

THE INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
QUAKERISM, 1647-1700

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ABSTRACTS

Short Abstract:

This thesis considers the development of seventeenth-century Quakerism (1647-1700). Changes affecting the movement in this period are often explained as the result of the Quakers' desire for socio-political respectability – that is, their desire to reduce persecution and social exclusion. This thesis does not deny the importance of socio-political factors. However, it argues that they have been exaggerated as a historical force, and that theological factors driving change have been comparatively neglected. The thesis therefore explores the Quakers' desire for 'theological respectability', by examining the scope and impact of their constructive engagement with outsiders. The project begins with an investigation into the Quakers' understanding of their personal experience, noting both continuities and underlying theological changes which cannot be explained in socio-political terms – namely, a changed view of divine immanence, a strengthened group identity, and the loss of a sense of prophetic vocation. The rest of the thesis explains these developments in their theological context. The Quakers' engagement in Christological debate forms the central case-study. Individual chapters examine the Quakers' earliest Christology, first responses to criticism, the early career of William Penn, the intellectual development of Robert Barclay's *Vehiculum Dei*, the Quakers' place in the early Enlightenment, and the Keithian controversy. In particular, the need to articulate a positive theology of the Incarnation led the Quakers into conversation with many influential figures outside the movement, which in turn encouraged an increasingly derivative understanding of the Light within and more optimistic view of physical matter. These shifts relate directly to the religious changes explored in the first part of the thesis. This study illustrates the necessity of theological analysis as part of historical investigation and provides a sustained intellectual history of seventeenth-century Quakerism, demonstrating its important contribution to the intellectual landscape of the early Enlightenment.

Long Abstract:

This thesis considers the development of Quakerism from its origins to the dawn of the eighteenth century. Changes affecting the movement in this period are often understood as a series of defensive attempts to secure socio-political respectability, driving a broad process of institutionalisation and consolidation of the movement's corporate identity. It is assumed that even theological changes were driven by the desire to lessen persecution. Combined with a pervasive view of the Quakers as part of a radical, anti-intellectual *illitterati*, theological factors driving change have been neglected in existing scholarship. Such neglect has skewed our perception of the early Quaker movement to stress its passivity and coarseness. This study does not deny the importance of socio-political factors in the development of seventeenth-century Quakerism. However, it suggests that such considerations were not prioritised by the Quakers themselves, and have therefore been exaggerated as a historical force for change. Indeed, the Quakers were remarkably resilient to persecution and continued to stress their religious agenda in the face of extreme adversity.

This thesis therefore examines the Quakers' desire for 'theological respectability', conceived as the creative process by which they demonstrated their Christian primitivism, orthodoxy and theological coherence, in support of their bold understanding of the movement as 'true Christianity'. Even a cursory examination of early Quaker writings demonstrates the importance of the Quakers' self-understanding as the 'true Church', expressed in language of 'brothers and sisters', 'the age of apostasy' and 'ancient Friends'. Furthermore, important theological shifts were occurring across a much wider intellectual landscape – this was a time marked by transition and crisis of religious policy – yet the effect of these changes (and indeed, the Quakers' active participation in the development of seventeenth-century thought) has barely been studied. The thesis considers the Quakers' positive theological engagement, exploring their contribution to the early Enlightenment and locating their place in the wider intellectual landscape of the later seventeenth century.

If the early Quakers' aim was simply to moderate their own persecution, we might expect some change in the tone or intensity of their religious sensibility. Therefore, the first chapter considers how the Friends' understanding and articulation of their religious experiences changed over the period of study.

What truly characterised the changes within Quakerism at its most personal level? In his *Journal*, George Fox famously described his religious breakthrough as the realisation that ‘There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition’, and this chapter traces how the Quakers’ articulation of their religious concerns changed over time. Certainly, a sense of divine immanence was promoted enthusiastically throughout this period, and reflected a continued commitment to belief in immediate communion with the Light within. However, the Quakers’ understanding of the nature and scope of this divine immanence did change. Furthermore, their group identity was consolidated, their sense of individual prophetic vocation mellowed, and the early ‘incantatory style’ was toned down.

The Quakers’ desire to present an acceptable public image cannot adequately account for these changes: there is no obvious causal link between the desire to produce an acceptable public image and a changed view of divine immanence, an increasing valorisation of corporate discernment and church unity, or the loss of prophetic vocation, without other more fundamental theological changes first taking place. After all, what does the magistrate’s opinion matter if Christ himself dwells within you? Rather, these changes point to a powerful shift in Quaker thought. As the rest of the thesis will argue, this was directly motivated by theological engagement with non-Quakers.

The majority of this project comprises an investigation into the Quakers’ changing Christological understanding. This focus is germane because both Quakers and non-Quakers were active and engaged in debates which directly affected their Christological perspectives: an affirmation of the immanent Christ was central to the Quakers’ notion of the Light within, and Christological themes intersected directly with discussions concerning the nature of material and spiritual reality which were so prominent in the seventeenth century. Motifs pertinent to the Eucharistic debates of the Reformation also continued to spark disputation, fuelling the religious turmoil of the mid-century and providing fertile soil for the metaphysical disputes of the seventeenth century. Nonetheless, in existing scholarship there is just one major survey of Quaker Christology – the 1956 doctoral thesis of Maurice Creasey – which is largely disparaging of the Quakers’ wider theological engagement. Therefore, this thesis will also refine Creasey’s conclusions, providing an updated account of early Quaker Christology which engages more fully with the subtleties of theological discourse at this time.

Chapter two examines the Christological perspective of the earliest Quakers. It has been suggested by Richard Bailey that Quakers believed in the ‘celestial inhabitation’ of Christ within the individual. This chapter challenges this view, to argue for the Quakers’ highly spiritualised understanding of the Light within. Quakers did believe in an immanent presence of Christ within them, and occasionally suggested a specific belief in Christ’s indwelling celestial flesh, particularly as they drew parallels between their own experience of religious communion and the Lord’s Supper. However, evidence for the Quakers’ direct link with those who taught a doctrine of celestial flesh is limited, and these metaphors were conceived in a Reformed context in which the Eucharistic presence was understood spiritually. More striking are the Quakers’ constant rhetorical contrasts of spirit and flesh, and the chapter argues that the first Quakers ultimately understood the Light within to be the essentially complete, yet entirely spiritual, presence of Christ. This stance ultimately undermined the significance of the Incarnation, and was criticised heavily by their opponents.

Chapter three explores the Quakers’ initial responses to their critics, particularly as they moved towards a derivative view of the Light within and conceived of perfection more as moral blamelessness rather than deification. It focuses on changing views of perfection in the writings of George Whitehead, which reflect an increasing distinction between justification and sanctification in Quaker soteriology, and the attempt to demonstrate Quaker ‘orthodoxy’ in George Fox’s 1672 letter to the Governor of Barbados. Chapter four considers the state of Quaker Christology by the mid-1670s, focusing on the early theological career of William Penn. It examines Penn’s disputes with Thomas Hicks and John Faldo, noting that Quakers were engaging more actively and dialogically with their opponents by this point. However, in both these chapters, the Quakers’ theological solutions were marred by a failure to explain the significance of the body and find a coherent theology of the Incarnation: their highly spiritualised worldview persisted, as they struggled to balance their experience of divine immanence with the theological need to identify the role of the historical Jesus.

Chapter five investigates the intellectual development of Robert Barclay, and the crucial contribution of his *Apology* to Quaker theology. It focusses on his notion of the *Vehiculum Dei* as a middle substance: the ‘Spiritual body of Christ’, which was neither fully man nor God, flesh nor spirit. This marked a

significant metaphysical shift within Quaker theology, and the salient points of this notion have traditionally been attributed to George Keith, who was Barclay's closest colleague and friend. Nonetheless, Barclay's own input is demonstrated by a consideration of his direct contact with the intellectual circle of Ragley Hall, including Anne Conway, Francis Mercury van Helmont and Henry More, just as he was writing the *Apology* in the mid-1670s. This circle played a crucial role in the formation of his understanding of the Light as a middle substance, demonstrating both the influence of non-Quakers in the advance of Quaker theology, and the shared concerns of Quakers and the wider intellectual milieu.

Chapter six demonstrates the Quakers' engagement across the intellectual spectrum in the wake of Barclay's contribution. This is primarily investigated through consideration of a dispute between John Norris and Richard Vickris regarding the correct understanding of the Light within. Both men believed in a Light within, but Norris was highly critical of the Quakers' understanding of it; the dispute was largely concerned with establishing whether the Light was human or divine, illustrating the potential risks associated with Barclay's inherently ambiguous middle substance. The defence of Vickris offered by the Anglican Edmund Elys in 1690 also hints at the wider place of Quakerism in the early Enlightenment, as he perceived something in Quakerism which was of value to the defence of innatism against Locke. Nonetheless, this chapter also recognises and examines the Quakers' conversations with a much broader range of intellectual parties, including deists and empiricists, as well as their response to an intellectual environment which was increasingly hostile to metaphorical expression.

Finally, chapter seven explores the impact of these elite debates on the wider Quaker community. It considers the Keithian controversy, in which George Keith defected from Quakerism to become an Anglican, to argue that two sets of theological priorities were in operation within Quakerism by the end of the seventeenth century: that which comprised the Chalcedonian formula of Christ's nature and Reformed understanding of his saving works (that is, the Christian heritage which had shaped the broader religious assumptions of the society in which the Quakers primarily operated, and which was often referred to in shorthand simply as 'Christian') and that arising from the Quakers' own distinctive commitment to immediate revelation, total sanctification, and the sufficiency of the Light. Viewing the

Keithian controversy through the lens of the Christological development of seventeenth-century Quakerism elucidates the motivations of both parties, and illustrates how the beliefs of ordinary Quakers were affected by the elite Christological discussions of the previous fifty years. Whilst the wider Quaker community was still keen to protect their belief in the sufficiency of the Light, and viewed Keith's critique as an attack on the distinctive elements of Quakerism, Keith himself had moved beyond the boundaries of the movement towards a much more positive understanding of the outward form.

The thesis concludes by suggesting that changes affecting the Quakers' religious experience can be explained directly in terms of these Christological disputes. In particular, the Quakers' growing understanding of the Light within as derivative of Christ, and their changed perfectionism, directly affected how seventeenth-century Quakers understood the scope and nature of divine immanence. In turn, this would have had profound implications for their understanding of the prophetic vocation, and the necessity of group discernment.

By embedding the development of Quakerism in its theological context, the thesis has two major aims. First, it seeks to augment scholarly understanding of the development of Quaker theology as a response to socio-political pressures, by arguing for the independent importance of theological factors as a historical motivation for change. Secondly it locates the Quakers' place in the intellectual milieu of the later seventeenth century, presenting them not simply as a hangover from the turbulent radicalism of the Civil Wars, but as active participants in the vibrant and fluid intellectual culture of the dawning Enlightenment. This study illustrates the necessity of theological analysis as part of historical investigation and provides a sustained intellectual history of seventeenth-century Quakerism, demonstrating its important contribution to the intellectual landscape of the early Enlightenment.

ABBREVIATIONS

FHL Friends House Library

JFHS Journal of the Friends' Historical Society

JEH Journal of Ecclesiastical History

ODNB Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

QS Quaker Studies

Fox, *Journal*. George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. John L. Nickalls (Philadelphia, 1952; repr. 1997), unless otherwise stated.

Hill, *WTUD*. Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (rev. ed. London, 1972).

Original capitalisation and spelling, but not original italicisation, are retained in early modern quotations. Early modern titles are taken from the Wing Short-title catalogue, and follow Wing's abbreviation and capitalisation.

INTRODUCTION

...they acknowledged the present Quakers to be orthodox, or to that effect,
but the former books blasphemous...¹

In the early 1650s, the first Quakers professed a belief in an immanent presence of Christ dwelling in the individual. Obedience to this ‘Light’ enabled perfection, as Christ was raised again and eclipsed the identity and agency of the believer; disobedience ensured damnation, as Christ was crucified anew in the rebellious soul.² This startling message was spread mainly by itinerant preachers moving south from 1654 onwards, proclaiming the universal possibility of an intimate and animated communion with the Divine. The early Quakers were denounced by their opponents for reported ‘Quakings, Shreeking and ridiculous Actions’, but self-identified more positively as ‘Children of the Light’.³

Despite the polarising reputation of the first Quakers, the movement comprised 1.15 percent of the English population by 1680, and published an estimated 8.8 percent of the nation’s printed works between 1652 and 1684.⁴ At the close of the century it had spread across Europe, North America, and the Caribbean. It had become efficient and well-organised, as the Quakers established their own internal system of censorship, an extensive web of local and national meetings, separate meetings for appointed ministers, and an international network of pastoral and disciplinary communication.⁵ It had also inspired some of the most charismatic and commanding figures of a generation to join it. Writing in 1692, the French Huguenot Philippe Naudé (1654-1729) declared that ‘if it had not been for the tragic affair of the Enthusiasts of Munster... Penn would already be King in London, Barclay in Edinburgh, and Furly

¹ Benjamin Coole to G. Rooke, Swarthmore Collection MSS, vol. 358, 13 of 10th Month 1693, FHL, item 76.

² James Nayler, *Love to the lost*, N294 (London, 1656), 26-8.

³ Anon, *A declaration from the Children of Light*, D588 (London, 1655), sig. A1r; George Emmot, *A northern blast, or The spiritual Quaker converted*, E714aA (London, 1655), sig. A1r; William Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 1955), 51-97, 153-76, 44-5; Douglas Gwyn, ‘Seventeenth-Century Context and Quaker Beginnings’, in Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers and their Theological Thought, 1647-1723* (Cambridge, 2015), 13-31; Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge, 2007), 13-37; Rosemary Moore, *The Light in their Consciences* (University Park, PA., 2000), 3-34.

⁴ E. A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield (eds.), *The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1989), 93-4; Thomas O’Malley, “‘Defying the Powers and Tempering the Spirit.’” A Review of Quaker Control over their Publications 1672–1689’, in *JEH*, 33, 1 (1982), 72-88, at 74.

⁵ A useful survey of changes affecting Quakerism during this period can be found in Caroline Leachmann, ‘From an “Unruly Sect” to a Society of “Strict Unity”: The Development of Quakerism in England c. 1650-1689’, PhD thesis, University College London, 1997.

in Rotterdam'.⁶ Naudé referred to three leading lights of the early Quaker movement: William Penn, Robert Barclay and Benjamin Furly. Behaviourally, too, the Quakers became more recognisable by their plain speech and dress than the 'incantatory style' of their early prophetic outpourings.⁷ What began as a 'Northern Blast' – demonstrating the specific Englishness of their audience, and connoting their own otherness, tribalism, tenacity, and perhaps even parochiality – had become an international, cosmopolitan, and highly-effective machine.⁸ In short, the movement was transformed. Nonetheless, as Barry Reay has observed, 'it is easier to chart the transformation of Quakerism... than it is to account for it.'⁹ This thesis is a response to Reay's challenge.

The Development of Early Quakerism in Existing Scholarship

How does existing scholarship explain the development of early Quakerism away from its initial form? Accounts are significantly directed by three underlying historiographical forces – namely, the disproportionate number of practising Quakers studying the history of the movement, subsequent reactions against this influence from social historians (which nonetheless accept the broad narrative of confessionalised history), and the assumption that religious dissenters were generally anti-intellectual and poorly educated. All three forces have encouraged the neglect of theological factors in existing histories of seventeenth-century Quakerism.

⁶ 'D'ailleurs le succez tragique des Enthousiastes de Munster & du reste de l'Allemagne l'ont rendu sage. Sans cela nous verrions autant de Rois Anabaptistes & fanatiques que de Villes où il y adroit des Kouakers, & qui s'y pouroient cantonner. Pen se seroit Roy de Londres, aussi-bien que de sa Philadelphie, Barclay se seroit Roy d'Edinbourg, & Furlhy de Rotterdam.' Philippe Naudé, *Histoire abrégée de la naissance et du progress du Kouakerisme avec celle de ses dogmes* (Cologne, 1692), 7. The English paraphrase is taken from William Hull, *Benjamin Furly and Quakerism in Rotterdam* (Swarthmore, 1941), 156.

⁷ Jackson Cope, 'Seventeenth-Century Quaker Style', in *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 71 (1956), 725-54, at 725.

⁸ Emmot, *A northern blast*, sig. A1r. The Quakers' northern identity was not only highlighted in hostile sources, and their own rhetorical use of this motif is discussed in Kate Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers* (Cambridge, 2005), 75-6. See, for example, James Nayler, *A collection of sundry books*, ESTC T102522 (London, 1716), 35.

⁹ Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (Southampton, 1985), 121.

First then, it is important to recognise that most Quaker history has been – and still is – written by Quakers.¹⁰ Unsurprisingly, the earliest histories of Quakerism were hagiographical.¹¹ Yet, as David Scott notes, confessional loyalty has also coloured recent historiography in more subtle ways, as ‘since the mid nineteenth century the history of early Quakerism has [been] seen in terms of a decline from evangelical exuberance to respectable quietism’.¹² The classic account of this decline was expressed by John Rowntree in 1858, in his winning entry to an essay competition intended to explain falling numbers in nineteenth-century Quakerism.¹³ Rowntree valorised the seventeenth century as an era of greater spiritual vitality, and strongly influenced William Braithwaite’s seminal account of the early Quaker movement. Braithwaite wrote unashamedly as a Quaker, and retained many of these basic assumptions pertaining to the narrative of decline and worldly engagement. Nonetheless, he did stress more heavily the role of persecution in precipitating the establishment of a ‘mechanism of organisation’.¹⁴ The theological challenges facing early Quakerism were downplayed as the central religious insights of the Quakers were assumed to be true and unchanging; interaction with outside groups was conceived along socio-political lines, and intellectual engagement with (or even appeasement of) the outside world was neglected.¹⁵ The confessional nature of Braithwaite’s work is demonstrated neatly by its reception: in 1919, Allen C. Thomas concluded his review of Braithwaite’s *Second Period* with the hope that ‘all new works be as faithful to the essentials of Quakerism as this’.¹⁶

Secondly, historians working outside the religious community of Quakerism have resisted such confessional bias in historical writing, leading them to stress the political significance of the

¹⁰ I am practising Quaker myself, and cannot claim complete detachment. However, a major aim of this thesis is consciously to identify and address some of the consequences of confessional bias in the study of Quakerism – and bridging the gap between internal and external accounts of Quakerism obviously requires engagement from both sides, rather than the exclusion of certain voices to achieve an illusory objectivity.

¹¹ William Penn, *A brief account of the rise and progress of the people called Quakers*, P1257 (London, 1694); William Crouch, *Posthuma Christiana*, ESTC T116784 (London, 1712); Willem Sewel, *The history of the rise, increase, and progress of the Christian people called Quakers*, ESTC N66723 (London, 1718).

¹² David Scott, *Quakerism in York 1650–1720* (York, 1991), 1.

¹³ John Stephenson Rowntree, *Quakerism, Past and Present, being an Enquiry into the Causes of its Decline in Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1859).

¹⁴ William Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 1961), 225, 250–91, 401, 538, 632–7, 646; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*.

¹⁵ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, 635.

