary to support a thriving outer plantation, Friends could not reconcile the figures in their account books with the spiritual accountability their faith demanded. Instead of seeing their enslaved laborers as fellow human beings with god-given rights, they comforted themselves with a sense of moral superiority, arguing that slavery could be beneficial if it brought religion to the “heathen” among them.

### **“All in the New Covenant”: Obstacles to Christianization**

Even if Friends could not put themselves in the shoes of enslaved Africans, some did agree to follow Fox’s advice about bringing the knowledge of the Christian God to their enslaved laborers. Col. Morris and other Quaker planters on Barbados could have taken on a role as responsible Christian master for many reasons: some may have been spurred by idealistic

---

<sup>44</sup> Kenneth L. Carroll, “Quaker Slaves in Algiers, 1679-1688,” *Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society* 54 (1982), p. 301, 303, 305-06, 309-10, 312; Durham, p. 1; Haverford Library Special Collections, Vaux Collection, No. 1167, Box 14, for reference to one Barbados Friend, John Field, who sent £135 towards the release of captives in Barbary in 1703.

<sup>45</sup> Will of Dr. Henry Brych (d. 1710), Barbados Department of Archives, RB6/5, 411-16.

evangelical dreams, others hoped to compensate for their failure to treat enslaved with humanity, still others thought that in doing this Christian “duty” they might stockpile moral capital that they could use to point out their superiority over other competing denominations. Termed “Honest Lewis” by officials in the Providence Island Company, Morris likely had tried his hand at evangelization already among the Indians of the Moskito coast, “teaching them the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, and Ten Commandments, as well as basic English.”<sup>46</sup> After being “convinced” as a Quaker in Barbados, he became known as a leader one could count on to act according to his religious principles, and likely conversed at length with many English Friends interested in slave Christianization.<sup>47</sup> Fearing that Quakers new ideas were somehow behind a failed slave uprising in 1675, the Barbados Council passed legislation in 1676 mandating that any slave found present at Friends’ meetings was subject to forfeiture, and that the master of the home in which others’ slaves were found would also be responsible for paying a fine of ten pounds sterling per slave. By including slaves in the Society’s meetings, Morris asserted his moral and cultural superiority, risking stiff penalties in defense of a moral stance.<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately, historians know very little about the substance or the extent of this evangelization campaign. A few missionaries to Barbados remarked that some slaveowners

---

<sup>46</sup> Kupperman, 98.

<sup>47</sup> Morris certainly had ample opportunity to discuss the outlines of an evangelization campaign with leading Friends, both when Fox lodged at his home in Barbados in 1671, and later when he went to Nevis and Antigua with William Edmundson, an influential Irish Friend and one of those who later would become one of the most pointed critics of the morality of the institution of slavery. Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 365.

<sup>48</sup> “Anno 1676: An Act to prevent the People called Quakers from bringing Negroes to their Meetings, &c.” In Besse, *Sufferings*, vol. II, p. 308-09. The informant’s hefty reward suggests that as many as 100 blacks may have been brought to participate in the spiritual exercises hosted by Morris and another offender, Ralph Fretwell. The parameters of the fines laid out in the 1676 Barbados law dictated that informers would receive one half the value of the slaves forfeited by their owners, or one-half the £10/person fine charged to facilitators of mixed-race gatherings. David Galenson’s tracking of the prices of adult slaves shows that in the 1670s, the value of an adult male in the Barbados market was roughly £18-19, with women bringing prices of £14-16 (Galenson, “The Slave Trade to the English West Indies, 1673-1724,” *The Economic History Review* 32, 2 (1979), Table 1, “Adult Slave Prices: Barbados, 1673-1723,” p. 242). Creole and acculturated Africans may have brought a somewhat higher price in the Barbados market, but even if the value of those confiscated was calculated to be as much as £20 each, at least eighty slaves were present at these meetings.

there had followed Fox's advice to set up meetings for blacks. In these sessions, Fox instructed them to set aside "two or three Hours of the Day once in the Week, that Day Friends Meeting is on, or on another Day, [that they could] meet together, to wait upon the Lord."<sup>49</sup> Even though Fox seemed to be advocating a fairly open format where blacks would "wait upon the Lord" as Friends did, in silence, he also recommended that meetings be headed by the master of each household. When Barbados magistrates questioned Fox's designs, he reassured them that Friends would only be engaged in "teaching" Africans about Judeo-Christian morality, to "instruct them according to their Understanding, and to read the Scriptures to them, directing them to the inward Teacher, whereby they might be led out of Stealing, Murdering, Plotting, and out of their Uncleaness and Adultery."<sup>50</sup> It is quite probable that planters, unsure of how to practice silent meetings without dismantling the hierarchy that their economic endeavors relied upon, tended more towards meetings based around didactic lectures, more object lessons than subject-participants in the process of contemplating each individual's own "Light." Local meeting records for Barbados and other valuable sources which may have at one time existed have long since vanished (historians could only wish for marriage registers corroborating Fox's one-time proposition that marriages be recorded to honor the enslaved families in Quaker households), so it is difficult to know just how many West Indian Friends were seriously involved in establishing religious instruction for their slaves. Although Lewis Morris and two other prominent Quakers were caught disobeying the 1676 law that forbade them to include

---

<sup>49</sup> Fox, *Gospel Family-Order*, p. 22; taken from a letter written by Fox to Barbadian Quakers ca. 1672-73, and read at a Quarterly Meeting at Thomas Rous's.

<sup>50</sup> Besse, ii.349. The only other Caribbean Quaker community for which Meeting Minutes still exist is Tortola, which was established by Friends in the early eighteenth century. Quaker historian Charles F. Jenkins noted that "There is little information as to the treatment of slaves in Tortola. The minutes of the Meeting mention them but once [in a property dispute]..." *Tortola, A Quaker Experiment of Long Ago in the Tropics*, Supplement No. 13 to the Friends Historical Society (London, 1923), p. 52.

Africans in their religious ceremonies,<sup>51</sup> three offenses do not indicate a clear pattern of civil disobedience. Furthermore, no evidence exists in reference to Morris' continuance of Christianization efforts on his New York and New Jersey estates.<sup>52</sup>

More importantly, it is impossible to know how much such efforts were able to attract the interest or participation of the enslaved in such households. As little as we know about the realities of colonial Quakerism's plans for evangelization, there is no direct evidence, in wills, missionary letters, or elsewhere, to prove that enslaved or free blacks in Barbados ever became full participants in the Society of Friends during the seventeenth century.<sup>53</sup> One obvious and likely supposition to explain this silence is that those blacks targeted by Quaker evangelization rejected "the white man's god," finding ways to practice traditions and rituals brought from their homes, or cooperating with other West Africans to create new, hybrid spiritual practices and worldviews to support and sustain their lives.