¹⁶ Allen C. Thomas, review of William Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (London, 1919), in *Quaker History*, 9, 2 (1919), 62–5, at 65.

movement's origins – whilst retaining the 'decline' narrative of the movement's development. Alan Cole's influential work on the early Quakers' political engagement challenged a stereotype of Quakers as politically abstinent, arguing that the 'purely political activities' of the early group mellowed into 'uncompromising passive resistance' (epitomised by the declaration of the Peace Testimony in 1660) only after their experience of political defeat. Cole posited that 'for fifteen years after the Restoration, the Quakers... were almost exclusively preoccupied with the struggle for survival', so that they discounted themselves as a political threat. This led to increased collusion with the world and, ultimately, the 'settling down' of the Society into a 'group of respectable philanthropists'.¹⁷ Cole's work anticipated later research into the impact of Quaker centralisation. For example, it has been echoed in Jordan Landes's study of Quaker institutions and communicative networks – particularly London Yearly Meeting – in the creation of a transatlantic community, and in Thomas O'Malley's characterisation of the Quakers' intentional depoliticization of their publications as a major motivation for the 'famous decline of Quakerism into respectable quietism'.¹⁸ More immediately, however, it directly informed Christopher Hill's Marxist reading of seventeenth-century 'radical ideas', which noted the Quakers' increasing attempts to distance themselves from the more threatening elements of revolutionary religion – especially Ranterism, with which many early Quaker converts had been associated – to ensure the survival of the movement.¹⁹ Hill later characterised changes in early Quaker practice, including increasing centralisation and censorship, more explicitly as part of their 'experience of defeat' (though in fact he identified two defeats – that of Nayler's fall in 1656, and that of the collapse

¹⁷ Alan Cole, 'Quakers and the English Revolution', in *Past & Present*, 10 (1956), 39-54, at 48, 51; Alan Cole, 'Quakers and Politics, 1652-1660', PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1955.

¹⁸ Jordan Landes, *Quakers in the Trans-Atlantic World: The Creation of an Early Modern Community* (Basingstoke, 2015), esp. 22-36; O'Malley, 'Defying the Powers', 87.

¹⁹ 'Ranterism' was famously dismissed by J.C. Davis as 'a projection of an image inverting all that true godliness should represent', which 'had more to do with the reality of religious anxieties, a sense of dislocation, than with the reality of particular people or groups', and was based on evidence 'which we would hope would not stand up in a court of law and... should not be acceptable at the bar of history'. Clearly, the Ranters did embody that anxiety, though Davis's denial of the existence of a Ranter movement has been roundly criticised by a number of leading historians of Interregnum radicals. J.C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986), 124-37; J.F. McGregor, Bernard Capp, Nigel Smith and B. J. Gibbons, 'Fear, Myth and Furore: Reappraising the "Ranters"', in *Past & Present*, 140 (1993), 155-194; J.C. Davis, 'Fear, Myth and Furore: Reappraising the "Ranters": Reply', in *Past & Present*, 140 (1993), 194-210.

of the army and Restoration in 1659-60) despite admitting that this experience did not end the Quakers' millenarian expectations.²⁰

Making his frustration with confessionalised history explicit, Barry Reay – Hill's doctoral student – complains that 'the spiritual rather than the social permeates the work' of prominent historians of Quakerism such as Geoffrey Nuttall (who had connections to both the United Reformed Church and the Society of Friends) and Hugh Barbour (a committed Quaker), and stresses the socio-political motivations of early Quakers.²¹ Reay deliberately downplays theological factors in early Quaker development, stating that Interregnum Quakers 'were not preoccupied with theology; it was only later, in the 1670s, that they set out their religious doctrine in any systematic form. Before that... they usually defined their beliefs defensively'.²² By describing the Quakers' presentation of their beliefs as 'defensive', Reay betrays a limited notion of what counts as 'theological' and discounts the wide variety of performative and non-systematic ways in which the Quakers expressed their theology. Yet more fundamentally, Reay's assertion reflects his concern to show that 'from the start, the Quaker movement was a movement of political and social as well as religious protest.'²³ He defines this political protest as the redistribution of wealth, and quotes Cole directly to cast it as a 'movement of protest against the suppression of the "good old cause"'.²⁴ That is not to say that they successfully promoted their political concerns; Reay defines their main political significance negatively, arguing that widespread fear of Quakerism motivated the Restoration, whilst the Quakers failed to make any concrete constitutional demands of their own. However, he is unabashed in his presentation of early Quakerism through an overwhelmingly socio-political lens.²⁵ This is epitomised by his emphasis on 1660 as 'the crucial year in Quaker history'. Reay's whole account is embedded in a political framework, which pays little

²⁰ Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (London, 1984), 129-69, 164; Hill, *WTUD*, 231-58.

²¹ Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, 3.

²² *Ibid.* 33.

²³ *Ibid.* 9-10.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 32-9.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 81-100.

attention to religious or theological developments: ‘the struggle to survive Restoration persecution encouraged organisation, and organisation stimulated conservatism’.²⁶

Both confessional and socio-political approaches have found an ally in the rise of sociology as an academic discipline, and H. Richard Niebuhr’s 1929 ‘denominationalism’ theory.²⁷ Expanding the static church-sect typologies of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, Niebuhr argued for an inevitable progression from ‘sect’ to ‘denomination’. He characterised this progression as a ‘proneness towards compromise’, made inevitable as Christianity was unable to ‘escape all taint of conspiracy and connivance with the worldly interests it despises’.²⁸ Niebuhr explicitly cited the emergence of birth-right membership in Quakerism as an example of this process.²⁹ Thus, he posited that ‘by its very nature the sectarian type of organisation is valid only for one generation’, as the children of members rarely hold their principles with equal ‘fervour’. Invariably, ‘the sect becomes a church’.³⁰ Niebuhr’s own intention in writing was not primarily sociological: he denounced this process as the ‘moral failure of Christianity’, and as an ‘evil’ born of ‘the failure of the churches to transcend the social conditions which fashion them into caste-organisations’.³¹ Nonetheless, his work became extremely influential as a sociological model of sectarian progression.

Niebuhr’s influence is especially clear in Adrian Davies’s study of the social interactions of Quakers in Essex from 1655 to 1725. In fact, Davies helpfully challenges Reay’s emphasis on the significance of 1660 as a watershed, suggesting instead that the 1670s were ‘the crucial period in early Quaker history’

²⁶ Ibid. 104, 121.

²⁷ This resemblance is explicitly noted by Frederick B. Tolles in his ‘Introduction’ to the second edition of Braithwaite’s *Second Period*, xxxi.

²⁸ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Hamden, 1954), 3-6. Weber had contrasted the organisation of the ‘hierarchical, inclusive’ church-type with the ‘democratic, exclusive’ sect-type, and classified membership respectively as automatic or voluntary: that is, one is born into a church, but joins a sect. Troeltsch identified a third type: mysticism. Discussing Quakerism explicitly, he posited that the movement was initially a spirit-led community which ‘overcame the natural... individualistic tendency of mysticism’. However, it soon became ‘bourgeois’, as Quakers lost their initial spiritual vitality and developed into something indistinguishable from Calvinist asceticism, except by the fact that the movement was ‘founded upon a voluntary basis’. Ultimately, Troeltsch concluded, ‘with Quakerism the wave of mysticism in England was spent’. John A. Coleman, ‘Church-Sect Typology and Organisational Precariousness’, in *Sociological Analysis*, 29, 2 (1968), 55-66, at 57; Ernst Troeltsch, *Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols, vol. 1, transl. Olive Wyon (London, 1931), 331-349, 377; Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, vol. 2, 780-4.

²⁹ Niebuhr, *Social Sources*, 21.

³⁰ Ibid. 19-20.

³¹ Ibid. 25, 5, 21.

as from this point ‘the Society [in Essex] was prepared to countenance greater levels of integration between Quakers and others’. Yet he explains this shift as a ‘path of accommodation and integration which ultimately sowed the seeds of its own decline in the next fifty years’. Quaker history is primarily viewed in terms of gradual social compromise and denominationalism, and so, whilst Davies makes crucial observations regarding the significance of the 1670s in the development of early Quakerism, his reliance on the explanatory power of the Quakers’ desire for social inclusion means that he too remains almost entirely silent on theological currents affecting the movement in this period.³²

A third historiographical force encouraging the neglect of theological factors is the assumption that Quakers were anti-theological, anti-intellectual, or downright illiterate. As Nicholas McDowell has convincingly shown, this was in the interests of both conformists (who wanted to undermine the intellectual basis for dissenting beliefs) and nonconformists (who wanted to contrast humble piety and the pharisaical intellectualism of the day, to undermine the university-educated established ministry).³³ Prominent dissenting voices were castigated for their ignorant contempt for learning, yet were often highly educated. Thus, Abiezer Coppe was educated at All Soul’s and Merton in Oxford; Richard Overton was educated at Cambridge; John Lilburne was ‘son of a Durham gentleman... from a wealthier background than that arch anti-democrat Thomas Hobbes, son of a Wiltshire parson’.³⁴ Similarly the Quaker Robert Rich, best known for his ardent support for James Nayler and subsequent ostracism from the Quakers, amassed an extensive library of heterodox reading material, including work by Jacob Boehme, Thereau John Tany, and Abiezer Coppe. Whilst he had little formal education, he claimed to have read Hobbes and was clearly intellectually engaged with Quaker ideas at the highest level through his publications, despite his unfashionable religious associations.³⁵

Nonetheless, the rhetorical portrayal of dissenters as intellectually unsophisticated has been received uncritically by commentators, leading to the persistence of seventeenth-century prejudices in modern scholarship. In his history of West Jersey, John Pomfret described how George Keith’s character as a

³² Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society, 1655-1725* (Oxford, 2000), 217-8, 1-8.

³³ Nicholas McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion and Revolution, 1630-1660* (Oxford, 2003), 9, 22-49.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 51-2, 90.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 172-3.

‘logical, reasoning man’ led him ‘to attempt to systematize Quakerism and to reduce it to theological orderliness’.³⁶ Pomfret assumed that theological sophistication necessitated a reduction or perversion of the first Quaker message. In a similar manner, McDowell critiques Christopher Hill’s problematic account of radicalism as a product of the perceived lower classes, given the number of radicals who ‘possessed a considerable degree of formal education’.³⁷ In contrast, McDowell argues that ‘to understand the culture of radicalism in the English revolution we need to develop a greater understanding of how that culture was shaped not simply by conflict between the cultural worlds of the high and the low, of the learned and the unlearned, but by their interaction’.³⁸

Such is the historiographical inheritance of Quaker scholarship. Early confessional histories of Quakerism suggested a narrative of decline into worldliness, and a reluctance to think critically about early Quaker theology or historicise a message regarded ultimately as pure and timeless; in response, social historians sought explicitly to downplay the religious character of early Quakerism altogether; in support of both, sociologists have stressed the inevitability of compromise. Crucially, none of these approaches encourage consideration of the role of theology as an external factor affecting the development of early Quakerism – and the religious agency of seventeenth-century Quakers is undermined further still by the assumption that they were disengaged from wider intellectual trends of their society.

Therefore, it should not surprise us to read Richard Allen’s more recent discussion of a progression towards ‘respectability’ in the *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*.³⁹ Here, ‘respectability’ is a socio-political category, born out of a response to persecution. Similarly, Phyllis Mack argues that by the end of the seventeenth century ‘after decades of systematic persecution by the restored monarchical government, Quakers were attempting to become part of the social and political mainstream’, and Richard Vann claims that ‘Quakerism as a “movement” had drawn to a close as early as 1670’ which

³⁶ John Pomfret, *The Province of West New Jersey, 1609-1702* (Princeton, 1956), 243.

³⁷ McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination*, 3-5. See also Nicholas McDowell, ‘A Ranter Reconsidered: Abiezer Coppe and Civil War Stereotypes’, in *The Seventeenth Century*, 12, 2 (1997), 173-205, at 178.

³⁸ McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination*, 9.

³⁹ Richard Allen, ‘Restoration Quakerism, 1660-1691’, in Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies* (Oxford, 2013), 29-46, 43.

was ‘largely the consequence of persecution’.⁴⁰ Perhaps most notably, Richard Greaves has argued that they secured social respectability by ‘constructive engagement’ with outsiders, rather than political and social introversion. Greaves points to their sustained denunciation of plots, strict confinement to non-violent resistance, and toleration as an economic principle rather than a ‘cloak for sedition’, and concludes that ‘Quaker success in commerce and industry coupled with the renunciation of violence and plotting paved the road to respectability’. This characterisation of early Quakerism provides an important challenge to earlier narratives of increasing sectarianism in the wake of political defeat. However, Greaves’s discussion entirely excludes the Quakers’ theological activity.⁴¹

Where theological consideration is made explicit, the narrative of a quest for socio-political respectability remains. Rosemary Moore’s *Light in their Consciences* is directly concerned to ‘bridge the divergence between... theological and historical approaches’, and her work has made an important contribution to the study of early Quaker theology. However, she concludes her discussion by tracing the ‘metamorphosis’ of the Quaker movement as Friends sought ‘solid respectability’ in the aftermath of Nayler’s entry into Bristol.⁴² Similarly, Hugh Barbour’s *Quakers in Puritan England* explicitly stresses the need for a ‘balanced theological insight’, and is consciously presented as an examination of the Quakers’ personal experience. Barbour even explicitly notes the Quakers’ overseas missions as evidence that ‘the Quakers had not let the Lamb’s War become defensive’ in the aftermath of the Nayler affair. Yet he also characterises the late 1650s as the turning point at which the Quakers were forced to change under the weight of increased persecution: ‘the intense persecutions of 1662-1689 in England ended Quaker expectations of world conquest’, leading to the movement’s increasing introversion in the quietist eighteenth century.⁴³

⁴⁰ Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley, 1992), 2; Richard T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1725* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 200.

⁴¹ Richard L. Greaves, ‘Seditious Sectaries or “Sober and Useful Inhabitants”? Changing Conceptions of the Quakers in Early Modern Britain’, in *Albion*, 33, 1 (2001), 24-50, at 25-6, 33-7.

⁴² Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, 236, 214-28.

⁴³ Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven, 1964), ix-xii, 66-8, 71; Hugh Barbour, ‘The Early Quaker Outlook upon ‘The World’ and Society, 1647-1662’, in *Church History*, 26, 2 (1957), 175-176, at 176.

More recently, scholars have recognised the need to reconcile confessional and non-confessional study of the movement.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the theological culture of the movement is beginning to receive fuller scholarly attention, demonstrated most obviously by the publication in 2015 of the edited volume, *Early Quakers and their Theological Thought*.⁴⁵ This echoes wider trends in Reformation and Enlightenment studies towards a reintegration of religious ideas into historical narratives.⁴⁶ Along with the observations of Nicholas McDowell noted above, such developments challenge the notion that dissenters were separated from wider theological discussions. However, the fruits of these labours have not been brought to bear on that central question of Quaker historiography: what drove the development of seventeenth-century Quakerism away from its initial form?

The Theological Culture of Early Quakerism

Such underlying scholarly assumptions have generated an over-reliance on socio-political categories to explain the development of early Quakerism. The implication is that the colourful religious ecstasy experienced by the first Friends was either not important, or had faded by the time that Quakerism began to change. The story of seventeenth-century Quakerism is a story of appeasement in response to challenging conditions created by secular authorities: the Quakers primarily hoped to be accepted by society, rather than to transform society itself into a ‘kingdom’ acceptable before God. Change is conceived as a political necessity, and the Quaker movement is analysed as if it were a political party, rather than a religious movement. Such models paint a patronising picture of second-generation Quakers forfeiting their founding principles to join the world.

In contrast, this thesis argues for a greater consideration of the Quakers’ central religious concerns. In the first instance, then, it is necessary to understand the theological culture of early Quakerism.

⁴⁴ For example, Grigor McClelland, ‘What is Quaker Studies?’, in *QS*, 1, 1 (1996), 1-25; Robynne Rogers Healey, ‘2016 George Richardson Lecture: Speaking from the Centre or the Margins? Conversations between Quaker and non-Quaker Historical Narratives’, in *QS*, 22, 1 (2017), 3-20.

⁴⁵ Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers*.

⁴⁶ For example, see Knud Haakonssen, *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996); Diarmaid MacCulloch, ‘Protestantism in Mainland Europe: New Directions’, in *Renaissance Quarterly*, 59, 3 (2006), 698-706; Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford, 2013).

Certainly, portrayals of Quakers as simple believers pervaded early Quaker writings. In *The sandy foundation shaken*, William Penn (1644-1718) asserted that ‘God did not use to wrap his Truths up in Heathenish Metaphisicks, but in plain Language’.⁴⁷ Yet as the son of an English admiral and alumnus of Christ Church in Oxford, Penn was highly educated and wrote various in-depth analyses of metaphysical concepts – as will be explored in great detail later in this thesis.⁴⁸ Similarly, the discrepancy between Samuel Fisher’s identification of himself as a ‘Rustick’ and his early career as an Oxbridge-educated lecturer, biblical scholar, and Presbyterian minister is striking in his 1660 *Rusticos ad academicos*.⁴⁹ Indeed, his direct engagement with figures such as John Owen and Richard Baxter to ‘correct’ the ‘University, and Clergy’ was facilitated largely by his own education and social status. In both instances, we must conclude that language was being used rhetorically to stress the purity of the Quaker message and the unassuming character of individual Friends. These were moral complaints, which did not entail a lack of theological sophistication in the Quaker community.

Indeed, the historical record attests to the tenacious theological engagement of the early Quakers. Remarkably, twenty-four theological pamphlets written by George Fox seem to have been published *only* in Dutch.⁵⁰ This may have been encouraged by a concern to expand Quaker communities in more tolerant countries. However, Quakers also produced a vast quantity of theologically engaged literature for English readers – and this cannot be explained away as a cynical attempt to woo powerful readers with the leverage to secure greater toleration in England, because it was not only the hostile elite who read early Quaker writings. Kate Peters has analysed the printed works of Quakers between 1652 and 1656 to argue convincingly that publications were carefully coordinated as a means of political and religious engagement. Whilst her work largely concerns the earliest period of Quakerism and deals only secondarily with theological issues, it establishes the basic strategy of Quaker print culture from the start. Peters’ observation that ‘writing was not an inherent part of being a Quaker’ is especially pertinent.

⁴⁷ William Penn, *The sandy foundation shaken*, P1356 (London, 1668), 10.

⁴⁸ See below, especially 143-59.

⁴⁹ Samuel Fisher, *Rusticos ad academicos*, F1056 (London, 1660), sig. A1r. For a more detailed discussion of the importance of Fisher as a biblical scholar, see Hill, *WTUD*, 259-68; McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination*, 137-82; above, 194-5.

⁵⁰ Dean Freiday, ‘Christian Dialogue in the Seventeenth Century’, in *Quaker Religious Thought*, 88, 4 (1997), 39-55, at 53.

For ‘the authors of Quaker tracts were also the movement’s leadership, and their function as authors was central to their authority as leaders’. Thus, between 1652 and 1656, just eight Quakers were responsible for more than half of their publications. James Nayler is estimated to have contributed to one in five publications in the same period, and to have written approximately half of all the printed exchanges between Quakers and their opponents; Richard Farnworth, aged roughly twenty-three, is thought personally to have contributed to over half of the twenty-seven publications released in 1653.⁵¹ The Quakers’ critics would repeatedly quote from a small cluster of standard works to discredit the opinions of the whole movement.

This does not reflect the apathy or illiteracy of most Quakers, as much as the existence of a *de facto* ‘Quaker ministry responsible for writing’.⁵² Thus, in 1662 the early Quaker leader Edward Burrough distinguished between local meetings and the ‘Ministry’, and described how ministers were

... wholly devoted to the worke of the Ministry, to which we were ordained of God, and were continually exercised in preaching the Gospell, in answering Books and Manuscripts put forth against us, and in Disputes and Conventions with such as opposed the truth.⁵³

In other words, the ideas of certain individuals carried weight – and, even in a movement as ostensibly disparate and suspicious of the ‘dead letter’ as early Quakerism, this authority could be asserted through text. Moreover, the networks in place to distribute this material were sophisticated and extensive, even early on. This organisation inevitably required the involvement of the wider group,

⁵¹ Peters, *Print Culture*, 16-22, 234n; Kate Peters, ‘Patterns of Quaker Authorship, 1652-1656’, in *Prose Studies*, 17 (1994), 6-28, at 8, 15.