The difficulty of attracting enslaved converts was not just because this religion demanded social subordination. A wide gap also yawned between "African" and "European" religious cultures.<sup>54</sup> If we allow ourselves for a moment to think comparatively, almost as anthropologists

---

<sup>51</sup> The only recorded cases that attest to Quakers' following missionary's dictates is the proceeding case against Lewis Morris and another prominent Friend, Ralph Fretwell. Richard Sutton, a third leading Quaker and former captain, was fined for 30 slaves present at another meeting, also in 1677, but was later exonerated by a jury of his peers. *Hand of God*, 18-19; Besse, ii.310.

<sup>52</sup> It is possible that Morris continued to make efforts at Christian instruction on his estate in New York, making it such a everyday, accepted part of life that his ward and nephew who became Governor of New Jersey (also named Lewis Morris), would think it safe to encourage the evangelization projects of Elias Neau, "an Anglican catechist who gave religious instruction to New York City slaves, when, in the aftermath of the great servile revolt that shocked the town in 1712, many other slaveholders opposed Neau as a subversive influence on slaves..." Sheridan, 10-11.

<sup>53</sup> Kristen Block, "Faith and Fortune: Religious Identity and the Politics of Profit in the Seventeenth-Century Caribbean" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Rutgers University, 2007), Ch. 4, "'Merchantmen of the Precious Truth': Barbados Quakers and Evangelization of Slaves in the Late Seventeenth Century," pp. 225-306.

<sup>54</sup> Some of the most commonly agreed-upon features of broad regional differences include the stark difference in worldview between monotheistic and polytheistic traditions, in which the latter generally lack dichotomies of good and evil so central in salvational theologies. Monotheistic religions tend towards rigidity and ethnocentrism, and Christianity in particular had by this time worked to dismiss ordinary person's access to the otherworldly as superstition and witchcraft.

of religion, we must recognize that points of unity or agreement between these two religious traditions would have been uncommon at best. The unity potentially derived from common recognition of temporary “possession” by spirits or the Spirit (as Penn had experienced) was rather tenuous—and besides, by the end of the seventeenth century, Friends strongly discouraged such manifestations of enthusiasm, especially among those seen as “weaker vessels,” susceptible to false visions and vainglorious tendencies. By the time he had become a prominent patron of the Society, Penn adamantly rejected the idea that each person “who calls his dark Imagination, a Motion of Light” should be respected for their religious experiences: “This opens a Door to all Licentiousness, and furnisheth every Libertine with a Plea.”<sup>55</sup> Most felt that too many charismatic preachers had fostered disunity through their over-confident pronouncements, too many raving women had diminished the Society’s reputation in the world.<sup>56</sup> It is unthinkable that leaders of the Society would have countenanced visions and possessions among Africans.

The process of conversion requires one to acquire a new ritual vocabulary, first by translating new religious ideas through the frame of existing concepts, then through the more dislocating transformation of basic cultural concepts. Quakerism ostensibly welcomed newcomers by de-emphasizing biblical literacy, stripping away the accoutrements of religious ceremony. Many of these “formalities” had been denigrated by Quakers as outward signs unnecessary for true Christianity—the ethos of the Society of Friends celebrated their freedom from old, corrupt formalism.<sup>57</sup> However, their stated belief that the Spirit within gives everyone

---

<sup>55</sup> William Penn, *Judas and the Jews Combined against Christ and his Followers* (London, 1673), p. 15.

<sup>56</sup> Separatist controversies stemming from charismatic preachers and outspoken visionaries (labeled “Ranters” by rivals) included followers of James Naylor, John Perrot, John Pennyman, and later, George Keith. For Naylor and Perrot in particular, critiques focused on both men’s numerous female followers, several of whom were seen as disorderly and overly ambitious in their leadership attempts. See Mack, p. 197-209; 277-78; Carroll, *John Perrot*, p. 51; and Nigel Smith, “Hidden Things Brought to Light: Enthusiasm and Quaker Discourse” *Prose Studies* 17, 3 (1994): 57-69, esp. pp. 63-64, 68.

<sup>57</sup> That is not to say Quakers had no rituals. Indeed, during the early days of the Society’s consolidation, the group could not agree about how much standard Protestant practice should be done away with: contentious debates

access to the wisdom of God was countermanded by an implicit understanding that the “common Spirit” should take precedence over the moving of the Spirit in individuals. For Quaker ritual practice—especially the silent meeting—performing one’s rightful place in the community could only be achieved through subtle signals, a type of “wrapping,” that identified those who had merge their assertions of commonality with the authenticity necessary for true acceptance.<sup>58</sup>

Several spoken and unspoken assumptions were especially dominant in seventeenth-century Quakerism, and in early modern Protestantism more generally. The first was the virtue of self-abnegation, humbling oneself and deferring to God’s will in all things—for Quakers, this meant “suffering.” The Society of Friends had made this watchword central to their identity. Friends suffered as a result of public scorn, because of the fines and imprisonment inflicted on them for following God’s commands against tithing, oath-taking, and military service. In reality, any deprivation or bad experience could be turned into a sign of virtue, patience and fidelity to what was deemed to be “God’s will.” Slavery, the ultimate form of suffering and bad fortune, was often viewed by Christian writers as a type of blessing, a means to purify the soul through abasement.<sup>59</sup>

---

surrounded the Bible as a primary source of inspiration or the need to remove one’s hat during prayer. See Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. x.

<sup>58</sup> A pair of religious scholars has recently looked at Quakerism through the lens of anthropological insights about the “wrapping” of ritual practice. Wrapping takes place in every religious ritual—in Christian traditions, it includes the way one accepts the Eucharist, the modulation of the voice in congregational responses, the coordination of hands, head, and eyes as one genuflects and makes the sign of the cross. Wrapping becomes especially complicated for those entering into new religious groups, for they “need to assimilate often subtle and ambiguous wrapping practices... in order it identify fully with the ‘us,’ to participate ‘properly’ in worship.” In other words, they must not only learn what types of offerings (gifts) are appropriate, but what outward materials and actions are necessary to enclose and present such offerings in order to create a ritual bond. P.J. Collins & P. Dandelion, “Wrapped Attention: Revelation and Concealment in Non-conformism,” in *Materializing Religion: Expression, Performance and Ritual*, ed. E. Arweck & W. Keenan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 45-61.

<sup>59</sup> Elias Neau’s plan to bring the gospel to blacks in New York school for blacks in 1703 (with the support of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) was supposedly prompted by his capture by a French privateer and in 1692 and subsequent imprisonment in a Marseilles prison. Neau’s 1702 pietist tract attributed imprisonment as a “gift” that brought his spiritual understanding through contemplation of Christ as a vehicle for comprehending suffering. See Jon Butler, *Huguenots in America*, 160-65.



If some of Col. Morris' enslaved prosylites had been born in any part of West-Central Africa, they must have scoffed when Morris spoke about suffering being a blessing. According to John Thornton and other scholars of early modern Kongo and Luanda, regional cosmologies generally explained suffering as the result of malevolent witchcraft. A person might suffer as a result of the malediction of one who hoped to gain from the misfortune of others—greed was seen as the main reason people went to *ndoki* for their special access to the supernatural (European observers called them “witches”). Thornton asserts that “merchants of any race or nationality were especially vulnerable to the charge of being witches because the necessarily individualistic behavior of merchants in the face of a folk ethic of sharing and community service could easily be seen as greed, the root of witchcraft.” Bad fortune—drought, famine, war—could also plague an entire community as a result of its leader's unhealthy and selfish actions and desires, those who turned to supernatural means to enrich themselves to the detriment of others.” Lacking benevolent rulers and community-minded neighbors, everyone suffered. Mid-seventeenth century Kongo was rife with power struggles and civil wars that led to community dislocation, the violence of war, and the enslavement of those who had fought on the losing side.<sup>60</sup> Although numbers and regional distinctions for the slave trade are incomplete for the mid-seventeenth century, West-Central African prisoners of war may have comprised a substantial percentage of those sold by Dutch and Portuguese traders in Barbadian markets at about the time Lewis Morris would have had the capital necessary to purchase the labor for his sugar scheme.

Subject to warfare and enslavement, torn from their families and communities to cross an ocean of death, such suffering no doubt made enslaved Africans in the New World skeptical of a

---

<sup>60</sup> John Thornton, “Cannibals, Witches, and Slave Traders in the Atlantic World,” *WMQ* 60,2 (2003), accessed online <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/wm/60.2/thornton.html>>.

religion that promised that pain was a virtue that, if endured, would lead to a heavenly reward. Any of those individuals first purchased by Lewis Morris would have had to survive the West Indian disease environment, then endure the dangers of work in the sugar fields and boiling houses; those brought north would have had to suffer through the winter's cold and the toil of planting crops on the New York estate or the back-breaking work of clearing trees to supply charcoal for the iron forge in New Jersey. Only Europeans could plausibly "choose" suffering as a way to perform dedication to their faith. For Africans laboring in American colonies, suffering was a back-breaking reality, a consequence of the greed that spoiled human relations.<sup>61</sup>

Another religious concept common among Protestants was that of the "calling"—a call to action, a directive from God, or for Quakers, the Light within. Quakerism's emerging theology insisted on a personal, emotional connection to the divine, and instructed those "moved by the Spirit" to heed the call to speak in First-day meetings, to travel abroad on a mission trip, to propose or accept an offer of marriage. Such "callings" had to be monitored, however, and Quakerism invoked the "Common Spirit" to curb excessive individualism and the potential for conflict. From the 1670s, newly-established Men's and Women's Meetings charged allowed "weighty Friends" with oversight and endorsement of individual members' lesser or greater callings (from marriage to missionary work, including the censorship of writings put out by Friends who felt called to publish against Quaker detractors). Like the crackdown on "enthusiasm," the Society of Friends' emerging disciplinary apparatus would have surely frowned on inappropriate "callings" expressed by African proselytes.

---

<sup>61</sup> After a second brush with captivity by French pirates in 1671 (the same year that George Fox had introduced the issue of extending religious liberty to the enslaved of Barbados), Lewis Morris might have agreed in principle if any of his enslaved West Central Africans had explained the connection between suffering and greed in their culture. In the only extant letter in Morris' own (barely literate) hand, he asserted that his French captor, who had held the Quaker captive under charges of privateering, was "a weked and unjust Man who had hoeps of enriching himselfe by my Ruing [Ruin]." However, he claimed to find peace in his predicament—even though his rights and liberty had been snatched away, Morris wrote with confidence that since "the Great God... knue my Enosenti [Innocency]," he cheerfully bore the injustices that had befallen him. National Archives, London. CO 1/27, No. 36.

But an alternate idea of a “calling” had also developed in early modern Protestantism, defined as a sense of a commitment to one’s occupation or place in the world—fusing the economic and social realms with the spiritual by sacralizing work and turning industry into divine commandment.<sup>62</sup> From the point of view of the enslaved, this must have seemed a lot like the “virtue” of suffering, but perhaps there was something that struck a chord. Several dozen of Morris’ slaves were deployed to work in his new iron foundry in New Jersey—could some of them, by that time conversant in the broad outlines of their master’s ritual language, have expressed a “calling” to this work site? After all, in West-Central Africa, blacksmiths were held in high esteem, creating swords and tools from earth, air, and fire. No mere objects, possessions forged from iron brought power to their owners—victory in warfare, prosperity in agriculture.<sup>63</sup> The sense of purpose that informed this particular profession might have offered a point of connection between missionary and missionized—both must have yearned to see that the everyday *meant* something.<sup>64</sup> But unlike Kongolese blacksmiths, who were consulted for their expertise in healing those affected by witchcraft—wielding magical bellows to drive evil from the body<sup>65</sup>—European Christians would have viewed such traditions as pagan superstition at best. Ironmaking in Europe and its colonial plantations were commercial ventures primarily intended to generate trade and profits. Any enslaved blacksmiths at Morris’ New Jersey foundry would have known that his master hoped to enrich himself and his trade partners by producing

---

<sup>62</sup> Quakerism, like some strains of Puritanism, developed a deep dedication to a “view of ‘the material world of daily toil and daily bread as God’s world in which men were called to do his Will.’ William Penn denounced Catholic monks for practicing ‘a lazy, rusty, unprofitable Self-Denial, burthensome to others to feed their Idleness.’” Walvin, *Quakers: Money and Morals*, p. 73).