⁵² Peters, *Print Culture*, 22.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 21. Of course, the early Quakers were vehemently against the paid ministry: true ministry was only thought possible through immediate revelation. However, they did identify certain Friends as ‘ministers’, or ‘public Friends’. This title primarily indicated travel outside one’s own immediate area, and such ministry became a key channel of communication between local Meetings. Other Quakers were expected to uphold their vocation financially. The role became more clearly defined over time, as ministers met separately from 1656 and were provided with official certificates of ‘clearness’ by the 1690s. Their preaching was not inherently more authoritative than that of any inspired individual, but it was more sustained. Naturally, unofficial hierarchies of power also affected the practical function of ministry – as noted here, the special authority of certain individual ‘ministers’ manifested in print culture, and the tendency for travelling ministers to be drawn from socio-economic groups which could financially support themselves would also have affected their standing in the movement. See Sylvia Stevens, ‘Travelling Ministry’, in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, 292-305, at 292-299; Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (New York, 1988), 103; Vann, *Social Development*, 98; D. Elton Trueblood, ‘The Paradox of the Quaker Ministry’, in *The Friends’ Quarterly*, 13, 10 (1961), 437-47.

most notably in raising financial support for the ministers' prolific output. Yet as William Dewsbury noted in 1654, even when local Quakers could not afford to contribute financially, they would 'look of books if they might have them lent' – and books were often read publicly, in churchyards and marketplaces.⁵⁴ Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that individual writers had influence over the opinions of a much wider pool of Quakers.

This appetite for written material seems to have emerged from pre-existent Puritan habits of socialised reading. As Andrew Cambers observes, 'godly reading was a style of religious engagement with texts which was frequently oral and communal' and this was a key 'ritual of separation' by which the Godly demonstrated their distinctive piety.⁵⁵ The construction and consumption of text was communal, and therefore paradigmatic of the godly life. In the immediate context of early Quakerism, this supports Peters's claim that Quaker publications were intended to widen participation and reinforce the teachings of the central Quaker leadership. Printed sources must not be disregarded as unrepresentative or anomalous simply because of the atypicality of the authors' theological engagement. Rather, the theological culture of early Quakerism as a whole was receptive and pro-active – strident and willing – and demands greater consideration as a driving force in the development of the early Quaker movement.

A further reason to consider theological factors is the inadequate explanatory power of the focus on socio-political respectability itself. Of course, socio-political forces undeniably had a profound impact upon the development of the movement. The Quakers learned to become effective lobbyists, and their legal campaigns can only be understood as engagement on the state's terms.⁵⁶ In large part, Kate Peters's research is an argument for the political acumen of the Quaker leadership. So too, the work of Simon Dixon on the Quakers in London has demonstrated the success with which Quakers participated in their local communities, and Alan Cole's work has at least demonstrated the active engagement of Quakers in politics during the Interregnum, for example in their lobbying for the reinstatement of the Rump

⁵⁴ Peters, *Print Culture*, 60-3, 63, 69.

⁵⁵ Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580-1720* (Cambridge, 2011), 9.

⁵⁶ Craig Horle, 'Changing Quaker attitudes towards legal defence: the George Fox case, 1673-75, and the establishment of the Meeting for Sufferings', in J. William Frost and John M. Moore (eds.) *Seeking the Light: Essays in Quaker History* (Wallingford, 1986), 17-40; Craig Horle, *The Quakers and the English Legal System, 1660-1688* (Philadelphia, 1988).

parliament, against previous assumptions of early Quaker passivity.⁵⁷ Clearly, early Quakers understood the strategic advantages to worldly engagement. Perhaps this is signalled most succinctly by their appeal to the economic and political benefits of religious toleration: in *The great case of liberty of conscience*, William Penn characterised toleration as an embrace of ‘the Wisest, Greatest, & Best States and Persons of Ancient and Modern Times’, and persecution as ‘destructive of all civil Government’, listing various examples of the principle of toleration leading to the ‘preservation of... states’ and ‘improved... Wealth, Trade and power’.⁵⁸

However, such economic arguments formed just one strand of a much wider tapestry, and there are several reasons to suspect that over-emphasis on the political has distorted our understanding of early Quaker development. First, we should question the assumptions underpinning the Niebuhrian model of collusion. Bryan Wilson has noted various examples of sects which have managed to sustain themselves, which challenges the notion that new religious movements cannot maintain their current form beyond a generation.⁵⁹ Expanding this argument specifically to consider early Quaker development, David Martin convincingly argues that sects ultimately ‘remain as sects or die’. In other words, rather than developing from sects, most denominations exhibit denomination-like features from the start. Martin argues that Friends were closer to following Niebuhr’s model than most groups, but he observes certain sectarian tendencies, most notably the ‘sectarian perfectionism’ of the pacifist stance, even in modern Quakerism. Martin’s work demonstrates the need for caution when considering the Quakers’ relationship to denominational and sectarian identities.⁶⁰ Indeed, raising further questions over the Niebuhrian model, existing accounts identify patterns of Quaker behaviour which display increased sectarianism as the result of *greater* fraternisation with the world; for example, Barbour’s understanding of persecution leading to a loss of missionary zeal suggests that strategies designed to end adversity

⁵⁷ Simon Dixon, ‘Quakers and the London Parish 1670-1720’, in *The London Journal*, 32, 3 (2007), 229-249; Cole, ‘Quakers and Politics, 1652-1660’.

⁵⁸ William Penn, *The great case of liberty of conscience once more debated*, P1299 (London, 1670), 8, 3, 41, 37-44. As noted above, this strategy is discussed explicitly in Greaves, ‘Seditious Sectaries’, 26, 36-39, 50.

⁵⁹ Bryan Wilson, ‘An Analysis of Sect Development’, in Bryan Wilson (ed.), *Sects and Society* (London, 1961), 22-45.

⁶⁰ D.A. Martin, ‘The Denomination’, in *The British Journal of Sociology*, 13, 1 (1962), 1-14, at 2.

encouraged introversion, rather than challenging it.⁶¹ This is contrary to the sociological model of inevitable compromise.

Yet Barbour's observation is also problematic in a more fundamental sense: that is, the changing behaviour of the Quakers over this period simply did not reflect increasing conformity to the world in any straightforward manner. A second reason to question the Quakers' desire for socio-political respectability, then, is their staunch persistence in behaviours which guaranteed their continued persecution. Indeed, Richard Vann has even characterised the result of persecution as a transformation 'from movement to sect', as 'it was, increasingly, reliable behaviour according to their distinctive norms which distinguished the Quaker from the children of the world'.⁶² The most obvious examples of Quaker peculiarity are their plain dress and plain speech, which Wilson explicitly identifies as examples of 'insulation' measures 'to protect sect values'.⁶³ However, other early Quaker practices would have had a much greater practical impact on the lives of adherents. For example, Quakers were ineligible for any job requiring an oath, including public office, until the Affirmation Act was passed in 1696 (and in any case, Quakers were excluded from university education until 1871). Yet the Quakers continued to refuse to swear oaths – and, more tellingly, many were highly reluctant to accept the terms of the Act when it came.⁶⁴ So too, Quaker marriages were not formally recognised until 1753, yet on Fox's return from his 1666-7 tour (understood in large part as a response to adversity) one of his main priorities was to consolidate Friends' alternative marriage practice. Of course, this might be interpreted as an attempt to present a more respectable procedure to the state, and Quaker marriages had been recognised more informally, on an *ex post facto* basis, since the early 1660s. Thus, Quakers were not entirely excluded from the legal privileges of marriage, and actively sought further legal protection. Nonetheless, full protection was not actually guaranteed until much later – and yet, despite the potential financial and

⁶¹ See above, 16.

⁶² Vann, *Social Development*, 197-208, 188.

⁶³ Wilson, 'Sect Development', 37.

⁶⁴ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, 187-204.

legal vulnerability it placed on Friends, Quakers were explicitly prohibited from marrying non-Quakers by the 1690s.⁶⁵ In short, Quakers often behaved in direct opposition to their worldly interests.

With this in mind, Michael Mullett has proposed a messier picture of seventeenth-century Quakerism, which became increasingly sectarian in some respects and increasingly denominational in others. Of particular relevance to this thesis, Mullett notes the Quakers' sectarian attitude towards persecution, which was encouraged by the reluctance of the state to facilitate a system of co-existing denominations. He argues that the state's legislative support for a single, all-encompassing church prevented the Church of England from becoming one denomination amongst many, and that this 'experience of oppression kept Quakers in a mental framework of alienation which was readily expressed in the language of eschatological expectation and which denotes to us the classic sect'. Mullett especially notes the refusal of the state to compromise on the matter of oath-taking.⁶⁶ His conclusions are supported by David Scott's study of Quakers in York, which notes the schism of this community in 1680 regarding Quaker policy on remarriage. Scott diagnoses an introverted Quaker culture that was primarily concerned with its own practices, rather than missionary interaction with the world. Yet he challenges the notion of a withdrawal after 1660, given that 'so few of the city's Quakers had been prominent in the public sphere in the first place', and identifies the start of business Meetings in 1668 as the crucial point in the development of York's civic Quakerism, pointing to the establishment of internal organisational structures as the most fundamental change in the Quaker movement. This was not an uncomplicated tendency towards increased sectarianism; relations between Quakers and their neighbours also significantly improved, and other dissenters were even interred in the Quaker burial ground.⁶⁷ However, whilst certain elements of Quaker behaviour and worldly engagement suggest increased collusion with

⁶⁵ Michael Mullett, 'From Sect to Denomination? Social Developments in Eighteenth-Century English Quakerism', in *The Journal of Religious History*, 13 (1984-5), 168-91, at 177; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 145-6. Admittedly, Mullett notes that Friends disowned for marrying out were 'freely, even joyfully' readmitted, suggesting a certain degree of flexibility. Nonetheless, this was probably largely the result of a concern to uphold the marriage once it was undertaken. Moreover, the willingness to readmit points to a strong tribal mentality amongst Quakers, in which membership of the community was a potent social force.

⁶⁶ Mullett, 'From Sect to Denomination?', 183-6.

⁶⁷ Scott, *Quakerism in York*, 20-3, 10-11.

the world, the social prospects of ordinary Friends would still have been significantly limited by their basic experience of relationships, education and the law.

Thirdly, early Quaker writings suggest that their theological vision was remarkably resilient to even the most terrifying of social pressures, as they used adversity to bolster their Quaker identity and reiterate their theological and religious concerns. This is demonstrated most strikingly by responses to the execution of four Quakers in Boston between 1659 and 1661, for entering the colony on pain of death. Certainly, Friends were not afraid to suffer: despite having been acquitted once before, Mary Dyer re-entered the colony to force her own execution, declaring that ‘it is the greatest Joy, and Hour, I can enjoy in this World’.⁶⁸ Yet arguably more significantly, both the martyrs and later commentators used these executions to promote their theological message. The rhetorical focus was squarely on the innocence of the Quaker martyrs (in contrast to an emphasis on the guilt and humility of the martyrs in earlier Puritan martyrology), and the immanent judgement of their oppressors by the Light within.⁶⁹ Suffering was, then, an important tool in the presentation of the Quaker message – indeed, it was ‘an integral part of early Quaker identity’ – and as such, it often framed Quaker missionary activity rather than preventing it.⁷⁰ Indeed, even the derogatory name of ‘Quaker’ was exploited to distinguish between righteous insiders and hostile outsiders. Thus, in 1652 Richard Farnworth published a ditty declaring the author to be ‘one whom the people of the world calles a Quaker, / but is of the Divine nature made partaker’. Kate Peters argues that this rhyming signature was ‘evidence of the performative nature of Quaker tracts’, and the content of the rhyme conveyed the sense (reiterated throughout Quaker literature) that the group known to the world as ‘Quakers’ was in fact the assembly of the ‘Lambs of Christ’.⁷¹ As the Quaker leader George Whitehead (1636-1723) described,

Altho’ for the Space of about Twenty Five Years... we had but small
Respite from some kind of Persecution or other.... Yet the TRUTH lost no

⁶⁸ George Bishop, *New England judged*, B3003 (London, 1661), 109.

⁶⁹ I have discussed the theological significance of the Quakers’ response to the Boston persecution more extensively, in Madeleine Ward, ‘Transformative Faith and the Theological Response of the Quakers to the Boston Executions’, in *QS*, 21, 1 (2016), 15-32. See also, Rosemary Moore, ‘Reactions to Persecution in Primitive Quakerism’, in *JFHS*, Vol. 57 (1996) 123-31.

⁷⁰ John Miller, ‘“A Suffering People”: English Quakers and Their Neighbours c. 1650-c. 1700’, in *Past & Present*, 188 (2005), 71-103, at 71.

⁷¹ Peters, *Print Culture*, 96-105, 111; William Hale, *An answer to a book, titled, Quakers principles quaking*, A501 (London, 1656), 2.

Ground, but gained through all: The Persecution Time, was a Seed Time, for the Truth and Gospel of CHRIST JESUS, which we suffered for, and the Faithful grew and multiplied.⁷²

Whitehead's account also challenges historical narratives which view the Restoration as a new stage in the development of Quakerism. Ultimately, whilst the harsh changes which accompanied the Restoration were severe – Coffey estimates that 4,257 Quakers were in prison in 1661 – they were not entirely new, as the Quakers had been outside the religious fold from the start.⁷³ Nothing conveys this more poignantly than the harrowing death of nineteen-year-old James Parnell in prison (possibly following a hunger strike) in 1656, which Moore describes as a 'shock to Friends' that 'concentrated their minds' to make 'serious attempts to write theologically about suffering'.⁷⁴

Fourthly, in addition to cultural indicators in the writing and behaviour of the movement, it is worth also noting that, against the common assumption that Quakerism began life as a movement of the economically disadvantaged and became more socially empowered over time, there is evidence to suggest that the Quakers in fact became poorer as the seventeenth century went on.⁷⁵ As careful research by Richard Vann has shown, 'in the beginnings of Quakerism the gentry and wholesale traders were especially drawn to it, and... the tendency was for the social standing of Friends to decline during the first century'.⁷⁶ Vann notes the large number of gentlemen and professionals amongst the Valiant Sixty (eight out of fifty-five families represented came from the gentry) and concludes that 'the stereotype of the Quaker "mechanic preacher" owes most to the malice of... Christian controversialists'.⁷⁷ Amongst rank-and-file Quakers, 'the core of support... seems to have been the yeomen and the wholesale traders'. This was a relatively comfortable demographic, and Vann concludes that the first Quakers were generally drawn 'from all classes of society except the very highest and the very lowest'.⁷⁸ Yet

⁷² George Whitehead, *The christian progress of that ancient servant*, ESTC T138652 (London, 1675), 631-2, cited in Robynne Rogers Healey, 'From Apocalyptic Prophecy to Tolerable Faithfulness: George Whitehead and a Theology for the Eschaton Deferred', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers*, 273-92, at 284.

⁷³ John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* (London, 2000), 171.

⁷⁴ Moore, *Light in their consciences*, 160.

⁷⁵ Compare Niebuhr's contention that a major driving force for change, aside from persecution and generational change, was the Quakers' economic success and their transformation into a 'middle-class' church. Niebuhr, *Social Sources*, 54.

⁷⁶ Vann, *Social Development*, 50.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 55-8.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 59-73.

the movement struggled to retain its following amongst the landed and lesser gentry. Vann suggests that this may have been accentuated by the ‘galling effects of Quaker discipline’, but was more likely the result of the clear political advantages of conformity. In any case, ‘the converts made after 1670 were generally of lower social status than the original ones’.⁷⁹

In short, the development of seventeenth-century Quakerism cannot be characterised in terms of a straightforward, linear progression towards social respectability. Later Quakers did enjoy improved relations with the world in certain respects. However, this occurred only alongside other developments which pulled them towards a sectarian identity, and the positive reclamation of persecution in the construction of a Quaker identity. The picture outlined above suggests the presence of complicating factors in the Quakers’ interactions with the world, and we must look beyond mere socio-political posturing to explain the development of early Quakerism.

Quakers and ‘Theological Respectability’

How might we proceed? One approach might be to dispense with the category of ‘respectability’ altogether. Nicholas Morgan has suggested instead that a desire for ‘reputation’ drove the Quakers. Whilst ‘respectability’ must be conceived in the world’s terms, Morgan understands ‘reputation’ as a set of outcomes guided by the Quakers’ own preferences.⁸⁰ Furthermore, unlike respectability, reputation may also include elements of challenge to the ways of the Quakers’ opponents. For example, their refusal of certain societal norms might render them less respectable, but generate a distinctive ‘reputation’ grounded specifically in those beliefs which they judged most important to their identity. Nonetheless, the socio-political criteria by which ‘reputation’ would be evaluated in the world were still outside of the Quakers’ control – and so, must necessarily have affected them to the extent that they were willing to engage at all. Whilst Quakers may have chosen to withdraw from the world in certain

⁷⁹ Ibid. 73-9.

⁸⁰ Nicholas Morgan, ‘The Quakers and the Establishment, 1660-1730, with specific reference to the North-West of England’, PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 1986, cited by Scott, *Quakerism in York*, 2.

ways, that does not change the inescapable fact that where they *did* engage, such engagement could not proceed entirely according to their own preferences.

Rather, the major failure of the ‘respectability’ model is the focus upon socio-political factors at the expense of the theological. It is this tendency which has distorted scholarly understanding of the Quakers’ priorities as a religious movement, and which ultimately undermines any explanation of those elements of Quaker development which prevented social inclusion. Addressing both these issues, then, a better approach is to broaden our conception of how a movement might seek ‘respectability’ to include theological and religious criteria. To this end, this thesis will explore the Quakers’ relationship with ‘theological respectability’ – that is, the religious and intellectual counterpart to the well-documented desire for socio-political respectability – to argue that the Quakers increasingly engaged intellectually with non-Quakers as the century progressed, and that this engagement reflected their desire to demonstrate their theological coherence, legitimacy, and primitivism. Moreover, the increased engagement with outsiders over time should not be understood simply as a corollary of increasing desperation to avoid persecution; rather, it reflected a natural process of identity-making which gathered its own momentum as the Quaker movement became more established and, if anything, intensified more greatly during periods of toleration more than periods of persecution.

Of course, the Quakers themselves did not use language of ‘theological respectability’. Moreover, they would undoubtedly have resisted any suggestion that they sought validation from their religious opponents, or that these opponents were qualified to give it. For seventeenth-century Quakers, the only indicator of theological respectability was whether one’s ministry was validated by a true authority – that is, whether it was enabled by immediate revelation or not. Nonetheless, this thesis contends that it is a useful historiographical category, which ultimately aligns more closely with their concerns than terminology currently used to conceptualise the development of early Quakerism. For peering behind their own rhetoric, we find that their writings were saturated with more subtle indicators of their theological aspirations, which can usefully be described in shorthand as a desire for ‘theological respectability’ (variously encompassing their navigation of such categories as apostolicity, primitivism, antiquity and orthodoxy).

In the first instance, then, seventeenth-century Friends' rhetoric was consistently directed towards the construction of a Quaker identity in terms of true Christianity. Language of 'brothers and sisters', 'the age of apostasy' and 'ancient Friends' all bolstered the idea that Quakerism was a return to the early Church. In turn, this absolutely necessitated a demonstration of doctrinal purity.⁸¹ Moreover, as Michael Graves has recently noted, the Quakers' rhetoric shifted in favour of this model, with the growing popularity of 'remnant' imagery over that of the 'Lamb's War' (although both were present from the beginning).⁸² This reflected the prominence of the 'true Church' motif in the Quaker identity: just as Richard Baxter lamented in 1657 that the Quakers 'have not told us of any sect but their own, which they take to be the true Church', Thomas Ellwood boldly confirmed in 1696 that 'we, the People called Quakers, are the Church of Christ'.⁸³ Later, in the early eighteenth century, they explicitly endeavoured to be 'good Christians'.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Quakers made explicit claims to apostolicity and antiquity, as they attempted to demonstrate precedent for the 'New and Living Way Christ set up Himself, above 1600 Years ago'.⁸⁵ Motifs of apostolicity, antiquity, primitivism and ecclesial purity were central to seventeenth-century Quakers' understanding of themselves as the true Church.

This did not necessitate a complete endorsement of their doctrinal and liturgical inheritance – and it is crucial to note that their clarification of the relationship between Quakerism and Christianity was both apologetic *and* critical. This was reflected in their quasi-creedal statements of faith. For example, Whitehead's *The Christianity of the people commonly called Quakers, asserted* was published in 1689 explicitly against 'the Unjust Charge of their being no CHRISTIANS'. The publication reflected both Whitehead's attempt to appease his opponents, and a positive affirmation of his own religious vision. Thus, he began by clarifying the Quakers' acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity, probably because protection under the Toleration Act did not extend to Unitarians. Whitehead explained that 'Our Belief is, that in the Unity of the Godhead there is Father, Son and Holy Ghost, being those Three Divine

⁸¹ Quaker 'primitivism' is discussed extensively in Ted Underwood, *Primitivism, Radicalism and the Lamb's War* (Oxford, 1997).

⁸² Michael P. Graves, *Preaching the Inward Light: Early Quaker Rhetoric* (Waco, 2009), 66.

⁸³ Richard Baxter, *One sheet against the Quakers*, B1334 (London, 1657), 2; Thomas Ellwood, *An answer to George Keith's narrative*, E613 (London, 1696), 210.

⁸⁴ Voltaire, *Letters concerning the English nation*, ESTC T137614 (London, 1733), 3.

⁸⁵ George Fox, *Concerning the antiquity of the people of God*, F1773 (London, 1689), 7.

Witnesses that bear Record in Heaven... and that these Three are One'. Yet Whitehead notably avoided the Trinitarian language of three 'persons' which Quakers rejected, and might even be interpreted as modalist. Clearly, there was more to Whitehead's demonstration of his 'Christianity' than a cynical attempt to secure toleration, and he did not shy away from a confident declaration of his theological priorities as a Quaker. Rather, he ended his pamphlet with a summary of the Quakers' 'Christian sense and belief in these Matters' as it emphasised the priority of inward, spiritual forms, including an unambiguous rejection of the outward Eucharist.⁸⁶

Whitehead protested specific aspects of the received traditions of the national Church (in this case, rejection of the language of 'persons' in the Trinity, and the outward sacraments) but still sought to cast his distinctive views in terms of the doctrinal inheritance of Christianity. His publication would have looked very different if it was solely a strategic attempt to demonstrate tolerability, designed to prevent the interruption of an ultimately social protest. Likewise, it would have looked very different if his faith was so radically creative that Christian respectability was not important to him at all. Rather, fidelity to the peculiar vision of Quakerism, and to the body of Christian doctrine and tradition from which it emerged, both clearly mattered deeply to Whitehead. In this sense, the Quakers occupied a liminal space, pushing against the edges of acceptable faith as they forged their own distinctive religious identity.

The ground for such theological negotiation was especially fertile as the various groups opposing Quakerism engaged in their own, parallel processes of identity-making. Of course, the identities of emergent religious groups are always volatile, and Baptists, Ranters, and Muggletonians all interacted to define their identities over and against one another. However, given the turbulence of the seventeenth century, not even the established Church provided solid ground. Many previously conforming clergymen were forced from their livings as a result of successive ecclesiastical changes between 1649 and 1662 – and even where personnel remained *in situ*, legislative shifts precipitated a disorientating

⁸⁶ George Whitehead, *The Christianity of the people commonly called Quakers, asserted*, W1911 (London, 1689), 1-3.

reconfiguration of existing religious categories.⁸⁷ At any one time, ‘outsiders’ might become ‘insiders’, and vice versa – as demonstrated powerfully by the exclusion of Presbyterians from the Restoration settlement, and accession of the Catholic James II in 1685. What is now known as ‘Anglicanism’ was settled following the Restoration – just as the Quakers consolidated their own religious and doctrinal identity.⁸⁸ Religious identities were similarly unsettled in both colonial America and the Netherlands, where major Quaker communities developed during this period.⁸⁹ The Quakers were, then, one unsettled group among many, evolving at a time when all religious identities were in flux. As such, they were active participants in a wider conversation, rather than passive respondents in a series of externally controlled events – and so, rather than viewing the Quakers as an anachronism of the turbulent mid-seventeenth century, struggling to survive in a new context, it is more appropriate to unpick their responses to the emerging religious culture of the Restoration-era and the early Enlightenment.

A similarly dynamic picture of the Quakers’ relationship with theological respectability is reflected in their use of language of ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’ to articulate their theological concerns – an otherwise neglected marker of both the contested nature of true Christianity, and the Quakers’ extensive theological engagement. Of course, ‘orthodoxy’ is a controversial category in historiography, and we

⁸⁷ The difficult choices facing seventeenth-century clergymen, including the strong evidence for the continued use of the Prayer Book and the popularity of episcopal ordination during the Interregnum, can be found in John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (London, 1991), 6-8, 16-8; Judith Maltby, ‘Suffering and surviving: the civil wars, the Commonwealth and the formation of “Anglicanism”’, in Judith Maltby and Christopher Durston (eds.), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), 158-180; John Morrill, ‘The Church in England, 1642-9’, in John Morrill (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War* (London, 1982), 89-114; Kenneth Fincham and Stephen Taylor, ‘Vital Statistics: Episcopal Ordination and Ordinands in England, 1646-60’, in *The English Historical Review*, 126, 519 (2011), 319-344, at 342.

⁸⁸ Anthony Milton, ‘Unsettled Reformations, 1603-1662’ in Anthony Milton (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume 1: Reformation and Identity, c.1520-1662* (Oxford, 2017), 63-83. This thesis uses the term ‘Anglicanism’ to refer to the national Church of England as it was defined by the new Prayer Book and Act of Uniformity in 1662, despite recognising its intellectual heritage in the Reformation in England. For further discussions of Anglican identity, and the appropriate terminology by which to describe it, see Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*; Peter Lake, ‘“Puritans” and “Anglicans” in the History of the Post-Reformation English Church’, in Milton (ed.), *History of Anglicanism*, 352-79; Peter Lake, ‘Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity at the Court of James I’, in Linda Levy Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge, 1990), 113-33; Maltby, ‘Suffering and surviving’, 159, 174.

⁸⁹ In the Netherlands, the limited toleration established in the United Provinces during the 1640s and 1650s encouraged migration into the region, creating space for new religious collaborations. A desire for toleration also encouraged migration to America, although these communities were often transient: Susannah Hardman Moore calculates that one in three clergymen who went to America in the 1630s returned to their native country, and the years 1650-56 (during which time the Quakers began their mission to America) saw ‘the highest concentration of settlers travelling home’. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe’s House Divided, 1490-1700* (London, 2004), 370-3; Susan Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims: New World Settlers & the Call of Home* (New Haven, 2007), 5-7, 14.

must be wary of replicating historical power imbalances through unthinking use of it.⁹⁰ However, this does not require jettisoning it altogether – for the Quakers’ own use of this language demonstrates that it was not simply a set of unchanging criteria employed to marginalise them, a category imposed on them by proponents of a more acceptable brand of Christianity, or a foreign construct rendered nonsensical by their lack of education. Rather, it was a significant pillar of their own theological identity-making.

Thus, Friends often employed such language ironically, directly to challenge aspects of the existing Church which they opposed. In 1656, Edward Burrough complained that the history of Christianity had seen the Church ‘[fill] the world with damnable heresies, as holding forth that sprinkling infants with water is baptisme into the faith of Christ, and that a steeple-house is the church’.⁹¹ Similarly, William Penn judged that so-called Christians had become obsessed with ‘mens invented Traditions and Precepts’, whilst neglecting ‘that more Orthodox definition of the Apostle James, (viz.) Pure Religion... is to visit the Fatherless, and to keep himself unspotted from the World’.⁹² Here, Penn and Burrough positioned themselves as more faithful to ‘orthodoxy’ than their opponents, rather than throwing off its constraints altogether. Yet they completely inverted the category for their own,

⁹⁰ Particularly since the 1980s, historians have been wary of using labels of ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’ in their analysis. This is largely due to a recognition that the historic identification of heresy has almost invariably involved the attempt by a more powerful party (those within the boundaries of the church) to exclude another party from their power. Rarely has this process been motivated purely by theological reasons. Incidentally, similar issues apply to the designation of certain groups as ‘Popish’, ‘Papist’, ‘Puritan’, and ‘enthusiastic’ in the seventeenth-century. However, as L.J. Sackville notes, ‘necessary deconstruction can, when taken to an extreme, lead to a complete unravelling of the construct or representation, to the dismissal of those elements identified as rhetorical or borrowed, and to an assumed disconnect between that construction and the thing described’. In this sense, to avoid speaking of ‘orthodoxy’ altogether has the similarly problematic effect of writing out the theological elements of a historical event or process; a nuanced understanding of the politicisation of theological ideas is simply impossible without a consideration of how ‘orthodoxy’ was navigated. This thesis argues that a key indication of the Quakers’ desire for theological respectability was their increasing acceptance of certain doctrinal principles – most obviously, the Chalcedonian understanding of Christ as both fully human and fully divine. Therefore, the category of ‘orthodoxy’ has significant interpretative value, even if it does not characterise their desire for theological respectability exhaustively. Moreover, the assertion of an increasingly powerful ‘Quaker orthodoxy’ is also relevant to the investigation in later chapters, particularly as it affected the course of the Keithian controversy. L.J. Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics in the Thirteenth Century: The Textual Representations* (York, 2011), 9. For other discussions of ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’ in historical writing, see Herbert Grundmann, *Religious movements in the Middle Ages*, transl. Steven Rowan (Notre Dame, 1995 [1935]); Robert Moore, *Origins of European Dissent* (London, 1977).

⁹¹ Edward Burrough, *A measure of the times*, B6012 (London, 1657), 16.

⁹² William Penn, *Innocency with her open face*, P1304 (London, 1669), 3.

specifically Quaker, agenda, to undermine conformity and construct an alternative vision of true Christianity.

However, Quakers also increasingly used the language of orthodoxy as a mode of appeal, to defend specific ideas, rather than as a simple exhortation to primitive, practical theology. In 1668, Penn described 'the Quakers Principles' as 'Orthodox', defended his queries as 'orthodox' despite anticipating the objections of the Quakers' detractors, and discussed the necessary 'ingredients of an able and orthodox Minister'; in defence of his *Apology*, Robert Barclay argued that, whilst he wrote 'not expressly and distinctly of the Trinity', his opponent acknowledged 'that... I am orthodox herein, that he finds not any clear ground to the contrary'; a letter penned by Robert Rich, published in 1679, described the notion that God 'offereth his Grace freely to all; the defect is in our selves, that answer not God's calling by his Grace' as 'sound orthodox Doctrine'; Thomas Ellwood complained that George Keith (following his departure from the movement) 'acknowledge[d] G. Whitehead and W. Penn to be Orthodox, though he has charged them with being Heterodox'.⁹³

These doctrinal appeals became more common as the century went on, and, most strikingly of all, the notable Quaker author Benjamin Coole (d. 1717) informed his Irish colleague, George Rooke, that in a public dispute between Quakers and local 'priests' in Norfolk, the priests having been incited by the tenacious Francis Bugg, 'Truth got the victory over them, & they acknowledged the present Quakers to be orthodox, or to that effect, but the former books blasphemous, yet would not put that blasphemy upon the trial as above'.⁹⁴ By comparing the present 'orthodox' Quakers with their 'blasphemous' forebears, Coole not only demonstrated his own active concern for orthodoxy (the term seems to have been his own choice, rather than a direct quotation from his opponents), but also tacitly accepted that the Quakers' message had changed, in such a way that allowed their opponents to accept a crucial re-categorisation of Quaker beliefs from 'blasphemous' to 'orthodox'. Thus, both the Quakers and their opponents explicitly acknowledged the Quakers' growing efforts to clarify their relationship to

⁹³ William Penn, *The guide mistaken, and temporizing rebuked*, P1301 (London, 1668), 14, 34, 43; Robert Barclay, *Robert Barclay's Apology for the true Christian divinity vindicated*, B724 (London, 1679), 15; Robert Rich, *The epistles of*, R1356 (London, 1680), 4; Ellwood, *An answer*, 172.

⁹⁴ Benjamin Coole to G. Rooke, Swarthmore Collection MSS, vol. 358, 13 of 10th Month 1693, FHL, item 76.

Christian doctrine, as part of their tendency towards ‘orthodoxy’. The shifting sands of English religion did not, then, preclude the existence of criteria by which theological disputes might be assessed. Rather, as Ann Hughes notes in the specific context of seventeenth-century theological disputations, ‘orthodoxy’ was one contested theological category amongst many, which could be employed by both sides of the debate to secure theological legitimacy.⁹⁵

To speak of a Quaker desire for ‘theological respectability’ is not to deny Friends’ own original insights and concern for practical spirituality, or their deep suspicion of the established church and its institutions. Moreover, as Whitehead’s *The Christianity of the people* demonstrates, neither must we reduce this desire to a desperate attempt to prove ‘orthodoxy’ as defined by their opponents – after all, unlike the Presbyterians, they were not fighting for inclusion or readmission into the Church of England. Rather, we should understand the term to refer to their concern to offer a respectable and coherent articulation of their own values. This process involved their interaction with motifs of apostolic primitivism and orthodoxy, but was not limited to either. Moreover, whilst it was conducted largely in terms of (or in creative tension with) their doctrinal heritage, it contained both offensive and defensive elements. In short, the process of securing theological respectability involved both appeals to Christian doctrine and the pro-active assertion of Quaker values, as well as the interplay between the two. Critically, this process necessitated engagement with other Christian groups – and this engagement grew over time.

With all this in mind, it is surprising that neither the relationship of the Quaker identity to ‘orthodoxy’, nor their positive interaction with other Christians to secure theological respectability, have attracted much scholarly attention. Various scholars have explored particular aspects of the theological context and concerns of the movement: Allison Coudert’s intellectual biography of Francis Mercury van Helmont provides a particularly important contextualisation of the intersection between George Keith and some wider intellectual trends at the time; Marjorie Nicolson and Philip Wragge have considered the influence of Cambridge Platonists upon Keith and Keith’s subsequent influence upon Quakerism as

⁹⁵ Ann Hughes, ‘The Pulpit Guarded: Confrontations between Orthodox and Radicals in Revolutionary England’, in Anne Laurence, W.R. Owens and Stuart Sim (eds.), *John Bunyan and his England, 1628-88* (London, 1990), 31-50, at 33, 50.

a whole; Douglas Gwyn has considered the theological implications of Quaker apocalyptic understanding as a crucial part of their identity; Ted Underwood explores dialogues between Quakers and Baptists; David Manning has also conducted several important studies of accusations of blasphemy against Quakers.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, there has been no sustained consideration of the ways in which Quakers may have sought a specifically theological brand of respectability, or of their constructive intellectual engagement with wider society.

Methodology

This thesis addresses the scholarly neglect of theology as a driving factor in the development of Quakerism, to consider how Quakers engaged with non-Quakers from roughly 1647 to 1700. It is based on the simple premise that seventeenth-century Quakers sought to demonstrate their own theological respectability. Indeed, no matter how averse the early Friends were to formal theological training, a level of doctrinal credibility and coherence was vital if their self-understanding as a return to true Christianity was to be taken seriously. Whilst absolutely recognising the importance of positioning Quakerism in context, this study moves beyond a purely socio-political understanding of that context. In this way, it seeks a reintegration of the theological and the political in scholarly consideration of the development of early Quakerism, through an examination of the neglected theological elements of their desire for ‘respectability’.

Consequently, the theological examination of early Quakerism is not incompatible with a study of the movement’s strategic or political interests. Indeed, the construction of a respectable theology formed an indispensable aspect of their wider engagement. However, whilst this study does not seek to deny potentially pragmatic motivations guiding the development of early Quakerism, it does argue for their inability to provide a full account of that development. In doing so, it points to the necessity of

⁹⁶ Marjorie Nicolson, ‘George Keith and the Cambridge Platonists’, *Philosophical Review*, 39 (1930), 36–55; Underwood, *Primitivism, Radicalism and the Lamb’s War*; Philip Wragge, ‘The Debt of Robert Barclay to George Keith: The Life and Writings of Keith to 1677, and their influence on Barclay’, PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1946; David Manning, ‘Accusations of Blasphemy in English Anti-Quaker Rhetoric’, in *QS*, 14, 1 (2009), 27–56; David Manning, ‘Blasphemy in England c.1660–1730’, PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2008.

theological analysis in the history of Christianity, affirms the early Quakers' neglected theological agency, expands scholarly understanding of the place of the dissenting tradition in the wider intellectual landscape of the seventeenth century, and presents a sustained consideration of the Quakers' contribution to the early Enlightenment. Indeed, the Quakers became active participants in the wider intellectual milieu of the seventeenth century, enabling and contributing to the most significant theological and philosophical debates of the era.

Any explanation of the early development of Quakerism must avoid generalised explanations for the exact nature of the changes being discussed. Why should it be assumed, for example, that financial penalties imposed by the Clarendon Code caused a retreat from the extreme theological perfectionism of 1650s Quakerism? To account for these changes more accurately, a useful distinction can be drawn between the fundamental *religious* concerns of the Quakers (most prominently, the importance of direct communion with the Divine) and the *theological* tools which they used to conceptualise and explain them. Therefore, chapter one of this thesis considers the extent to which the religious understanding of Quakerism changed and remained the same over time. It identifies continuity in seventeenth-century Quakers' commitment to the immanence of Christ within, despite changes in the way this immanence was conceived, alongside a heightened sense of group identity and the loss of the prophetic vocation. Consequently, it argues that the quest for socio-political respectability cannot fully explain the specific nature of these developments. Rather, we must consider theological motivations for change.

The following five chapters (chapters two to six) examine the impact of external theological engagement on Quakers' understanding of their faith, by tracing conversations relating to a single theological category: Christology. The scope of a doctoral thesis does not allow an exhaustive account of the theological landscape of seventeenth-century Quakerism, and settling on a single category clearly excludes some important aspects of their thought. An extended consideration of Friends' attitudes to Scripture, for example, might be expected. The Quakers' belief in continued revelation (and subsequent prioritisation of the Light over Scripture, living faith over historical faith, spirit over letter, despite their staunch assertions that the two did not contradict one another) was at the heart of their faith – just as it

was the basis for some of the most severe criticisms of the early movement.⁹⁷ Yet their position on the Bible, and criticism thereof, ultimately reflected their broader approach to religious authority, and in this sense, it was derivative of their understanding of the Light. Indeed, whilst much of their distinctive witness exuded from their beliefs about the Light within them, far fewer of their views can reliably be attributed to their beliefs about Scripture as a fundamental principle. Neither did the Quakers ever admit any change in their elevation of the Light over Scripture, or in their utmost respect for the contents of the Bible. Their view of Scripture, then, depended on their precise understanding of what the ‘Light’ was – and, as will become clear, this was a Christological matter.