<sup>63</sup> See John K. Thornton, “‘I Am the Subject of the King of Congo’: African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution,” *Journal of World History* 4 (1993): 181-214; John Ringquist, “Kongo Iron: Symbolic Power, Superior Technology and Slave Wisdom” *The African Diaspora Archaeology Network Newsletter* (Sept. 2008) <http://www.diaspora.uiuc.edu/newsletter.html>.

<sup>64</sup> According to one Africanist historian and religious scholar, Yoruba and Igbo, too, shared “a concept of personal destiny, chosen before birth,” and misfortune was seen as a sign that a person had ignored the divinity’s call to service. Elizabeth Isichei, *The Religious Traditions of Africa: A History* (New York: Heinemann, 2004) p. 313.

<sup>65</sup> Ringquist, p. 7-9; Thornton, “Cannibals, Witches, and Slave Traders...,” paragraph 24 (online version)

and exporting iron tools and farm implements. His labor stripped of its special sense of sacredness, trained blacksmiths could only find approval in terms of their master's spiritual idea of labor, which valued self-discipline and diligence in the "suffering" path to godliness.

As Quaker masters and their slaves embarked on the cultural translations involved in evangelization, it is likely that some enslaved individuals responded favorably, even given the uneven power relations and lack of good will that must have been evident to all involved. Just as slaveowners acceded to the somewhat dangerous idea of Christianization for different reasons (guilt, self-righteousness, idealism), enslaved individuals too could impact the terms of the exchange. Some may have expressed interest and enthusiasm in an attempt to curry favor. Others might have wondered if a faith that idealized brotherly love, non-violence, and the preservation of family ties (even if did not guarantee their masters' consistent compliance) could help sustain and protect them from the violence and dehumanization so rife in the colonies. For Quakers *were* seen as different in the English world, and they tried to hold themselves to standards in many ways remarkable for their time. In Barbados wills—normally documents focused on the transfer of property and estate—proportionately more Quaker slaveowners showed signs that they hoped to go beyond the simple recognition of the humanity of enslaved Africans than their non-Quaker neighbors.<sup>66</sup> Some even begin to hint at the respect and reciprocity only available to those who had been in a sense "adopted" into the community. For the enslaved, becoming part of their masters' Society of Friends was the primary way to achieve such bonds, imperfect and unequal though they may be.

---

<sup>66</sup> Although only a tiny fraction (about 2%) of Barbados' population at large manumitted slaves in their wills during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, nearly 10% of the roughly 150 slaveholding Quaker testators in my prosopographical sample included manumission clauses. Jerome S. Handler and John T. Pohlmann, "Slave Manumissions and Freedmen in Seventeenth-Century Barbados," *WMQ* 41,3 (1984): 405.

## **“Promesses Faire”: Industry, Loyalty, and the Problem of Free Will**

Although nothing I have found in Quaker wills or other documents definitively proves even minimal success of the Christianization campaign (and for the slaved, I recognize that there was much to dislike), several clues suggest that masters like Lewis Morris may have been positive about the promise of some black individuals’ religious propensities. Ned, one of Morris’ slaves, seems to have risen to a position of trust with his master, serving as his agent in at least one business deal; Nell, another female servant, was promised freedom to choose her own residence after her mistress’ death; and Morris designated that Toney, his enslaved cooper, should receive his maintenance and 40 shillings salary for life.<sup>67</sup> Unsurprisingly, Morris and his fellow Quaker masters seemed most impressed by those who seemed to hew to what we today would call the Protestant ethic—hard work, frugality, honesty—linking spiritual significance to economic advantage. Barbados planter John Todd recognized the efforts of “a Negro man by name Hector, a Potter, who for several years past hath been a profitable servant unto me.” Todd hoped that, after his death, Hector could attain a measure of economic independence through continued work in the plantation pot-works, directing executors to pay him 20 shillings out of every 20 pounds he earned.<sup>68</sup> Could it be that judging an African’s dedication to his master’s outer plantation was an indication that Christianity could take root and bloom in his inner, spiritual plantation? Quakers seem to have placed great hopes in their ability to foster such a transformation among their enslaved laborers—in 1674, Fox challenged Barbadian Friends to send him a black youth to prove that an African could be transformed into a “free man” (at least

---

<sup>67</sup> It is unknown why Morris singled out Nell or Toney in his will, but Ned he considered trustworthy enough that he was registered as the witness to the shipment of a dozen horses in 1686. Bolton, p. 465; Ultan, 174-75.

<sup>68</sup> Will of John Todd (d. 1687), BDA, RB6/40, 435.

in the spiritual sense).<sup>69</sup> Upon his death bed in 1691, Lewis Morris wrote his will, bequeathing Yaff, an enslaved African who had worked with Morris for some time, to his friend William Penn—if he would take up the challenge of coming to Pennsylvania to take charge of putting the plantation work that both Friends had for many years yearned to put on solid footing.<sup>70</sup>

When Penn eventually made it to Pennsylvania, he made sure to collect Yaff from Morris' heir, and even brought Yaff back to England on one of his return trips. By now, Yaff was a world traveler, and seemed quite comfortable in the world of influential Quakers, likely conversant in its values. It came as no small surprise that Penn was similarly pleased with Yaff's attitude and contributions, and so had promised him freedom "after four years faithfull service." In a letter to his overseer James Logan in 1703, Penn discussed his possible return to the Pennsylvania estate, but said that he had given Yaff the option to remain in England. If Yaff did decide to the colony with the *Messenger*, Penn wrote, Logan should not worry about the price of his passage, for Penn had faith that the man's willing and excellent shipboard labor would more than compensate. Penn continued his praise, calling "Yaff... an able planter, & good Husbandman," but it seems that after rereading his letter, he edited it to insert another clause to this final commendation, interlining the text with the qualifier, "& promesses faire." Penn also gave Logan some room to call into question the promise of another enslaved man working on their plantation, Sam, who had "but one year more to serve, I think, by my note, if he has serv'd well..."<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America*, p. 7. Drake notes that this comment was only found in 1939 among a group of Fox's personal papers that had not been published—likely another example of later generations of Friends' discomfort with their leaders' ambivalence on slaveholding.

<sup>70</sup> Bolton, 465.

<sup>71</sup> Rich yet opaque in many of its comments, this letter suggests several even more troubling conclusions. William Penn to James Logan, 1.2m.1703. "Yaff is also gone, in the room of one that cant goe for weakness [*has he fallen ill when in England?*], & I have resolve after four years faithfull service he shall be free, yet I have left it to him to returne, if {he} may passage free (w<sup>ch</sup> he will more than deserve in any ship) in the Messenger; nay I leave it for him to return from Deal if he will. Thou art to allow R. Jannay nothing for him; that goes into the 20 pounds for

Such qualifiers, hints of mistrust amidst glowing recommendations and promises of reward, were not atypical. Although Morris had made provisions to reward Nell and Toney in his will, he sternly demanded “that they yield all duty, full submis<sup>n</sup> and faithf<sup>d</sup> obed<sup>ce</sup> in all respects as become dilig<sup>t</sup> serv<sup>ts</sup> tow<sup>ds</sup> my wife; otherwise, they are to enjoy no benefit hereby, but their beq<sup>ts</sup> to be void, as if never written or ment.”<sup>72</sup> Was Penn also saying that he questioned Sam and Yaff’s willingness to continue in as diligent and reputable husbandmen once freed?<sup>73</sup> Were his doubts due to Yaff’s promises of loyalty to Penn or to the Quaker faith? On Morris’s New York estate, Toney and Nell were required to demonstrate “faithfulness” to his widow to continue to enjoy favor—just as in Barbados, Hector was warned that if he did not “follow his trade but is negligent, [and] squanders away his time, Then it shall be lawful for my Executors & I do hereby Impower them to sell and dispose [him].”<sup>74</sup> Another Quaker in Barbados, Alice Baynes, granted a woman “Emblen the elder” her freedom, but demanded motherly love and tenderness in exchange, stipulating that she must “not depart from the Plantation but looke after her children.” (Baynes made no mention of granting freedom to Emblen’s children as well.)<sup>75</sup>

It is worth stating the obvious: enslaved men and women purchased by Lewis Morris and other Friends were not primarily the subjects of an early Quaker experiment. They were valuable assets—for their cash value, their wealth-producing labor, and their reproductive

---

the other two; {also} & besides, he wants 3, of his compleient, and must have payd as much had he not gone [*This whole passage seems to continue to refer to Yaff, but the talk of money going to him is unclear—was Yaff also demanding payment for some service? Who are the “other two” and what is Penn suggesting is lacking because he (who?) was gone?*]; besides, I have otherwise been kinde to him Yaff is an able planter, & good Husbandman {& promesses faire}, & Sam has but one year more to serve, I think, by my note, if he has serv’d well...” Dunn & Dunn, *The Papers of William Penn*, Vol. iv, p. 113.

<sup>72</sup> Bolton, 465.

<sup>73</sup> Penn’s remarks seemed especially focused on physical “industry.” Another instruction to white deputies overseeing his estate instructed that slaves given land and freedom as reward for service should be reported on, “especially as to whether they, and some unnamed ‘black boys’ were ‘beginning to be diligent’” (Wildes, 326).

<sup>74</sup> Will of John Todd (d. 1687), BDA, RB6/40, 435.

<sup>75</sup> Will of Alice Baines (d. ca. 1685-87), BDA, RB6/42, 1-2.

potential.<sup>76</sup> Some Friends dedicated to the idea of evangelization but also the determination to uphold profitability struggled with the distinction. William Penn himself had toyed with the idea of limiting the terms of service for both British and African “servants” in Pennsylvania (a term almost universally preferred by Quakers to “slaves”), but decided that he could not deprive the colony’s settlers of what they would doubtless believe to be an infringement on their property rights when it came to blacks purchased under the assumption of lifelong slavery. Penn himself had weighed the costs of labor and decided to use enslaved blacks and white overseers on his Pennsbury plantation, deciding in the end that “It was better they was blacks... for then a man has them while they live.”<sup>77</sup> Later, he seemed to hesitate about that distortion of his conscience, resolving in a will drafted in 1701 to free all his slaves at his death, with an extra grant of 100 acres to “ould Sam... to be his Childrens after he & wife are dead, forever; on common rent of one bushel of wheat yearly forever.” But later drafts of his will (1705 and 1712) deleted this sweeping proposition, and Sam (free or not) died in 1721 still in the service of the Penn estate.<sup>78</sup>

Friends in the colonies, like others concerned with financial prosperity and how to manage their human property, were likely concerned by stories filtering throughout the British and Dutch Atlantic that enslaved Africans and their offspring who had converted to Christianity seemed to think they also deserved freedom. In New York, the Dutch West India Company and Reformed Church had allowed such transformations for a time during the 1660s. Some of those African converts freed in recognition of their “long and faithful service” still lived with their children in a free black community near the East River opposite Hog Island.<sup>79</sup> Had the slaves of Quakers heard about these individuals, determining that it might be in their own interests to

---

<sup>76</sup> See Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

<sup>77</sup> Wildes, p. 322-324.

<sup>78</sup> Dunn & Dunn, iv.113-114n.

<sup>79</sup> Hodges, *Root and Branch*, 12-13.



“convert” as well? Laws had only recently begun to stipulate that not only did English colonists not have to free their enslaved Christian converts, also that religious affiliation would have absolutely no impact on African’s legal status as chattel.

I believe that doubts about the consequences of an enslaved person’s religious state or professions of “loyalty” were intimately related to the question of free will. Enslavement by its very nature denied men and women the exercise of their own agency, and without free will—the foundation of Christian conversion (and thus the cultural transformation of Africans)—any actions or intentions an enslaved man or woman expressed had to be viewed with suspicion. Friends’ term for conversion—“convincement”—likewise presupposed that the convert in question had a mind free to judge, contemplate, and accept a new life for him or herself. It begged the question: could the enslaved, lacking autonomy and thus free will, convert to Christianity or truly accept European values?<sup>80</sup>

In the early modern era, autonomous status was normally accorded to those (usually men) who had sufficient resources to support a household. Stipulations that slaves be given money as reward for their hard work, to provide economic incentives for continued industry, suggests that some Friends adhered to the principle of allowing slaves some measure of autonomy and self-determination. But did they provide the means for the enslaved to achieve economic means to support self-sufficiency, to become “masters” of their own independent households? Some idealistic Friends seem to have experimented with the possibility. One Quaker merchant in Barbados bequeathed freedom to his slaves Bess, Peter, and a boy named Paralie, stipulating that Peter should receive “his Chest, box, cloathes, [and] bedding, my carpenter, Masons and Coopers Toolles, [and] my Iron Vice and the musquett that is now in his custody”—presumably, all items

---

<sup>80</sup> Remember, none of the instances in which enslaved individuals are elevated mention conversion as the reason for such recognition. However, given the serious push to legislate away the possibility of gaining freedom because of conversion to Christianity, this absence should not be surprising.