In the first instance, approaching this investigation through a study of Christology is germane because it lay at the very centre of Quakers’ thought. Given their belief in a ‘measure of Christ’ within all people, their Christological position was regularly implied in their views on the Light within, the function and authority of Scripture, and the Eucharist. Particularly in the earliest Quaker writings, these issues were often entangled – which is itself a symptom of the centrality of Christ in all their beliefs, and the unsystematic nature of early Quaker theology. Therefore, the investigation does not isolate Christological writings, but infers Quaker attitudes concerning Christ from a variety of texts. Moreover, Christological claims were especially pertinent to the most controversial aspects of Quaker beliefs – that is, those beliefs which posed the greatest obstacles to theological respectability. As Rosemary Moore and Richard Allen note, the ‘most significant source of contention’ in the defence of seventeenth-century Quaker theology was ‘the Quaker emphasis on a direct relationship with God through the Light in the conscience, or the Light within, which appeared to lead to a diminution of the work of Christ’.⁹⁸ For this reason, the Quakers’ response to this critique reflects their approach to theological engagement where it was most necessary.

Secondly, a study of Christology allows exploration of the Quakers’ engagement with metaphysical disputes raging throughout this period, as criticisms of early Quaker Christology largely focused on the relationship between the historical and spiritual Christ. We might particularly note the parallels between

⁹⁷ Jack Dobbs, ‘Authority and the Early Quakers’, DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1995, 65-86.

⁹⁸ Rosemary Moore and Richard Allen, ‘Afterword’, in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers*, 293-304, at 295.

the Eucharistic debates of the Reformation – above all, whether Christ’s presence in the bread and wine should be understood physically or spiritually – and the philosophical reflections of Descartes, Locke, Newton, the Cambridge Platonists, and others, regarding the relationship between spirit and matter. Ralph Cudworth described ‘Metaphysics or Theology’ as the ‘most honorable’ of the sciences, as it dealt with that which was most removed from matter.⁹⁹ Here, Cudworth not only privileged spiritual realities over material ones, but implied a commonality between issues in theological and metaphysical discourse. Indeed, determining the relationship of spirit and matter arguably underpinned the most divisive philosophical disputes of the seventeenth-century. Thus, in 1692, John Locke mused, ‘How many intricate Disputes have there been about Matter?’¹⁰⁰ Locke’s reflection betrays the fact that questions of the relationship between spirit and matter loomed large during this period, and as Dmitri Levitin notes, the rejection of atomism went on to become an ‘obsession’ of the seventeenth-century.¹⁰¹ These concerns directly intersected with Quaker attempts to explain the relationship between the Light and the Incarnate Christ. Christological discussions therefore allow us to observe both the impact of contemporary metaphysical concerns on the development of Quaker theology, and the Quaker contribution to wider philosophical discussions of the time. In short, Christology was the crucible in which the fundamental concerns of both the Quakers and their opponents met.

Thirdly, the parameters of so-called ‘orthodox’ Christology have been defined in precise theological statements, which provide clear criteria by which to judge the Quakers’ relationship to more ‘respectable’ views. Primarily, this thesis traces their theological development as it was measured against a Chalcedonian understanding of Christ as a ‘hypostatic union’, who was

complete in his deity and complete – the very same one – as to his humanity, being like us in every respect apart from sin... acknowledged to be unconfusedly, unalterably, undividedly, inseparably two natures, since the difference of the natures is not destroyed because of the union, but... the character of each nature is preserved and comes together in one person and one hypostasis, not divided or torn into two persons but one and the same Son and only-begotten God, Logos, Lord Jesus Christ....¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Robert Armstrong, ‘Cambridge Platonists and Locke on Innate Ideas’, in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 30, 2 (1969), 187-202, at 189.

¹⁰⁰ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Pauline Phemister (Oxford, 2008), 317.

¹⁰¹ Dmitri Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New Science, c.1640-1700* (Cambridge, 2015), 446.

¹⁰² Richard A. Norris (ed.), *The Christological Controversy* (Philadelphia, 1980), 159.

The Christological criticisms levelled at the Quakers sought to protect this union, and particularly focused on the inclusion of Christ's humanity in his identity.¹⁰³ In addition, the Quakers' Christological understanding had important implications for their Trinitarian theology (insofar as the first Quakers implied a modalist vision, which excluded the hypostatic union), and their soteriology (as their ambivalence towards Christ's body raised uncomfortable questions regarding the efficacy of the crucifixion as an atoning event).

Of course, it is important to recognise the Quakers' suspicion of conciliar formulations in the theological task. Thus, in 1668, Penn warned his readers

not to imbrace the determinations of prejudic'd Councils... to whom the Scriptures bear no certain testimony, neither was believ'd by the Primitive Saints, or thus stated by any I have read in the first, second, or third Centuries, particularly Ireneus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Theophilact, with many others who appear wholly forreign to the matter in controversie.¹⁰⁴

Here, Penn argued that the language of three 'persons' was 'not from the Scriptures, nor Reason' but was 'born above three hundred years after the Antient Gospel was declared' in the Athanasian Creed.¹⁰⁵ Instead, he proposed a theological method grounded in direct revelation, framed as a critique of the existing Church. Nonetheless, his reservations do not invalidate an investigation of the Quakers' relationship to conciliar definitions altogether. In fact, again, such an investigation uncovers increasing sympathy towards the doctrinal settlements of the early Church over time – and so, itself allows for a more nuanced understanding of Quaker attitudes to Christian doctrine.

¹⁰³ The hypostatic union is distinguished from a union of nature (by which a new, third 'divine-human nature' is created at the Incarnation), and a union of grace (a state theoretically available to all Christians, by which the human nature is adopted into the divine life). A distinction can be made between an 'enhypostasis' (in which the human nature of Christ consists of a complete and personal man) and 'anhypostasis' (in which the human nature is generalised and has no distinct personal identity of its own). Chalcedon implied an anhypostatic understanding, although it subsequently became more common to refer to the human nature of Christ as anhypostatic before the Incarnation, and enhypostatic after it. Ian A. McFarland et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Cambridge, 2011), 230, 17.

¹⁰⁴ Penn, *The sandy foundation*, 15.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 9-15.

Fourthly, the Quakers' Christology has been understudied, making such an investigation valuable independently of what it tells us about the development of the early movement.¹⁰⁶ The most extensive work on the topic was provided by Maurice Creasey, whose influence on subsequent scholarship has been pervasive, despite his primary work (that is, his doctoral thesis) remaining unpublished. Creasey stressed that 'the distinctive character of the Quaker doctrine of the inner light is that it is a Christological doctrine rather than an anthropological one'. He characterised this 'Christological doctrine' as the belief that Christ was immanent and could be known experimentally, and therefore envisaged a dynamic Christology (rather than a statement about the human potential for perfection) as the central insight of the earliest Quakers. He also understood this belief as a critique of dogmatic and creedal statements of Christ's nature – that is, how Christ's divine and human natures interacted – at the expense of true relationship with Christ, and suggested that this vision was expressed most fully in the devotional writings of Isaac Pennington.¹⁰⁷ Elsewhere, he downplayed the radicalism of early Quaker metaphysics, arguing that the spatial metaphors of the earliest Friends – and

¹⁰⁶ This reflects the more general scholarly neglect of seventeenth-century Christology, as Mark Elliot notes in 'Christology in the Seventeenth Century', in Francesca Aran Murphy (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Christology* (Oxford, 2015), 297-314, at 297-8.

¹⁰⁷ Maurice Creasey, 'Early Quaker Christology: with Special Reference to the Teaching and Significance of Isaac Pennington 1616-1676', PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1956, 1-12, 136-7, 279-336. In this manner, Creasey was heavily influenced by Lewis Benson's notion of 'prophetic Quakerism', as part of a wider dispute over the origins of the early Quaker movement. The dispute is worth considering. In the early twentieth century, Rufus Jones presented Quakerism as an English manifestation of the mystical tradition. Elsewhere, he noted continuities between Quakerism and the earlier continental thought of radical reformers such as Casper Schwenckfeld and Jacob Boehme. Against Jones, Geoffrey Nuttall famously argued for the native Puritan context of Quakerism, as the ultimate outworking – that is, the radical, logical conclusion – of the emphasis on the Holy Spirit in English Reformed Protestantism. Both Jones and Nuttall were later criticised from within Quakerism by Lewis Benson, who instead argued for the prophetic nature of the early movement. Benson argued that this was fuelled by their understanding of Christ's immanence as teacher, and it was this understanding of the early Quakerism which lay behind Creasey's view of early Quaker Christology. This thesis is not primarily concerned with Quaker origins. Nonetheless, it takes the broad view that the primary historical context for the Quaker movement was the turbulence of the civil war and regicide which, not unlike the moral crisis of the early twentieth century, brought existing concerns regarding the moral health of the nation to a crisis point in the minds of the early Quakers. Nuttall was right to view certain aspects of Quakerism as the radical conclusion of a Puritan emphasis on the Spirit; indeed, whilst Creasey also rightly emphasised the Christological motivation for the doctrine of the Light within, this cannot properly be understood without also appreciating the highly spiritual terms in which they approached Christology (and indeed, the Trinity), much to the frustration of their critics. However, it must also be noted that the theological outcome of this process was vehemently opposed to Puritan theology on several key points – most importantly, predestinarian theology and the separation of justification and sanctification. Regarding Jones, this thesis also notes a limited influence from continental radical reformers, but does not recognise these influences to be fundamentally as important as the native Puritan context. This understanding of early Quaker origins lies behind its discussion of the early Quakers' spiritualised Christology, and their relationship to doctrines of celestial flesh, in chapter two. Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (London, 1909); Rufus Jones, *Quakerism: A Spiritual Movement* (Philadelphia, 1963); Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford, 1946), 5, 12-13, 29, 34-47, 104; Lewis Benson, *Prophetic Quakerism* (Philadelphia, 1944).

especially the distinction between ‘inward’ and ‘outward’ – related simply to the distinction between sincere and nominal faith, rather than a metaphysical claim.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, he accepted the epistemological or moral significance of such spatial metaphors, but denied any implied ontological distinction between spirit and flesh.

Complementing this interpretation of the earliest Friends, Creasey was highly critical of what he saw as the diminished status of the Light within in the more ‘speculative’ and ‘philosophical’ approach of later Quaker thinkers such as George Keith and Robert Barclay. In an apparent value judgement of Barclay’s spirituality as much as his Christology, Creasey described how ‘when we turn from Penington to Barclay, we are conscious of moving, so to speak, from the Meeting to the Study’. Creasey argued that Barclay had corrupted Quakerism with a ‘quasi-philosophical dualism’ by harmonising Quakerism with a Cartesian division of body and mind.¹⁰⁹ This transformed a figure of speech – that Christ could ‘speak to thy condition’ – into a doctrine of ‘that of God in everyone’, by which separate organs received inward and outward knowledge, and outward forms were seen as inherently negative.¹¹⁰ In short, ‘Barclay [had] taken... the earlier definition of inward and outward as two different ways to apprehend the same revelation given in history, and turned it into “two kinds of Revelation”’.¹¹¹

Creasey’s ideas have acted as the springboard for most subsequent work on early Quaker metaphysics. In the first instance, his purely moral understanding of spatial metaphors has supported a reticence to diagnose radical metaphysical dualism in the earliest Quaker theology. Thus, Carole Spencer states that, ‘Though Quakers in their radical dichotomies of flesh and spirit often appear highly dualistic, Nayler... moves towards non-dualism’, as his regular expressions of the unity of creation demonstrate that he did not perceive a distinction between the human and the divine, the material and the spiritual.¹¹² Secondly,

¹⁰⁸ Maurice Creasey, ‘Inward and Outward: A Study in Early Quaker Language’, in *JFHS*, supplement 30 (1962), 1-24, at 5-8.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 11, 23.

¹¹⁰ Creasey, ‘Early Quaker Christology’, 206.

¹¹¹ R. Melvin Keiser, ‘Touched and Knit in the Life: Barclay’s Relational Theology and Cartesian Dualism’, in *QS*, 5, 2 (2000), 141-164, at 145.

¹¹² Carole Dale Spencer, ‘The Man Who “Set Himself as a Sign”: James Nayler’s Incarnational Theology’, in Angell and Dandelion, *Early Quakers*, 64-82, at 70.

as Melvin Keiser has noted, Creasey is also the source of the ‘growing consensus’ that Barclay’s theological approach was informed by Cartesian dualism. Thus, D. Elton Trueblood accepted and defended Barclay’s use of Cartesian philosophy, and Hugh Pyper further notes signs of Cartesian assumptions in Barclay’s representation of the self as an ‘individual [who] is fundamentally a mental being’.¹¹³

Of course, Creasey’s conclusions have not gone entirely unchallenged. In his discussion of William Penn’s contribution to Quaker thought, Melvin Endy characterises Penn’s dualism as a continuation of earlier trends, describing how he in fact ‘systematised and radicalised’ strongly dualistic tendencies within early Quakerism, which were inspired by Pauline distinctions between flesh and spirit and the Calvinistic concern that the positive evaluation of the physical realm would lead to idolatry.¹¹⁴ Moreover, Barclay’s reliance on Descartes has been partially challenged by Keiser himself, who argues that he used Cartesian ideas only in his apologetic work – not his personal reflections upon faith – as it conflicted with his personal experience and a more ‘relational’ approach to theology.¹¹⁵ And most important of all for the aims of this thesis, the recent scholarship of Michael Birkel has emphasised the importance of other intellectual schools, in particular the Jewish Kabbalah, on Barclay’s thought.¹¹⁶ Thus, the story of Quaker metaphysics has traditionally been understood in terms of an opposition between earlier and later Friends. However, both the extent of early Quaker dualism and the intellectual motivations of later systematising Friends are contested in current scholarship.

An important alternative model of Quaker Christology is provided by Richard Bailey, in his 1992 work, *New Light on George Fox and Early Quakerism*. Bailey retains Creasey’s understanding that later Friends transformed the earliest doctrine of the Light within, but emphasises more strongly the radicalism of the early view. He notes the ‘bowdlerization’ of the historical record by later Quakers and argues that the first Friends believed in the radical manifestation of ‘the presence of Christ’s heavenly

¹¹³ Keiser, ‘Touched and Knit in the Life’, 144; D. Elton Trueblood, *Robert Barclay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 18-20, 132-49; Hugh Pyper, ‘Resisting the Inevitable: Universal and Particular Salvation in the Thought of Robert Barclay’, in *Quaker Religious Thought*, 91, 2 (1998), 5-14, at 16.

¹¹⁴ Melvin B. Endy, ‘William Penn’s contribution to Early Quaker Thought’, in Angell and Dandelion, *Early Quakers*, 239-55, at 240.

¹¹⁵ Keiser, ‘Touched and Knit in the Life’, 142-4.

¹¹⁶ Michael Birkel, ‘Robert Barclay and Kabbalah’, in *QS*, 21, 1 (2016), 1-15.

flesh and bone in the believer', as righteousness was attained and the believer entered into unity with Christ.¹¹⁷ Within this, Fox was uniquely understood as a 'charismatic prophet, a magus and, above all, an avatar'.¹¹⁸ Bailey argues that Barclay later spiritualised this notion, so that a Foxonian belief in a 'celestial inhabitation' of Christ's 'flesh and bone' was scaled back to 'no more than an impersonal, mediating Vehiculum Dei which helped direct fallen man back to God'. Thus, the Quakers' message mellowed into a merely 'metaphorical' view of Christ's presence. Metaphysics is central to this account: 'Quakerism was transformed into a Spirit theology but it began as a radically christopresent theology'.¹¹⁹ Elsewhere, Bailey notes more explicitly that 'the historical overview of the debate over immateriality' is necessary for a 'more informed' reading of Quaker 'Christologies', and frames homogeneity within Quakerism as one symptom of different metaphysical approaches.¹²⁰

This thesis questions both Creasey and Bailey's models, arguing that early Quaker theology was highly spiritualised, but mellowed over time as Quakers increasingly sought a theological place for the historical Jesus. Regarding Creasey, it challenges his sanitisation of the earliest Quaker Christology, his characterisation of its later philosophical perversion (above all, in the writings of Robert Barclay), and the notion of a stark contrast between two 'schools' of Quakerism. Creasey underestimates the radical spiritualisation of early Quaker theology – that is, a specifically metaphysical claim which underpinned the most radical elements of early Quaker Christology and is reflected in critique of Quaker theology. Moreover, he misrepresents Barclay as a Cartesian dualist, by downplaying esoteric influences on his thought (especially the Kabbalah) which in fact collapse the dualism of the earliest Friends. Contrary to Creasey, the contributions of Keith, Penn and Barclay should be understood as part of a wider theological trajectory which unfolded over decades, rather than as a sudden innovation imposed upon an earlier model. Bailey's recognition of the first Friends' radicalism does provide a useful corrective to Creasey, and his focus on the metaphysical issues at stake is invaluable. Nonetheless, Bailey still relies heavily on Creasey's framework of a sharp break between early and later Quakerism, seems to

¹¹⁷ Richard Bailey, *New Light on George Fox and Early Quakerism: The Making and Unmaking of a God* (San Francisco, 1992), 77.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* xi.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* i-ii, 232-239, 82, 276.

¹²⁰ Richard Bailey, 'Was Seventeenth-century Quaker Christology Homogenous?' in Pink Dandelion (ed.), *The Creation of Quaker Theory* (Farnham, 2004), 61-82, at 63, 65.

misrepresent the motivations behind Barclay's theology, and over-emphasises the existence of a belief in 'celestial inhabitation' amongst early Quakers. His main evidence for this reading of their theology relates to their emphasis on the unity of Christ, which does not necessitate belief in celestial inhabitation, and their use of Eucharistic metaphors, which in English Reformed Christianity ultimately reflected a spiritual presence rather than the 'transubstantiation' which he implies. That the disembodiment of Christ was perceived as a much greater problem than any widespread belief in 'celestial inhabitation' is supported both by an examination of hostile criticism of early Quaker theology, and, as a reaction to that criticism, the wider trajectory of early Quakerism towards a more body-positive theology.

By focusing on early Quaker metaphysics, this thesis also expands upon the widely-accepted maxim (reproduced uncontroversially, but uncritically) that the Quakers placed an increasing emphasis on the historical Jesus over time. In her wide-ranging study of changes affecting Quakerism in the seventeenth century, Caroline Leachmann identifies the increasing emphasis on the Incarnate Christ and the Trinity, and, reflecting many of the assumptions challenged above, understands these changes as part of a wider attempt to align Quaker beliefs with more 'acceptable' theology to secure the Quakers' inclusion in the Toleration Act of 1689.¹²¹ Nonetheless, Leachmann's study barely engages with metaphysical issues underlying the dispute, does not indicate the exact nature of the increased emphasis on the historical Christ, and excludes a consideration of possible causal links between theological and behavioural changes. Throughout the Christological sections of this thesis, then, a consideration of metaphysical issues will be central, challenging existing models of early Quaker Christology to argue for the radically spiritualised worldview of early Quakerism and a subsequent failure to identify a positive role for the Incarnate Christ. Moving forward, Quakers placed an increasing emphasis upon 'outward' and material forms, as part of their attempt to demonstrate the compatibility of their message with the Chalcedonian definition. Accordingly, later philosophical engagement did not mark a rupture with earliest Quakerism, but was part of a wider trend towards acceptance of the outward form.

¹²¹ Leachmann, 'From an "Unruly Sect"', 6-64.

One criticism of this model might be the limited influence of such elite discussions on the culture of Quakerism in general. Therefore, finally, chapter seven considers the relationship between different wings of the Quaker community – local and elite, colonial and European – as they navigated the Christological question. Taking the Keithian controversy as a case-study, it demonstrates the wider impact of these metaphysical trends, challenging the notion that most Quakers were unaffected by the theological engagement of the elite.