that would serve to support this newly-independent family.<sup>81</sup> Rowland Hutton determined that on his death, “my poor negroes being in number four”—named Jugg, Wambee, Gaskin, and Tombeee—should be freed over the term of four years, and that they should all

have sufficient provisions and cloaths allowed them until they shall be all free and to remain in their houses where they now live and upon there [sic] freedom to have four acres of land lying altogether where my said negroes shall appoint or as much as they can manure and timber to build them houses from and out of my plantation at Conger road... to have cloathing those that are not able during the term of their lives...<sup>82</sup>

It bears reminding that four acres wouldn't provide for much beyond physical survival in Barbados' economy (ten acres was the minimum to qualify for the franchise as a freedmen), and a thirty-year term of service (especially if the clock started *after* a testator's death) left very few productive years for former slaves to build stable lives for themselves in the ruthless economy. By the end of the seventeenth century, colonial lawmakers in several colonies were working to strip the enslaved population of any hopes for financial autonomy or individual betterment. In May 1683, East New Jersey's Council passed a law “Ags<sup>t</sup> tradeing w<sup>th</sup> negro Slaves,” asserting that “it is found by daily experience that negro and Indian slaves, or servants under pretence of trade, or liberty to traffic, do frequently steal from their masters...”<sup>83</sup> Removing slaves from participating in capitalism removed their incentives to labor for the betterment of themselves or their families, and denied them the agency to form credit ties with patrons.<sup>84</sup> In short, colonial

---

<sup>81</sup> Will of Henry Feake (d. ca. 1713-16), BDA, RB6/4, 95-101. The gun is a particularly unique item, given that Barbados law stipulated that no slaves were allowed to carry deadly weapons.

<sup>82</sup> Hutton left open the possibility that another pair of slaves, “Pegg and George” might join the four already named—if his son William Hutton were to die without heirs, the two slaves “shall be both of them free and to have their share and maintenance out of the said four acres of land formerly bequeathed to my said four negroes.” Will of Rowland [Ronald] Hutton of St. Philip (d. 1679), BDA, RB6/14, 82-85.

<sup>83</sup> *Journal of the Procedure of the Governor and Council of the Province of East New Jersey*, p. 70-71; Leaming and Spicer, *Grants, Concessions*, p. 254.

<sup>84</sup> When enslaved men tried to seek justice in the courts for the rape of their wives, no one gave serious consideration to the transgression of their property rights over their wives. See Reed and Miller, *The Burlington Court Book*, pp. 255-56 for the case of John Neve v. Negro man Mingo, servant to Seth Hill (13.4mo.1701).

patterns denied the enslaved the individuation necessary to be accepted as rational members of society, capable of self-governance and personal advancement.

Contemporary debates over the questions of allegiance and loyalty were firmly bound up with debates over property rights in the colonial setting. The second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century witnessed multiple political shifts in England that affected the allegiance and property rights of colonists—from the turmoil of the Civil War to Charles II’s Restoration, James II’s accession to his deposition during the Glorious Revolution. These changes in high politics impacted the colonies, too, determining who would receive royal patronage, whose fortunes were stable enough to support their colonial dabbling—several proprietors who had been given land grants saw their rights questioned and their proprietorships sold off as a result of the associated political and economic turmoil. Litigation and struggles on this high level trickled down to shareholders and property owners in the colonies. In East and West Jersey, proprietary conflicts persisted throughout the 1670s-80s, compounded by the shifting sands of sovereignty in New York, which had transitioned from Dutch to English rule, but faced a second interlude of Dutch control in 1673-74. Almost all the remaining records of the time are devoted to these issues, as colonists who wished to protect their property rights or gain new land holdings when more favorable patrons came to power put their petitions in the record books at the colony and county level.<sup>85</sup>

Property rights, the stuff of individuation and personal profit, could only be guaranteed through vows of allegiance to whoever was presently in power—whether it be a new governor, a proprietor, or the Crown. Quakers, who promised that their word was their bond (no oaths required) may have considered the constant shifts in the politics of property especially troubling.

---

<sup>85</sup> After his brother Richard’s death in 1671, Col. Morris moved aggressively to expand his brother’s holdings in the Bronx and to secure generous land grants and tax exemptions from the proprietors of East Jersey for an iron works at Tinton Falls (Freiday, 254-55). See also Reed and Miller, *The Burlington Court Book: A Record of Quaker Jurisprudence in West New Jersey, 1680-1709* (Wash, D.C.: AHA, 1944), pp. xiv-xxv; Jenkins, *The Story of the Bronx*, pp. 48-49, 57; *New Jersey Archives* (First series), i.311, 356.

It certainly threatened their ability to maintain thriving plantations. Chattel slavery provided the opportunity for a more stable form of property—less uncertain than grants of land—and the institution was proven in its ability to produce and multiply wealth. But thinking in symbolic terms, the need to change one’s allegiance through the threat of force or loss of property—a sign of autonomy and self-determination—was not unlike the bonds of “loyalty” under slavery. Promising to live peaceably under whatever regime was operating was the only way to survive, to gain favor in this world, and Quaker masters had to have been cognizant of the fact that their enslaved laborers doubtless recognized the same exigencies and responded in kind. Friends may have approved of plans for converting Africans, even recognizing those whose faithfulness and hard work were deemed worthy of reward, for such actions and sentiments proved to slaveowners that they were engaged in moral benevolence, thereby enriching their inner plantations. But maintaining control over the labor that produced their wealth was even more crucial, as the outward plantation seemed a more certain investment.