This series of case-studies will demonstrate a subtle but important metaphysical shift affecting Quaker theology over the course of the seventeenth century. Changing the Quakers' central notion of the Light within as it did, this shift also struck at the Quakers' understanding of divine immanence, communal discernment, prophecy, and eschatological expectation. Moreover, this whole process was driven by the Quakers' increasing theological engagement with others over time – and the thesis demonstrates the necessity of studying their positive intellectual engagement as a driving force for the early development of the movement. By using Christology as a lens through which to consider early Quaker development, the thesis consciously draws inspiration from the contextualising historiographical methods proposed by scholars such as Quentin Skinner and John Pocock. Central to the concern of this 'Cambridge School' is the necessity of placing sources within their wider intellectual and dialogical context, to conceive authorial intention in the framework of an argument or dialogue, rather than in the creation of a static text. In this thesis, the conversations driving the development of early Quaker Christology will be unpicked to shed light on the Quakers' religious priorities, the trajectory of Quakerism towards a culture of intellectual engagement, and the wider implications of the resultant theological shifts.¹²²

This thesis addresses the neglect of theological factors in the study of Quakerism, to elucidate the development of the early movement and uncover the Quakers' contribution to the wider intellectual life of the seventeenth century. Restoration-era Quakerism was not simply a relic of the Interregnum,

¹²² Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', in *History and Theory*, 8, 1 (1969), 3-53; Quentin Skinner, *Vision of Politics*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 2004); John Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century: A Reissue with a Retrospect* (Cambridge, 1957 [1987]); John Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975).

divorced from the society in which it operated and beholden to the prevailing (and increasingly incompatible) concerns of the age. Rather, its development was embedded in the evolution of that society, informing and being informed by the wider intellectual milieu. By viewing theological factors as part of the Quakers' strategic consideration, then, the thesis not only seeks to demonstrate the benefit of theological analysis to an understanding of early Quaker development, but also to expand scholarly consideration of seventeenth-century metaphysics, reintegrate the history of dissent into wider early modern intellectual history, and provide a sustained account of the Quakers' contribution to the early Enlightenment.

I. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY QUAKERISM

[I]f any Man think himselfe a Prophet or Spirituall, let him acknowledge we have the mind of Christ in these matters.¹

The religious vision of the earliest Quakers was made distinctive by their assertion of Christ's presence as an immanent authority (over the mediated authorities of tradition and Scripture), the ability of all individuals to access this presence regardless of training or education, and the possibility of total spiritual fulfilment in this life. This was religion at its most intense and experiential. Any explanation for the development of seventeenth-century Quakerism remains inadequate if it does not account for changes in this experience. Therefore, this chapter will establish the precise ways in which the experience of being a Quaker changed over time. It will examine how Quakers discussed and interpreted their personal religious experience from their earliest days to the beginning of the eighteenth century. It will observe that the importance of immediate revelation was continuously affirmed throughout this period. Nonetheless, other important changes did occur – namely, an altered understanding of divine immanence, the emergence of a powerful group identity, the loss of a distinctive prophetic vocation, and a growing understanding of perfection as moral righteousness. These changes all imply that the Quakers' underlying theological assumptions had shifted, as the remainder of the thesis will confirm: the Quakers' emphasis upon immediate revelation was based on a highly spiritualised understanding of Christ's identity, which was challenged as they interacted and engaged with non-Quakers on Christological issues.

Clearly, the historical record, and particularly written sources used in isolation, do not allow the historian to access the religious experience itself. The frequency with which religious (and especially mystical) experiences are described as ineffable or indescribable points to the fact that they are inherently difficult to capture in words.² Most religious experiences – prayers, fleeting emotions, chance encounters – escape articulation and so leave no historical trace at all. This is especially true of Quakerism, given its emphasis

¹ Minutes of London Yearly Meeting MSS, vol. 2, 1694, FHL, 60.

² William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Oxford, 2012), 290-1; Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London, 1926), 5-7.

upon silence in religious experience. Furthermore, even where authors are forthcoming about their experience, their foreign emotional, religious and theological assumptions may lead us to misinterpret their explanations.³

Yet even to capture a more mundane picture of Quaker experience – simply, what it was like to be a Quaker in this period – the use of written word as a sole guide is problematic. The Quakers were prolific writers: it has been estimated that they published as many as 3,853 texts between 1650 and 1699.⁴ Moreover, Vann notes that the seventy Quakers who had published some account of ‘the Lord’s dealings with them’ in the first two generations was an impressive figure compared to other religious groups.⁵ Yet, as noted in the introduction, this still represented only a tiny segment of the possible 60,000 Quakers in 1660.⁶ This does not mean that such writings were not important for other reasons; crucial for the purposes of this thesis, they are very likely to have been important as a way of standardising Quaker ideas. However, the writings of a small minority are clearly less useful in gauging the very personal religious *experience* of a wider pool of Quakers. Bonnelyn Young Kunze has also highlighted the surprising extent to which Quakers failed to overcome the influence of gender, status and education in their witness to equality, through a study of the friendship of Penn, Fox and Fell.⁷ Kunze’s work reminds us that the contributions of socially empowered Quakers, whilst hugely influential, do not always represent a whole religious movement. Moreover, the

³ Phyllis Mack’s study of eighteenth-century Methodism is particularly helpful as an exploration of these methodological issues. Mack notes the early Methodists’ theological construction of agency in terms of both ‘self-negation’ and ‘self-expression’ (rather than the modern, secular understanding of freedom as maximal choice), and the use of emotion to navigate this understanding of agency – all of which may also be found in Quaker writings. Of course, these issues apply to any historical study of religious writings, and the same themes, manifesting later in Quaker thought, can also be found in both Puritan and mystical traditions alike. Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge, 2008), 1-28, 9. Indeed, Mack discusses Quaker spirituality explicitly in Mack, *Visionary Women*, 127-402.

⁴ Catie Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community* (Aldershot, 2005), 1, cited in Betty Hagglund, ‘Quakers and the Printing Press’, in Angell and Dandelion, *Early Quakers*, 32-47, at 35. O’Malley calculates that the Quakers printed about 3,030 titles between 1652 and 1684, which amounted to 8.8 percent of all titles published in this period (fluctuating in any given year; they produced ten percent of titles in 1659-60, but only 5.8 percent in 1674-84). O’Malley, ‘Defying the Powers’, 74.

⁵ Vann, *Social Development*, 20.

⁶ Reay estimates a highest possible membership of 60,000 a decade after their genesis, although his lower estimate is a 35,000, in Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, 11. O’Malley estimates that there could only have been around 39,510 Quakers by 1715. In contrast, in 1700 George Keith estimated that there ‘cannot be reckoned less than a Hundred and Fifty Thousand Quakers... in England and Wales’, although he noted that there were fewer new converts by the time he was writing. O’Malley, ‘Defying the Powers’, 74; George Keith, *An Account of the Quakers Politicks*, K137 (London, 1700), 16.

⁷ Bonnelyn Young Kunze, ‘Religious Authority and Social Status in Seventeenth-Century England: The Friendship of Margaret Fell, George Fox, and William Penn’, in *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, 57, 2 (1988), 170-186.

later influence of group convention and censorship makes it difficult to distinguish between individual and communal responses. Particularly after the establishment of the Second Day Morning Meeting in 1672, we must expect texts to have been adjusted by Quaker leaders before their publication.⁸

Hostile sources can offer glimpses into early Quaker culture and behaviour aside from their potentially artificial self-understanding, although it is likely that they were exaggerated or distorted for different reasons. Some of the problems inherent in the use of published sources can also be overcome by using letters. As Laura Sangha notes, we must not assume complete sincerity or frankness when reading personal correspondence. Writing letters was a ‘calculated performance’ – an ‘exercise in the construction and projection of the self’ – and the text may still have been viewed by a wide audience.⁹ Letters could also still be edited, and even Fox doctored texts to remove their troubling or embarrassing insinuations.¹⁰ However, such edits leave a conspicuous trace, and can themselves prove eloquent articulations of the boundaries of evolving Quaker thought. Furthermore, there was a ‘developing sense of the letter as a private form’ over this period, and in Quaker circles we should also note the obvious functional difference between personal correspondence and the official ‘epistles’ sent out from central Meetings.¹¹

With all this in mind, the present investigation will rely on a variety of different sources – published and unpublished, hostile and sympathetic – to understand how Quakers organised and framed their experience from the witness of them all. The chapter will begin with a consideration of the earliest Quaker experience, before highlighting several points of development over time.

⁸ O’Malley, ‘Defying the Powers’, 72-88.

⁹ Laura Sangha, ‘Personal Documents’, in Laura Sangha and Jonathan Willis (eds.), *Understanding Early Modern Primary Sources* (Abingdon, 2016), 107-28, at 113.

¹⁰ Bailey, *New Light*, 186-88; Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England*, 148. The alteration of sources in this manner suggests the beginnings of the process traced more extensively throughout this thesis: that is, the adjustment of Quaker beliefs to mitigate the most startling implications of the earliest message (most notably, by moving away from an affirmation of the essentially complete presence of Christ in the individual).

¹¹ Sangha, ‘Personal Documents’, 119.

The Religious Experience of the First Quakers

In 1643, the nineteen-year-old son of a Puritan churchwarden and two local ‘professors’ shared a jug of beer in rural Leicestershire.¹² When it was suggested that ‘he who would not drink [more] should pay all’, the teenager – a young George Fox – was so offended by such ‘vanity’ that he left a groat on the table, abandoned his company, and was plunged into religious and existential despair. Moved to tears and unable to sleep, Fox’s journal tells us that he found solace in his personal faith and resolved to become an itinerant preacher.¹³ Several years later, whilst travelling near Coventry in 1646, he was struck by the realisation that ‘none were true believers’ except for those who were ‘born of God’ and ‘passed from death to life’. ‘[To] be bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not sufficient to fit a man to be a minister of Christ.’ Rather, Fox realised that ‘the Lord would teach his people himself’. He then claimed to hear a voice saying, ‘There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy Condition’. This led him into a period of ‘great openings’, resulting in Fox’s belief that he had ‘come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God’, in which ‘all things were new’ and ‘I was come up to the state of Adam which he was in before he fell’.¹⁴ He encountered many on his travels who shared his religious vision, and together these kindred spirits became the ‘Children of Light...by the world scornfully called Quakers’.¹⁵

Fox’s journal is not strictly a contemporary source; even the earliest manuscript was only written during Fox’s imprisonment in Worcester Jail between 1673 and 1674, as he dictated it to his stepson-in-law Thomas Lower, and the first published edition was not issued until 1694. Furthermore, since the original manuscript is missing its earliest pages, the passages cited above only appear in the 1694 edition onwards.¹⁶ Nonetheless, this material is very likely to have been written by Fox, or at least based on a direct oral tradition, and provides a useful starting point for reconstructing how he and the earliest Quakers viewed the core insight of their faith. Indeed, the picture of early religious experience given in Fox’s journal is corroborated by a consideration of his first converts. The most significant of these converts were groups of

¹² A ‘professor’ was someone who ‘professed’ to be a Christian but did not have true faith.

¹³ George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. John L. Nickalls (Philadelphia, 1975 [1972]), 3.

¹⁴ Fox, *Journal*, 7, 8, 11, 19, 27.

¹⁵ Anon, *A declaration from the children of light*, sig. A1r. Peters attributes this tract to London Quakers John Boulton, Simon Dring, William Rayman and Richard Davis, in *Print Culture*, 114.

¹⁶ Norman Penney, ‘Introduction’, in Fox, *Journal*, x-xi.

former Seekers from Yorkshire (including William Dewsbury and James Nayler) and Westmorland (including Francis Howgill, Edward Burrough, John Audland, and Richard Hubberthorne). The Westmorland Seekers were particularly significant as they converted *en masse* when Fox visited the region in 1652.¹⁷ They were already meeting together when Fox convinced them, and this nucleus provided a substantial portion of the energy and resources needed to spread Quakerism across the country in the coming years.

It is notable that this group was a pre-existing network, as they are likely to have contributed a certain shared perspective to Fox's original ideas. Exactly what characterised their 'Seeker' identity is less clear: the 'Seekers' were not an organised movement as much as a series of diverse and localised networks across the country. Christopher Hill notes the main views of William Erbery (a prominent spiritualist described by an anonymous author in 1646 as 'the champion of the Seekers') as belief in universal redemption, the manifestation of God in the saints, the resurrection of Christ in the individual, and the apocalyptic work of God directed through saintly intervention, though not in the political sphere.¹⁸ Erbery's daughter, Dorcas, would later become infamous amongst Quakers, as she accompanied Nayler on his entry into Bristol and claimed that he had raised her from the dead. Yet Erbery's concerns were quite different from (for example) the more politicised visionary theology dominant in the network of Berkshire spiritualists clustered around John Pordage.¹⁹ In fact there was a personal connection between Pordage and Erbery, in addition to more generalised connection through the network circling the radical publisher Giles Calvert, but they were not part of a shared movement in any formal sense.

However, the beliefs of the Westmorland group, even before Fox's arrival, bore strong resemblance to the subsequent message of the nascent Quaker movement.²⁰ These beliefs – especially the belief in Christ's judgement and presence acting as a direct spiritual authority within the individual – would soon become

¹⁷ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 82-97; Norman Penney (ed.), *The First Publishers of the Truth* (Philadelphia, 1907), 241-273.

¹⁸ Hill, *WTUD*, 192, 184-197.

¹⁹ The network around John Pordage boasted connections with the radical printer Giles Calvert (whose sister, Martha Simmonds, would also become a close associate of Nayler), the Ranter Abiezer Coppe, the prominent Digger William Everard, the prophetess Elizabeth Poole, and indeed William Erbery himself. Manfred Brod, 'A Radical Network in the English Revolution: John Pordage and His Circle, 1646-54', in *English Historical Review*, 119, 484 (2004), 1230-1253.

²⁰ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 81-2.

central to the Quaker message, and this was plausibly due to the Seekers' influence. Out of this melting pot of like-minded individuals, the embryonic framework of the Quaker movement arose, preaching the rejection of the organised priesthood and perceived hypocrisy of traditional religious authorities, the authority of the direct revelation of Christ over Scripture, and the virtues of silent worship.

This worldview was founded on the assertion that the risen Christ was immanent as a teacher, which necessitated a tangible change in the life of the believer, as opposed to reliance on worldly learning or propositional knowledge of God. This continual, dynamic instruction of Christ enabled the revival of the early church itself, rather than mere faithfulness to 'the historical artefact of its dead letter'.²¹ Ted Underwood has usefully clarified that the first Quaker vision was not just of a return to early church practice. Rather, it amounted to the more literal conviction that they 'were the New Testament church'. Thus, they claimed apostolic authority equal with that of Scripture, and characterised disagreements with their opponents as contests between genuine Spirit-led inspiration and hollow 'paper and ink'.²² This view can be contrasted to mere faithfulness to early Christianity because, as Douglas Gwyn has noted, it consciously distinguished itself from a return to the past. After all, the earliest Christians had not been saved from falling into apostasy.²³ Neither did it conceive of an Age of the Spirit *surpassing* the Age of Christ, as in the thought of Joachim of Fiore or (later) Jacob Boehme. Rather, Christ sanctified the present day as an apostolic age, precisely because he was still present amongst his people.

For this reason, it was not merely Christ's teachings that were immediately accessible. Christ himself was present; he dwelt within the individual as the agent and enabler of righteous action, and the believer could therefore assume perfection insofar as they had subsumed their own identity under Christ. As Nayler succinctly summarised, 'All that is not perfect is self', and 'faith which stands in Christ believes in purity and in perfection, and holiness, and slays sin, and by that faith alone the Just live, and justice and

²¹ Douglas Gwyn, *The Apocalypse of the Word* (Richmond, 1986), 36.

²² Underwood, *Primitivism, Radicalism and the Lamb's War*, 33.

²³ For Quaker discussions of the age of apostasy, see examples in Burrough, *A measure*, 5-6, 20, 28; John Crook, *A defence of the true church called Quakers*, C7202 (London, 1659), 1, 3, 16-17, 38. In particular, Crook distinguished the separate outward liberations of the Jews from Egypt and from Babylon, so drawing a comparison with inward liberations of the 'first bringing in of the first born into an unbelieving and Heathenish world' in the apostolic age, and 'the Church com[ing] out of the wilderness' in the present day.

righteousness is brought forth to light in the godly conversation'.²⁴ Thus, the virtuous Quaker exhibited an obedient 'willingnes [sic]... to be nothinge'.²⁵ This was not merely a vision of moral blamelessness, but of a perfecting union with Christ which completely eclipsed the identity of the sinful individual. Therefore, obedience to the Light within was viewed as entirely sufficient for salvation.²⁶ This represented a radical reinterpretation of the Calvinist emphasis upon human depravity and merely imputed righteousness.

This intense religious communion endowed many early Quakers with a sense of prophetic vocation, and Barbour and Roberts note how the very earliest Quaker sources were 'short, intense, personal' prophecies.²⁷ Viewing themselves as '[the Lord's] messengers' and 'Innocent Servants of God', their prophecies dealt with the inevitable judgement of individuals, and were framed in terms of a 'Lamb's War' by which God would 'make war with the god of this world'.²⁸ This endowed early Quakerism with a highly confrontational edge, leading to tense relations with outsiders in the early years. In return, of course, opponents were quick to criticise the Quakers' moral hypocrisy by portraying them as socially subversive or sexually depraved; on occasion, these tensions led to physical violence against Quakers, and of course, a degree of physical persecution was endorsed by the State.²⁹

More positively, the Quakers' prophetic identity was also often intermingled with claims to personal apostolic authority. Thus, William Dewsbury likened himself to Saint Paul, conveying his belief that he had been chosen for a special purpose and equating the Quakers' task with Paul's mission to preach the resurrection.³⁰ Dewsbury used a variety of images to convey the Christian vocation, characterising Paul as a 'chosen Vessel unto the Lord' and rebuking the Quakers' oppressors for persecuting the 'Messengers of

²⁴ Nayler, *Love to the lost*, 4, 14.

²⁵ James Nayler to George Fox, Swarthmore Collection TSS, vol. 2, 1652, FHL, 833.

²⁶ James Nayler, *A true discoverie of faith*, N323 (London, 1655), 1.

²⁷ Hugh Barbour and Arthur Roberts (eds.), *Early Quaker Writings, 1650-1700* (Wallingford, 1973), 55. The prophetic vocation of female Quakers is also discussed extensively in Mack, *Visionary Women*, 165-211.

²⁸ Joseph Nicholson, *The standard of the Lord lifted up in New-England*, N1109 (London, 1660), 20; Mary Dyer, in Edward Burrough, *A declaration of the sad and great persecution... of the... Quakers*, B5994 (London, 1661), 25; James Nayler, *The lambs warre*, N290 (London, 1657), 2.

²⁹ For example, Jonathan Clapham, *A full discovery and confutation of the wicked... doctrines of the Quakers*, C4407 (London, 1656), 51; Baxter, *One sheet*, 4-12; Anon, *A declaration from the children of light*, 1-3; Fox, *Journal*, 44, 97-8; Joseph Besse (ed.), *An abstract of the sufferings of the people call'd Quakers*, 2 vols, ESTC T84119 (London, 1733-38).

³⁰ William Dewsbury, *The discovery of the great enmity of the serpent against the seed of the woman*, D1265 (London, 1655), 4-12.

Jesus Christ' in the past and in the present day.³¹ These two images potentially suggested two understandings of the believer's relationship with Christ, demonstrating the fluid nature of early Quaker thought: either Christ was being carried by the 'Vessel', or he was elsewhere and required a 'Messenger'. It is also telling that in both cases Dewsbury implied that personal identity (as messenger or vessel) was retained. Nonetheless, the sole basis of a Christian's religious authority came from outside of their self – that is, from that of Christ within.