**“What Pains will men take, and cross the Ocean for worldly Gain!”  
Profits, Slavery, and Silence in the Archive**

In 1690, fading in strength and age, Fox wrote again to American Friends, exhorting them at length to take care with how they managed their inner and outer plantations:

Let your light shine among the Indians, and the Blacks and the Whites, that ye may answer the Truth in them... Keep up your negroes’ meetings and your family meetings... Take heed of sitting down in the earth and having your minds in the earthly things, coveting and striving for the earth; for... covetousness is idolatry. There is too much strife and contention about that idol... so that some have lost morality and humanity and true Christian charity.<sup>86</sup>

Large slaveholding was not nearly as common in seventeenth-century mid-Atlantic colonies as it was in the plantations of the West Indies and the Chesapeake. Pennsylvania in

---

<sup>86</sup> Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p. 436.

many ways was set up to benefit smallholders, servants, and shopkeepers who would work to earn their daily bread. Nevertheless, wealthy Barbadian transplants to the mid-Atlantic region set the tone for determining whether or not the institution's basic morality was up for question among American Quakers. We should contrast Lewis Morris' rather uncomplicated acceptance of African slavery and his transfer of "plantation complex"-style practices to the large estates he acquired in New York and New Jersey<sup>87</sup>—making him one of the wealthiest, most influential men in both colonies—with the life of John Hepburn, a tailor who came to East Jersey as an indentured servant working for the Scots Quaker proprietors around 1684. Within the next twenty years, Hepburn set himself up as a tailor, married the daughter of a fellow artisan, and bought modest amounts of land in Middlesex and Monmouth Counties. He and his wife appear to have been Quakers, perhaps had even met Col. Morris when he visited Shrewsbury to attend meeting while visiting his iron works, though they appear to have been among those who left the Society to join George Keith's Christian Quakers in the 1690s.<sup>88</sup> Hepburn saw slavery grow around him in New Jersey, although he never became a slaveowner himself. Like the separatist Keith, whose manuscript reflections, "Gospel Order Improved," challenged Quakers to see the injustice of enslaving Africans,<sup>89</sup> Hepburn looked upon American slavery as the epitome of hypocrisy and self-serving flawed logic. In 1715 he found a publisher who would print his thoughts on the subject, entitled *The American Defense of the Christian Golden Rule, or an*

---

<sup>87</sup> Morris housed enslaved blacks in his iron works in separate barracks-style accommodations, dressed them in cheap ozenbrig clothing, and perhaps distributed rum as a reward for a hard day's work.

<sup>88</sup> Henry J. Cadbury, "John Hepburn and his Book against Slavery, 1715" *American Antiquarian Society, Proceedings*, n.s.:59:1 (1949): 89-160, esp. 90-95.

<sup>89</sup> William J. Frost, *The Keithian Controversy in Early Pennsylvania* (Norwood, Penn.: Norwood Editions, 1980); Nash, *Quakers and Politics*; Jon Butler, "'Gospel Order Improved': The Keithian Schism and the Exercise of Quaker Ministerial Authority in Pennsylvania," *WMQ* 31,1 (1974): 431-52; Ethyn Williams Kirby, *George Keith (1638-1716)* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1942), p. 50, 56. Interestingly, Col. Morris had employed Keith as a tutor to his nephew during the 1680s (Sheridan, 2-6, Smith, 110-14), and also engaged his services as a land surveyor, as shown in his signature on land in Shrewsbury the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 6<sup>th</sup> month called Aug<sup>t</sup> 1685 (Manuscript materials from Rutgers Special Collections, Lewis Morris (I), 1677-1681). During this term of employment, did Keith come to the conclusion that Col. Morris' interpretation of Fox's call to "Gospel Family-Order" among his slaves was tainted by the self-serving love of money?

*Essay to prove the Unlawfulness of Making Slaves of Men.* Hepburn's central arguments against the institution included that slavery robbed men of their free will ("that noble Gift their bountiful Creator hath given them"), violated the Golden Rule, and gave Christians a reputation as bad as the Turks (worse even, for Christians did not free or give special treatment to slaves who converted to their faith). Hepburn attributed the "profound silence" that attended the institution to the greed and "worldly Interest" of those who benefited from the enslavement of Africans.<sup>90</sup>

A studied and deliberate silence *had* built up over the years—Hepburn was right to be cynical about whether his words would make much of a difference. He knew that slaveowners (who he called "Negro-Masters") would not be pleased that he had broken the silence, for he claimed that while searching for the writings of others with similar views, he found such texts "almost as scarce to be found as the Phenix Egg..."<sup>91</sup> The economic success of Quaker "plantation work" in Barbados and early northern colonial endeavors brokered no criticism, and those influential Friends who had a stake in maintaining slavery had worked to define their own relationship to the institution as blameless. Though the brutality and hypocrisy of slave-holding by Quakers were doubtless issues that made some feel uneasy, the social and economic capital of wealthy elites set the tone for the community's shared sense of ethics on the issue. In 1696, Barbadian Quakers received a letter from Friends in Philadelphia (Henry Jones was one of two signatories who had formerly resided in Barbados) to request that slaves no longer be sold to the

---

<sup>90</sup> Hepburn, reprinted by Frost, p. 119-20, 127-28. Hepburn was by no means unique in his arguments. Others who shared several key points included New England minister Samuel Sewall, who published an anti-slavery tract entitled *The Selling of Joseph* in 1700.

<sup>91</sup> Hepburn, p. A4. Among those rare sources Hepburn sought out were Fox's sermon to Barbados' Quakers, the Keithian paper against slavery, and the writings of "John Saltkill, Thomas Chalkley, and others, who... openly bear Testimony in their publick Assemblies, and declare against it..." Some word of other like-minded dissenters had leaked out verbally, Hepburn had been "credibly informed" by a Quaker from Germantown that Friends there "kept their Hands clean from that vile Oppression and inriching Sin of making Slaves of their fellow Creatures, the Negroes" (18). The now-famous Germantown Declaration was buried in the archives after its rejection by the 1688 Quaker Yearly Meeting, and was not discovered until 1844. Today, only two known copies of Hepburn's texts are known to have survived, one at the British Library and another at the Boston Public Library. Frost, introduction to Hepburn, p. 89; Brycchan Carey, "The Pennsylvania Origins of British Abolitionism" *The Historian* 93 (Spring 2007), p. 7.

mainland, concerned that replicating Barbados' reliance on a slave majority economy "may prove prejudicial several ways to us & our posterity."<sup>92</sup> None chose to elaborate on those "several" reasons for which they feared the rise of slavery in their city.

Silences still plague our interpretation of this period. Hepburn admitted that even though he had been outraged at the evils of slavery for many years, he "was silent so long, because I waited for my betters to undertake the work; and if any had appeared in this Work, it is like I had been silent still."<sup>93</sup> I have referred numerous times in this paper to the lack of historical records that might sustain my many assumptions and suppositions (some worthwhile, others probably erroneous and presumptuous). Modern historians who persist in digging for the past's ugly realities about this era of Quaker slaveholding have been discouraged by such archival silences (of obliviousness, arrogance, shame, or a simple neglect to put pen to paper for non-economic matters), and probably intentionally thwarted by 19<sup>th</sup> century Friends' certain embarrassment of their Society's early complicity in Atlantic slavery.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, it is vital to dig deep, to search for and contemplate the multiple meanings in the silences and rare utterances to consider what might have been, even when we cannot presume to have found the correct answers.<sup>95</sup>

For Fox's words—potentially dangerous in the wrong hands—were also used to justify the continuance of slavery as a system beneficial to reforming "heathen" Africans, disciplining them with religion to stem the threat of violence. One rare glimpse into this process can be seen

---

<sup>92</sup> Henry J. Cadbury, "Another Early Quaker Anti-Slavery Document," *Journal of Negro History* 27 (1942): 210-15.