From this basic claim to spiritual authority, individual Quakers were recognised to have navigated discernment particularly well, or to have exceptional measures of Christ within them. Just days before Nayler's entry into Bristol, he was apparently heralded as 'thou fairest of ten thousand, thou only begotten son of God' by one of his followers, Hannah Stranger. In the post-script to the same letter, Stranger's husband strikingly declared 'thy name is no more to be called James, but Jesus'.³² This was not praise directed towards the individual, then, although it may have seemed dangerously close to idolatry. Rather, it reflected the force of divine power within the individual, extinguishing the self and leaving only Christ as agent.³³

The Strangers' letter was denounced by other Friends at the time. However, its content was not so dissimilar from other Quaker writings from the same era. Again, Fox himself provides a striking example. In approximately 1655, the Quaker Sarah Bennet addressed him in a letter, declaring 'how glorious arte thou whose dwelling is in the eternall etearnity is thy name o thou soun of god.'³⁴ On another occasion, a woman apparently knelt down and worshipped him, without rebuke.³⁵ And indeed, just months before Nayler's notorious entry into Bristol, Mary Prince wrote to Fox:

³¹ Ibid. 3.

³² Hannah Stranger and John Stranger, in Ralph Farmer, *Satan inthron'd*, F444 (London, 1657), 7-8. It is worth noting that Nayler later denounced the contents of this letter and claimed never to have endorsed them. This implies that their approach was not representative even of Nayler's Quakerism at the time – yet the letter still reflects one manifestation of Quaker experience. Furthermore, Nayler seems to have accepted something like her understanding as long as it was clear that the worship was addressed to Christ in him, rather than the man James Nayler – and this raises questions over whether we should take him at his word. Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 248-9; see below, 101-3.

³³ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 183-6.

³⁴ Sarah Bennet to George Fox, Swarthmore Collection TSS, vol. 4, 1655, FHL, 25. Bennet is mentioned in Mack, *Visionary Women*, 417, and Bailey explores the implications of the high praise addressed to Fox more extensively in *New Light*, 23-136.

³⁵ Robert Rich, *Hidden things brought to light*, R1358 (s.l., 1678), 40.

G ff, thou ho art the Cheaf of ten thousand the father of the living of all the faithfull therein heare the nashons are blessed thou that kilest & makest a live thou that [w]oundest and makest hole thou that are joined to the lord and art made one with him Eternall god to the[e] is my love truly to the[e] thou son of Righteousness is my hart & soule boured out with fervent [power]. . . .³⁶

Here, Prince celebrated Fox's direct power over life and death, the blessed nature of his presence, and even his unity with the Godhead. She was not alone. Nayler himself also seems to have addressed Fox as if he were divine, as he wrote in 1652, 'My father, my father, the glory of Israell, my heart is ravished with thy love'.³⁷ Similar letters were later doctored (perhaps by Fox himself) to appear less controversial – but it is still significant that they were written in the first place.³⁸ Likewise, claims that Fox had performed miracles were later downplayed, but extensive evidence still exists of a widespread belief in his miraculous power.³⁹ So too, William Caton rejoiced that God had revealed his secrets to Margaret Fell, as he asked her for advice and petitioned her to 'Be mindfull of mee in thy prayers to thy heavenly ffather when thou appears before his Throne'.⁴⁰ The recipient of this praise – whether God within Fox, or within Fell, or as manifested in her private prayers – was ambiguous at best. These addresses notably echoed the words directed at Nayler in the Strangers' letter. Such extravagant acclamations were not, then, incidental to Quaker faith or restricted to the extremities of the movement. Rather, they represented the exhilarating apex of the Quaker vision: complete sacrifice of one's own identity to the measure of Christ within.

The Quaker use of language has been characterised helpfully by Jackson Cope in terms of a distinctive 'incantatory style', which he argues was later supplanted by their plain speech.⁴¹ Cope analyses Fox's journal to posit an 'epistemology of verbal incantation' in early Quaker writings, which points to a 'habit of sliding literalness and metaphor into one another' and 'the distinction between metaphoric and literal

³⁶ Mary Prince to George Fox, Swarthmore Collection TSS, vol. 1, July 1656, FHL, 165.

³⁷ James Nayler to George Fox, Swarthmore Collection TSS, vol. 2, 1652, FHL, 827.

³⁸ See above, 48.

³⁹ Henry J. Cadbury (ed.). *George Fox's Book of Miracles* (Cambridge, 1948, 2012 repr.); Rosemary Moore, 'Late Seventeenth-Century Quakerism and the Miraculous: A New Look at George Fox's *Book of Miracles*', in Jeremy Gregory and Kate Cooper (eds.), *Signs, Wonders, Miracles. Representations of Divine Power in the Life of the Church* (Woodbridge, 2005), 335-44; Bailey, *New Light*, 47-74.

⁴⁰ William Caton to Margaret Fell, Swarthmore Collection TSS, vol. 1, 17 March 1657, FHL, 372.

⁴¹ Cope, 'Seventeenth-Century Quaker Style', 725-54, 725.

[was] wholly obliterated on occasion'.⁴² Thus, Fox wrote that 'when first I set my horse's feet a-top of the Scottish ground I felt the Seed of God to sparkle about me like innumerable sparks of fire, though there is abundance of thick, cloddy earth of hypocrisy and falseness that is a-top, and a briary, brambly nature which is to be burnt up with God's word'. Moreover, after denouncing humanity for having left the image of God for the image of beasts, he observed that 'as they do come to be renewed up again into the image of God, they come out of the nature and so out of the name'.⁴³ In this sense, metaphor was not merely a tool of expression. Rather, 'nature' and 'name' were linked: language was 'key to the essence of proper reality' and the ultimate 'Name' of Christ (which, in line with the Johannine Prologue, was conceived as the eternal Word beyond outward words) was contrasted to the tongues of Babel.⁴⁴ The Quakers relied on 'incantatory repetition of a few Scriptural images' to legitimise their judgements.⁴⁵ Ideally, speech itself was reserved for those words which carried divine authority, even when this 'heavenly Eloquence and Rhetorick' might seem nonsensical to outsiders.⁴⁶ Indeed, Cope cites John Vincent Canes's observation in 1661 that 'these words are so strangely jumbled together, that every line has good sens [sic] in it, but all together none'.⁴⁷

Similarly, Richard Bauman has noted the significance of metaphor in Quaker language in his 'ethnography of speaking' in early Quakerism. Bauman notes 'a shifting of the locus and character of religious speaking from outward, human speech to inward spiritual speaking of God', so that their valorisation of 'silence' was not merely an exhortation to a lack of sound. Rather, it entailed a total quietening of the self and all that might prevent an individual from listening to Christ in a spiritual sense: anything that was not directed towards God was classified as 'noise', and only that which came from God should be voiced – again, implying an all-consuming prophetic calling.⁴⁸ Silence itself was, then, a metaphor for self-denial and the eclipse of one's own identity and agency in obedience to Christ within.

⁴² Ibid. 726. See also Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language in Literature in English Radical Religion, 1640-1660* (Oxford, 1989), 24.

⁴³ Cope, 'Seventeenth-Century Quaker Style', 726-7.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 729-31.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 737.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 732-3.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 738.

⁴⁸ Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few* (Cambridge, 1983), 30; Richard Bauman, 'Aspects of 17th century Quaker Rhetoric', in *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 56, 1 (1970), 67-74, at 72.

Moreover, as Nigel Smith notes, as the individual increasingly claimed perfecting union with God, ‘experience gave way to prophecy so the distinction between expression and behaviour disappeared: writing, speech, and gesture combined in imitations of Old Testament prophetic behaviour’.⁴⁹ This meant that the metaphorical expression of prophetic vocation was not expressed only through silence or the written word. It extended to prophetic performances too, enabling a parallel ‘incantatory’ outlook in their written and enacted expression.⁵⁰ The most famous example of such a performance is Nayler’s entry into Bristol itself, in which he rode on horseback behind a band of followers who declared praises and apparently sang ‘holy, holy’ before him.⁵¹ The presence of a bare-headed man in this group was made theologically significant by the Quakers’ controversial refusal of hat honour: hats were normally only removed in worship, so this indicated the presence of an authority higher than any mere human.⁵² Furthermore, Nayler’s close associate Robert Rich reputedly licked Nayler’s wounds during his humiliating punishment, which is likely to have been devotional.⁵³ These events clearly echoed the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, and his subsequent Passion, and therefore suggested the same triumphant presence at Zion and a seventeenth-century English city.⁵⁴

Aside from implying the reproducibility of the Incarnation, Nayler’s entry was intended more positively as a declaration of judgement, revelation, and the direct rule of Christ in the present day. It cannot fully be understood apart from the context of a wider trend within early Quakerism to use one’s body as a sign.⁵⁵

The other major example of this trend was famously the practice of ‘going naked as a sign’, which was

⁴⁹ Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 18.

⁵⁰ This illustrates the widely-noted relationship between a community’s social values and their view of the human body. See especially Marcel Mauss, ‘Body Techniques’, in *Sociology and Psychology: Essays*, tr. Ben Brewster (London, 1979), 95-124; Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (London, 2003).

⁵¹ Anon, *A true narrative of the examination, tryall, and sufferings of James Nayler*, T2789 (London, 1657), 5.

⁵² Farmer, *Satan inthron’d*, 2. The potential inconsistencies of the Quakers’ approach to hat honour were highlighted by the dispute between Quaker leaders and John Perrot, who argued against removing one’s hat in prayer unless moved to do so. Perrot also appealed against women having to cover their heads in worship when men did not, as Krista Kesselring discusses in ‘Gender, the Hat, and Quaker Universalism in the Wake of the English Revolution’, in *The Seventeenth Century*, 26, 2 (2011), 299-322.

⁵³ Anon, *A true narrative*, 42.

⁵⁴ Mark 11.1-11 and para.

⁵⁵ Susanne Langer’s distinction between ‘sign’ and ‘symbol’ is helpful here. Langer explains that signs carry meaning in themselves and so can act as proxies for their objects, whilst symbols merely point to an external meaning: ‘a term which is used symbolically... does not evoke action appropriate to the presence of its object’, but one used ‘signally’ does. Of course, the early Friends did not consciously invoke this distinction. However, Langer’s understanding of the ‘sign’ helps to articulate the immediacy of divine presence being expressed. Susanne K. Langer, ‘The Logic of Signs and Symbols’, in Michael Lambek (ed.), *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (Oxford, 2007), 136-144, at 141.

particularly prevalent from the early years to 1655, and again from 1659 to 1661.⁵⁶ Thus, in 1653, the Puritan minister Thomas Welde reported that the Quaker Thomas Holme had walked naked through Kendal declaring that ‘it is not I but God that goeth naked’, and that another Quaker had subsequently approached the minister of the town

...having a Message to him from the Lord, and being there in the Market Place, he very solemnly pronounced a woe against it, for rejecting that Prophet of the Lord, which he had sent to doe signes and wonders in it, meaning... that bear that went starke naked through the Towne...⁵⁷

Clearly, the act was intended to express God’s immanent judgement against the Quakers’ opponents. Similarly, in 1660, William Simpson wrote after his own act of nakedness that ‘thy nakedness and thy shame is near to come upon thee, from it thou shalt not fly: Oppression and Cruelty hath been a Staff for thee, but the Lord is risen to break thy Staff of Oppression’.⁵⁸

In this sense, the embodied individual denied their own personal identity and offered their body simply as a metaphor for the nakedness of others – that is, as a means of communication between God and society at large.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the Quakers consciously imitated the Biblical practice of naked prophecy, which was intended to expose the spiritual nakedness of society.⁶⁰ Indeed, in a long explanation of his own prophetic nakedness (which he continued to practise into the 1660s) the Quaker Solomon Eccles explicitly claimed that his action was ‘by the same Spirit’ as Isaiah.⁶¹ This demonstrated the Quakers’ belief that salvation history was theirs to inhabit and enact. To walk naked was a revelatory act. Furthermore, it qualified their experience as ‘apocalyptic’ in the literal sense. As Douglas Gwyn notes, the ‘total emphasis’ of early Quaker religion was on the apocalypse (or ‘unveiling’) of Christ which would encompass all things and

⁵⁶ Kenneth Carroll, ‘Early Quakers and “Going Naked as a Sign”’, in *Quaker History*, 67 (1971), 69-87, at 81.

⁵⁷ Thomas Welde, *A further discovery of that generation of men called Quakers*, W1268 (Gateside, 1654), 84.

⁵⁸ William Simpson, *A discovery of the priests*, S3842 (London, 1660), 7.

⁵⁹ Paradoxically, then, the primary purpose of an act which seemed to reflect heightened liminality and breakdown of hierarchies – that state which the anthropologist Victor Turner has termed *communitas* – was to establish a confrontation with society. This calls into question Turner’s suggestion that radical millenarian groups demonstrate ‘among the more striking manifestations of *communitas*’. Victor Turner, ‘Liminality and Communitas’, in Lambek (ed.), *Anthropology of Religion*, 358-374, at 360, 369-70.

⁶⁰ Isaiah 20.2-6; Micah 1.8. Nigel Smith also explores how ‘those connected with the Antinomian and perfectionist sects tended to read the Scriptures allegorically and analogously’ in *Perfection Proclaimed*, 14.

⁶¹ Solomon Eccles, *Signes are from the Lord*, E130 (s.l., 1663).

make them new.⁶² In turn, the performance was invested with heavy irony: by directing the shame and fallenness traditionally associated with the naked body towards others, and justifying the act as an expression of prophetic vocation, the naked bodies of the Quakers expressed innocence and intimacy with the Divine.

Although the Quakers did not make explicit the obvious Edenic associations of their nakedness, their prophetic nudity would have held a rich significance in the religious imagination of mid-seventeenth-century England. As early as 1641, reports were made of so-called 'Adamites' who made similar claims to perfection, and conducted silent meetings without clothing to express their belief in their own pre-Adamic innocence.⁶³ David Cressy has noted that accounts of the Adamites were non-specific, and seem more naturally to reflect the anxieties (or sometimes, erotic fantasies) of those reporting them rather than the existence of an organised Adamite sect. In other words, they reflect what would sell. Nonetheless, regardless of their actual existence, Cressy argues that the Adamites came to reflect the religious discordance of the age and 'served to discredit the rest of the sectarian swarm'. Indeed, they were even mentioned in parliament.⁶⁴ Therefore, the Quakers' later nakedness would have been invested not only with connotations of perfectionism, but also with the subversive social upheaval of the 1640s. This was only encouraged by further reports of Ranters going naked, this time in the context of their moral laxity.⁶⁵

In turn, reports of nakedness were themselves part of an even wider trend towards prophetic symbolism in the mid-seventeenth century, as in the case of Thomas Totney, who changed his name to TheaurauJohn Tany following a vision of God in 1649. Five years later, Tany set fire to various worldly possessions (including his Bible) and rowed to Westminster, entering parliament and thrashing his sword around the lobby when he could not deliver a petition as intended. That Tany's volatile behaviour included the destruction of a Bible emphasised his belief in the dispensability of Scripture: present revelation, not the Bible, was the only spiritual authority. Tany was mistaken for a Quaker after refusing to remove his hat in

⁶² Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 115.

⁶³ David Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension* (Oxford, 1999), 251-80; Anon, *A nest of serpents discovered... the Adamites*, N470 (London?, 1641); Anon, *A Discovery of 29 sects here in London*, D1662 (London?, 1641), 4; Anon, *Advice to a painter. In a poem to a friend*, A639 (London, 1681), 4, 15.

⁶⁴ Cressy, *Travesties*, 278-80, 279, 260.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 271.

his subsequent trial, and following his incarceration on a separate occasion, he strikingly declared that ‘the Prisons were always the Prophets Schools’.⁶⁶ Tany was also accused by Lodowick Muggleton of being the ‘prince and head of that atheistical lie held forth by all filthy sodomistical Ranters’.⁶⁷ Muggleton made this comment despite the fact that he himself had possible Ranter connections.⁶⁸ The Quakers, along with both Tany and Muggleton, were clearly part of a turbulent, tangled web of associations and accusations.

Such total commitment to one’s prophetic leadings was not always a positive experience for Friends, as the 1655 testimony of John Toldervy indicates. Toldervy published his account after he rejected Quakerism, and whilst he claimed that his primary aim in writing was to quell rumours that he was a ‘lewd’ person, rather than to defame Quakerism, his own defence would clearly be strengthened if he could blame actions for which he was criticised on the inherent character of the movement.⁶⁹ His assessment of Quakerism should, then, be received cautiously. On the other hand, Toldervy clearly *had* viewed the movement sympathetically, and perhaps his experience of lonely and destructive fanaticism, explicitly caused by an absence of religious guidance, is as good a reason as any to explain his change of heart. In either case, at the very least, his account gives an insight into the concerns of hostile observers, as they reflected upon the Quakers’ belief in the immanent Christ.

Toldervy retold an experience that might now be characterised as mental breakdown. He became involved with the Quakers after spending some time with Seekers, and was so impressed by the ‘powerful operation of their Prayer’ that he was inspired to ‘make a confession of my self... upon which I became subject to the teachings of a Spirit in my self, (the which being believed to be the Christ of God...)’.⁷⁰ Fatefully, Toldervy’s introductory explanation of the Quaker faith did not focus on the possibility of salvation through obedience, but the certainty of damnation through rebellion – ‘I was fully perswaded, that if denying

⁶⁶ Ariel Hessayon, *Gold Tried in the Fire: The Prophet Theaurau John Tany and the English Revolution* (Aldergate, 2007), 1, 5, 115. There are also recorded instances of Quakers burning Bibles, although this was denounced by the Quaker leadership: in 1657, Hubberthorne wrote to Fox to complain that Quakers in Kent had ‘given occasion to the world against the truth’ by doing so. Richard Hubberthorne to George Fox, March 20th 1657, cited in Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England*, 159.

⁶⁷ John Reeve, *A Remonstrance... unto the Parliament and Commonwealth of England* (London, 1831), 6, cited in Douglas Greene, ‘Muggletonians and Quakers: A Study in the Interaction of Seventeenth-Century Dissent’, in *Albion*, 15, 2 (1983), 102-22, at 105.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 105.

⁶⁹ John Toldervy, *The foot out of the snare*, T1767 (London, 1655), 51-2.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 3, 8-9.

anything in the least that [the Spirit] required, I could not be redeemed' – hinting that his sense of the Quaker religious experience was defined from the start by fear of punishment.⁷¹ In any case, he followed the leadings of Christ with enthusiasm, describing how life as a Quaker demanded various behavioural changes. He immediately adopted 'divers Ceremonies', including the refusal of hat honour, and even denied himself such basic pleasures as appetising food. Ultimately, all this led him to believe that he had become 'the true Christ himself'.⁷² However, his actions and visions became increasingly destructive under the burden of discernment, culminating when he felt called by God to set fire to his own limbs.⁷³ During his subsequent physical and mental rehabilitation (and rebuke), Toldervy eventually accepted that 'I was in a delusion'.⁷⁴

Fox's journey to Westmorland, Nayler's entry into Bristol and Toldervy's apparent descent into madness all reflect a common religious motivation. If this motivation could be distilled into a single idea – the crucial impulse behind all early Quaker activity – it was the immanence of Christ (however loosely 'Christ' was conceived) asserting himself in the life of the believer.