<sup>93</sup> Hepburn, A5.

<sup>94</sup> Quaker historian William C. Braithwaite acknowledged that Friends' religious documents contain many silences, especially regarding controversies resolved at a later date: "...men say little of changes produced by hostile and unwelcome criticism from without, and often persuade themselves into thinking that the resulting alterations in their conduct spring from their own initiative or go on asserting and believing that they have not changed at all." Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p. 494.

<sup>95</sup> Greg Dening has recently observed that "Imagination is rather unnerving to most historians. But it need not be. Imagination is not necessarily fantasy. Imagination is restoring to the past all the possibilities of its future." See his "Texts of Self," in *Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America*, ed. Ronald Hoffman, Mechal Sobel and Frederika Teute (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p. 161-62.

in a rare manuscript preserved at Haverford Library, entitled: “A Testimony for Family Meeting and keeping Negroe servants until they are in some Measure brought into a Christian Life (which is ye Duty of every Master & Mistress of families to Endeavour to bring them to that they may be free Men in deed).”<sup>96</sup> Its author was George Gray, a Quaker who had been repeatedly fined while living in Barbados for noncompliance with local laws (one island marshal was said to have called Gray his favorite “Milch-Cow”) and had even been imprisoned for a time, “for no other Cause than delivering to the Priest, and some of his Justices, a few Papers written by some of his Friends.”<sup>97</sup> Gray had moved to Philadelphia sometime around 1691-92, joining other Barbados transplants like Samuel Carpenter and Henry Jones in the colony’s utopian plans. Gray seems to have been “called by the Spirit” to compose a testimony on the issue of slavery around this time and to present it to his local meeting. Gray began by listing eight passages in the Bible related to issues of enslavement, several of the same ones Fox had used to show how slaves could fit into a Quaker “family.” Other citations, however, especially laws from Leviticus regarding those enslaved by the Hebrews, indicated that Gray thought he had found justifications for subjecting African “heathens” to perpetual slavery:

(Levitt. 25 & 44) Both thy Bond men & thy bond maids which thou shall have shall be of ye Heathen that are round about you of them shall yee buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover of the Children of Strangers that do sojourn among you of them shall yee buy, & of their families that are with you which they begat in yor Land and they shall be your possession. And yee shall take them as an Inheritance for your Children after you to Inheritt ym for a possession, they shall be your bond men for ever, but over your brethren, ye Children of Israel, ye shall not Rule over one another with Rigour.

Going further in his push to paint slavery as a biblical institution worthy of contemporary Quakers, Gray also referred to one rather obscure passage in Exodus (21:5-6) that cited Hebrew

---

<sup>96</sup> A similar analysis of this document was put forth by J. William Frost, “George Fox’s Ambiguous Anti-Slavery Legacy,” in *New Light on George Fox (1624-1691)*, ed. Thomas D. Hamm and Michael A. Mullett (William Sessions, 1991), pp. 69-88.

<sup>97</sup> *Short Account of the Manifest Hand of God*, 1696; Besse, 315.



servants whose bonds to their masters went beyond a sense of duty. Those that professed “love” for their master (and dedication to family members owned by that master), the passage explained, could voluntarily declare their fealty and renounce their liberty in a ceremony of blood ties: “his Master shall bring him unto ye Judge & he shall also bring him to ye Door post and his Master shall bore his eare through with an Aul [awl] and he shall serve him forever.” Grey expressed surprise that such a ritual was common among Old Testament co-religionists, but extrapolated from it that “if my brother an Hebrew be so served much more an ethyopian or black yt is a Heathen by Nature...”<sup>98</sup> Constructed fictions of “happy” slaves who loved their masters, along with the order to bring Christianity to the enslaved, helped Friends accept the symbolic violence of African bondage and justify their hold on valuable economic property.<sup>99</sup>

Others like John Hepburn and the Germantown Quakers did not agree with this prevarication, and insisted that Christians should act with more justice, even redress the wrongs of the past. But who would pay for such justice? Certainly, slaveowners would lose costly investments in labor if slavery was to be outlawed, and everyone knew that those with a financial stake in the institution would strongly resist such economic setbacks. Another testimony written by Quaker Robert Piles wondered, “if it bee not lawfull for to buy negroes for term of life in this gospel time, what shall be done with these y<sup>l</sup> friends have already?” Turning first to the “solutions” of evangelization and paternalism, Piles thought that perhaps “y<sup>e</sup> quarterly meetings [might] bee proper Judges in setting them free, provided ye maister bee not too much loss...”<sup>100</sup> What about justice and compensation for the enslaved? Only Leburn was brave enough to

---

<sup>98</sup> George Gray, “A Testimony for Family Meeting and keeping Negroe servants until they are in some Measure brought into a Christian Life which is ye Duty of every Master & Mistriss of families to Endeavour to bring them to that they may be free Men in deed,” ca. 1680-98. Haverford Collection, 1167, Vaux Collection, Box 3.

<sup>99</sup> Hepburn, 27, 29.

<sup>100</sup> Henry J. Cadbury, “An Early Quaker Anti-Slavery Statement” *The Journal of Negro History* 22,4 (1937): 488-493.

suggest the issue of restitution, arguing that workers whose labor and lives had been stolen for other men's wealth-creation surely deserved some sort of financial compensation "out of the Property of him that hath wronged them"—but even as he wrote down the idea, he knew that even suggesting such an outcome was ludicrous. There was no way to erase the profits, no way to balance the scales at this late date, and so Hepburn opined that justice would have to wait for the next world—unless masters would agree to repair the damage they had done by returning blacks to their African homeland.<sup>101</sup> Hepburn never wondered if he and other colonists should go back to Europe, abandon their shops and plantations and let the land return to its native people, since in many ways they too had been "robbed" of land and labor. No one questioned whether or not the Atlantic economy should continue, its profits flowing into the pockets of European colonists.

---

<sup>101</sup> Hepburn, p. 21.