Changing Views of Divine Immanence

Later Quakers remained committed to this same sense of divine immanence, though it was conceived differently over time. This is suggested by accounts of Quaker worship in the later seventeenth century, and especially by the unlikely witness of Voltaire. His *Letters concerning the English nation* were published in London in 1733, and described his experiences living in England from 1726 to 1729, covering time spent with 'one of the most eminent Quakers in England', his visit to a Meeting for Worship, the early history of the movement, and the pursuits of William Penn in the foundation of Pennsylvania and the quest

⁷¹ Ibid. 9.

⁷² Ibid. 15-19, 21.

⁷³ Ibid. 24-37. This bears resemblance to an incident (possibly the same one) which Nayler recalled to Margaret Fell in 1654, as the work of the 'tempter' who 'tempted [the Quaker] strongly to destroy himselfe'. The negative potential of Quaker teachings is also suggested by the case of William Pool, who drowned himself after becoming insane. Geoffrey Nuttall, *Early Quaker Letters from the Swarthmore MSS to 1660* (London, 1952), 107-8, 221, cited in Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England*, 115-116.

⁷⁴ Toldervy, *The foot out of the snare*, 40.

for religious toleration.⁷⁵ Voltaire described how ‘silence was universal’ for the first fifteen minutes of the Meeting, until somebody stood up ‘making a variety of wry faces, and groaning in a most lamentable manner’ before he ‘threw out a strange, confus’d jumble of words... which neither himself nor any of his hearers understood’. Was Voltaire describing glossolalia or nonsensical ramblings? Either way, the claim behind the ministry was that of direct inspiration, and the performative impact was a challenge to refined sensibilities. Voltaire asked his Quaker guide ‘how it was possible for the judicious part of their assembly to suffer such a babbling’, to which the guide responded that ‘we are oblig’d...to suffer it... because no one knows when a man rises up to hold forth, whether he will be mov’d by the spirit or by folly’. Expanding further, the Quaker went on to stress the discernment process, as ‘whoever...shall implore Christ to enlighten him, and shall publish the Gospel truths, he shall feel inwardly, such as one may be assur’d that he is inspir’d by the Lord’. Ultimately, ‘there is no such thing as Christianity without an immediate revelation’.⁷⁶

Voltaire’s remarkable account hints at a tension within early eighteenth-century Quakerism. On the one hand, the Quaker guide was unswerving in his affirmation that immediate revelation was possible. On the other hand, he accepted the accompanying risk of false inspiration, which must be ‘suffered’. Of course, Voltaire may have constructed the whole incident for rhetorical effect; we might even be tempted to dismiss his account as straightforward heresiography. However, his portrait of Quakerism was generally sympathetic, and this same tension shone consistently throughout.⁷⁷ Thus, he referred to his host as an ‘enthusiast’, but characterised him as ‘polite’, ‘humane’, and ‘most eloquent’; whilst he was keen to stress that he remained unconvinced by the Quakers’ religious convictions (most notably their rejection of outward baptism and communion), he gave an extended account of the theological justification for such beliefs; and George Fox himself was described as a ‘holy mad-man’.⁷⁸ Voltaire was not writing to criticise

⁷⁵ Voltaire, *Letters*, 1, 1-33.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 12-14.

⁷⁷ Openly sympathetic accounts of Quaker worship were rare even in the early eighteenth century, although the emphasis of later criticism was less on the potential for startling enthusiasm, and more on the necessity of right prayer, the sacraments and high-quality preaching, and the dangers of belief in immediate revelation. In this sense, the primary terms of the debate had shifted, from a social critique to an intellectual one – which in turn implied a shift in perceptions of Quaker worship. J.C., *A call to prayer, in two sermons*, C3819 (London, 1677), 103-152; Richard Stafford, *The necessity of keeping still*, S5126 (London, 1698), 28-30; Thomas Bennet, *A confutation of Quakerism*, ESTC T99678 (Cambridge, 1705), 1-110.

⁷⁸ Voltaire, *Letters*, 7.

the Quakers, but to portray their distinctive qualities. To this end, his assessment of Quakerism in the 1720s was of a movement marked by paradox: enthusiasm and measure, spirit and folly, holiness and madness.

The sense that such outpourings were not endorsed as inspiration by all Quakers – and that this trepidation grew over time – is supported by seventeenth-century sources. Thus, hostile commentators noticed a retreat from such behaviour. In 1668, Lodowick Muggleton noted scathingly to George Fox that ‘Then it was your principle ... to foam at the mouth ... and howl and groan as if hell were like to burst in you’, but now ‘I do not hear of any Quaker that hath any fits, no not so much as to buzz or hum before the fit comes’.⁷⁹ Similarly, in 1672 the Baptist Thomas Hicks noted that ‘quakings, foamings at the mouth, with dreadful roarings and howlings’ had become less common since the Quakers first arose.⁸⁰ And even as early as 1654, James Nayler distinguished between ‘Quaking and trembling’ (which was ‘that which the Lord hath said will come upon all flesh, and which the Saints hath witnessed’) and ‘grovelling upon the ground, and foaming at the mouth’ (which was a slanderous invention of Quakers’ opponents).⁸¹ Nonetheless, the more unnerving elements of early Quaker worship did not disappear altogether: in August 1702, the former Quaker George Keith (1638/9-1716) scornfully described the ‘Tears in plenty’, ‘Groans’ and shaking of a Quaker Meeting in Philadelphia.⁸² Admittedly, Keith had left the Society under a cloud by this point, and may well have been exaggerating. Yet this was not the only account of such behaviour amongst Quakers in the later century. The Dutch Labadist, Jaspas Danckaerts recalled the quaking and groaning – even the ‘shrieking’ – of a Quaker woman on his travels in 1679-80, and Voltaire’s account suggests that some Quakers would not denounce such behaviour even in the 1720s.⁸³ For some this might have reflected merely an intellectual position (that it should be ‘suffered’ to allow for genuine revelation) but clearly, this

⁷⁹ Greene, ‘Muggletonians and Quakers’, 116.

⁸⁰ Thomas Hicks, *A dialogue between a Christian and a Quaker*, H1922 (London, 1673), 80.

⁸¹ Peters, *Print Culture*, 104.

⁸² George Keith, *A journal of travels from New-Hampshire to Caratuck*, ESTC TO61193 (London, 1706), 22.

⁸³ Elizabeth Bouldin, *Women Prophets and Radical Protestantism in the British Atlantic World, 1640-1730* (Cambridge, 2015), 166. See also the late account of raving and convulsions in Quaker worship, in Anon, *Quakers mere obbists*, Q27 (London, 1678), 4-7. Established links between the Quakers and other prophetic groups, such as the Philadelphians and French Prophets, may also strengthen the plausibility of Keith’s claim. That said, as Mack notes, one motivation for involvement in these communities was the increased regulation over behaviour and publication *within* Quakerism, indicating a perception that the movement no longer had space for the radical prophecy these individuals sought to express. Mack, *Visionary Women*, 386-90; Lionel Laborie, *Enlightening Enthusiasm: Prophecy and Religious Experience in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Manchester, 2015), 86-90.

acceptance enabled quite startling expressions of immediate inspiration within the boundaries of the Quaker movement.

It might be tempting to explain this tension in generational terms. Different generations operate within any community, and all will have different relationships to change. Despite the early demise of many high-profile early Quakers (most obviously, James Nayler, Edward Burrough, James Parnell, and Samuel Fisher, all of whom were dead by 1665) many other Friends lived throughout the whole period. To name just a few, George Whitehead, John Whitehead, Margaret Fell, Thomas Camm, Anne Camm, and Ambrose Rigg all lived into the eighteenth century and were numbered amongst the ‘Valiant Sixty’ who first spread the Quaker message in the early 1650s. This would have connected the Quakers of 1700 with their earliest forebears. Any given Quaker would have had a sense of their own religious journey as coherent whole, and the continued influence of such important early Friends would clearly have lent the movement some natural continuity – despite change. Thus, it is likely that many of the real changes in Quakerism would only come one, or even two, generations after the first Publishers of the Truth had died.

This is demonstrated most obviously by the publication of testimonies to early Friends as they died in the late seventeenth century. For example, a series of testimonies to the recently deceased Cumbrian Quaker, Hugh Tickell, was published in 1690. Tickell became a Quaker in 1653. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that his wife proclaimed that at the moment of his death, ‘indeed was he become the Chiefest of ten Thousand to us: And now to thee, thou Ancient of Days, be Hallelujah’.⁸⁴ Dorothy Tickell’s words echoed the elaborate homages addressed to George Fox and James Nayler in 1656.⁸⁵ Likewise, the stability of Quaker religious values was captured by the late use of certain early Quaker texts across the period of study. For example, an intensely personal collection of works by Roger Hebden, published posthumously in 1700, contained extensive and detailed advice on the process of discernment, as he particularly urged readers not to expose themselves to the Devil in a rush to decipher God’s will.⁸⁶ The text itself was written in the 1650s but was still being read fifty years later. Even in 1700, then, Quaker leaders were happy to recycle and reiterate old material to encourage and guide believers. Indeed, such advice on discernment

⁸⁴ Anon, *Some testimonies concerning the life and death of Hugh Tickell*, S4622 (London, 1690), 4.

⁸⁵ See above, 53-4.

⁸⁶ Roger Hebden, *A plain account of certain Christian experiences*, ESTC R15158 (London, 1700), 23, 30, 107-9.

was extremely common even in this later period, and Hebden's advice on discernment is more notable for being explicit than unique.⁸⁷

Nonetheless, the later publication of Roger Hebden's reflections on discernment would naturally have been more palatable than the aggressive judgements of early Quaker jeremiads. Against viewing tensions merely as a function of generational shift, it is important to recognise indications of change even in the experiences of older friends. For Dorothy Tickell's apparently anachronistic salute to the language of the 1650s was not entirely untouched by the developments of the intervening decades. That her husband was only the Chiefest of ten Thousand 'to us' reflects her awareness of a certain subjectivity underlying her claim – that is, an awareness that her claim may seem outlandish to those without direct experience of her husband. Tickell's experience remained the same; she was connected to the earliest experience of Friends and held a deep affinity with it. However, her testimony reflected a change in her readers' likely assumptions. In other words, her experience was (at least in some sense) consistent, but the authority she attached to this experience had changed.

Similarly, a later account of Dewsbury's early ministry, written by Kelk Meeting in East Yorkshire, is worth quoting at length for its vivid portrayal of Dewsbury's charismatic persona:

His testimony was piercing and very powerful, so as the Earth shook before him, the mountain did melt at the power of the Lord which exceedingly, in a wonderful manner, broke forth in these days in our holy assemblies, to the renting of many hearts, and bringing divers to witness the same state, measurably, as the prophet or servant of the Lord did in ancient times whose lips quivered and belly shook, that he might rest in the day of trouble. Oh! It was a glorious day, in which the Lord wonderfully appeared for the bringing down the lofty and high-minded, and exalting that of low degree.⁸⁸

This text was compiled as part of a national survey of Quaker origins in 1720, and at first glance it might have been written by a Quaker at any point in the seventeenth century. Kelk Meeting displayed the

⁸⁷ This emphasis on discernment may have been encouraged by several factors: the continued suspicion of Quakers by outsiders, the need to enforce discipline within the movement, perhaps an increased concern for gentility (as represented by the foundation of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, though their success in the face of rising pluralism is debatable), and possibly even continued fear of witchcraft into the eighteenth century. MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 630-6, 663-7; Mark Knights, *The Devil in Disguise: Deception, Delusion, and Fanaticism in the Early English Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2011), 70-97; Ian Bostridge, *Witchcraft and its Transformations c.1650-c.1750* (Oxford, 1997), 2.

⁸⁸ Penney (ed.), *The First Publishers of the Truth*, 293-4.

apocalyptic concern: the Lord ‘wonderfully appeared’, demonstrating the unveiling of truth through Quaker ministry. The account was also highly visual, and effusively positive about Dewsbury’s spiritual authority. Yet closer consideration of the text suggests that these later Quakers were holding back. The outcome of the apocalypse of truth was understood *simply* as the levelling of the proud. In this sense, only one particular sin – pride – was overcome. Whilst the language employed did conjure images of a total transformation affecting all things, the vast majority of creation remained untouched and irrelevant to the fulfilment of God’s promise. Dewsbury’s message could easily be viewed as a specific message for the Quakers present, rather than a universally relevant warning of impending judgement. Any negative implications for the unconvinced were left unmentioned, and the main focus of the text was the joy of conversion. Finally, the account emphasised Dewsbury’s obedience and truth-filled ministry, and the humility of his listeners, but its implied theological sense of Dewsbury’s status before God – sanctified, perfected, or simply a prophet – was ultimately uncontroversial. The account was, then, a tribute to early Quaker origins rather than a whole-hearted return to early Quakerism: later Quakers wanted to convey a *sense* of the same exuberant urgency that ignited the zeal of their forebears, but avoided (deliberately or unwittingly) the most problematic aspects of early Quaker theology.

This suggests a changed understanding of divine immanence itself. This change was similarly reflected in the writings of the Quaker minister Jane Fearon in 1693. Fearon seemed to claim Christ’s immanence when she described her travels as comfortable ‘through the Divine Presence of the Lord my God which was continued to me, as any journey I have hitherto had’.⁸⁹ However, her understanding was not obviously linked to a process of inward sanctification by a personal indwelling presence. Rather, she simply hoped that she might do her ‘duty to God’, as those around her saw ‘the emptiness of all professions without the life, the power, the Word that cleanseth the heart’.⁹⁰ Fearon asserted her own continued agency, and adopted a strongly moralistic tone which made no effort to place her experience in a wider, cosmic context. Rather, her faith was domesticated, almost literally, as she felt Christ in the mundane experience of an earthly journey. So too, Thomas Upsher wrote to George Rooke that he knew many who ‘are become and becoming

⁸⁹ Jane Fearon to Friends, Swarthmore Collection MSS, vol. 358, 10th October 1693, FHL, item 74.

⁹⁰ Ibid. item 74.

more and more as strangers and pilgrims in this world, that they may witness daily a sitting down in Heavenly places in Christ Jesus; these are arising and risen with Christ', and that 'the moon, that is the world, is under their feet, and they seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth at the right-hand of God'.⁹¹ Upsher's understanding of 'Heavenly places' resembled more strongly the Prayer Book understanding of the believer lifting up their heart to Heaven during communion, than the judgemental presence of Christ experienced by Fox. And indeed, Upsher also seemed to place his ultimate salvation in the future, hoping that 'continually guided by his counsel, we may have true peace and at last be received into his glorious kingdom'.⁹² Both Fearon and Upsher seem to have tended away from the religious sensibility of early Quakerism.

These individuals clearly felt a strong sense of the presence of God amongst them, and of intimate communion with Christ in their daily lives. Yet Christ was now conceived as the believer's most intimate companion, rather than eclipsing their agency altogether; and the natural culmination of the religious life was now quite firmly in the next world, rather than in the present moment. The result was that, by the eighteenth century, there was a much greater focus on the hard, mundane graft of Kingdom-building than on the ecstatic highs and the transformative presence of the Divine which the first Friends expressed so vividly. Indeed, the moralism of this emerging culture may even have bordered on legalism, as suggested in Margaret Fell's complaint that the growing concern with plain dress and rejection of oaths amounted to 'silly imaginary outward practices'.⁹³

A similar tension was reflected even in positive accounts of the miraculous. The Quaker sailor Edward Coxere wrote of an extraordinary incident in which direct guidance he received from God averted shipwreck and ensured the safe passage of his shipmates to Alderney.⁹⁴ The tone of his memoir had significantly changed at the point he became a Quaker, and he regularly used phrases such as 'It pleased the Lord [to do so and so]', demonstrating a complete transformation of his outlook on life. Presumably his

⁹¹ Thomas Upsher to George Rooke, Swarthmore Collection MSS, vol. 358, 29th November 1700, FHL, item 75.

⁹² Ibid. item 75.

⁹³ Margaret Fell, *Undaunted Zeal: The Letters of Margaret Fell*, ed. Elsa F. Glines (Richmond, Ind., 2003), 469, cited in Sally Bruynell, 'Margaret Fell and the Second Coming of Christ', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers*, 102-17, at 105.

⁹⁴ Edward Coxere, *Adventures by Sea of Edward Coxere*, ed. E.H.W. Meyerstein (Oxford, 1945), 94-7.

manuscript was finalised after all the events being described had taken place, so we must assume this was a rhetorical decision intended to demonstrate a new sense of divine presence and providential involvement after his convincement. However, just as in Fearon's letter, it was cast in the more conventional terms of providential guidance – 'the Lord put it into my heart... to get aft to the master along the weather side of the ship' – rather than as a miraculous intervention or cataclysmic judgement.⁹⁵

These changes were summarised succinctly by John Whitehead (c.1630-1696). Originally from Yorkshire (and unrelated to the prominent Westmorland Friend, George Whitehead), John Whitehead had been convinced after hearing William Dewsbury preach in 1652, and went on to become a regular preacher, public Friend and clerk of Lincolnshire Quarterly Meeting. In a letter 'to be read amongst Friends in all their Meetings', written by and published in 1682, Whitehead described how

...now, being sensible how that Generation which did see the Wonders of the Lord, and were upheld by his mighty Power, is passing away, and many of them gone before us to their Everlasting Inheritance with Christ Jesus in his Kingdom, and another Generation that have heard more, but seen and experienced less, both of the Wiles of Satan, and operation of God's Power, that discovers and breaks his Snares, are entering, who are the Off-spring of the Elders, who through Faith and Patience have obtained a good Report, besides many others who have come into the Vineyard at other hours of the day, who must all be tryed and proved, as virtuous men have been in all Ages, that have obtained like-precious Faith.⁹⁶

As the first generation of Friends passed away, just as stewardship of the early church was transferred from the apostles to their successors, those who had 'heard more, but seen and experienced less' must now assume the mantle. Whitehead wrote to 'stir [his readers] up, by way of Remembrance, to call to mind the days that past, wherein the Lord in great Mercy did visit us'.⁹⁷ Here, Whitehead implied that the full visitation was over. This invested his account with a stirring sadness, and the pastoral tone of the epistle certainly implied a loss of momentum amongst the Quakers. However, he did not deny the reality of continued revelation. Rather, he still claimed to write 'from the movings of the Spirit of Christ Jesus, that quickens us and knits us together, as Members of his Body, in which we both suffer and rejoyce one with

⁹⁵ Ibid. 95.

⁹⁶ John Whitehead, *A general epistle to be read*, W1978 (London?, 1682), 3–4.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 1.

another, having a sence and feeling of one anothers Conditions'. Moreover, he addressed those first of all who 'have known the Lords great work in the beginning, and the manner of his carrying it on, both in your selves and others; blessed are you of the Lord who keep your Habitation in him, and do humbly walk with him, daily enduring the Cross of Christ Jesus, and Contradictions of Sinners against your selves'.⁹⁸ John Whitehead clearly perceived that something had ended since his own experience of Quakerism in the 1650s; he looked back to remember the primary visitation. Nevertheless, he continued to affirm the dynamic guidance of Christ 'without whom we can do nothing'.⁹⁹

These passages suggest that an experience of – and commitment to – divine immanence was retained between 1647 and 1700. However, the way these authors conceived of this 'immanence' changed. Assessing what comprised and caused this change is less straightforward, but a consideration of William Penn's preface to the collected works of John Whitehead, published in 1704, is instructive. Penn listed several features as fundamental to Quaker writing and reading which were entirely faithful to the earliest Quaker concern for immanent, unembellished religion.¹⁰⁰ He warned his readers that Whitehead would not enchant them with 'nice or polish'd Stile, which Men usually do, to give a Lustre to, or Varnish their Matter with', but instead wrote simply as an 'Enlightened and Experienced Man'.¹⁰¹ The high value placed on experience emphasised both the centrality of grace to Quaker discourse, and the importance of consistency between inward and outward: in contrast to inward understanding, an outward gloss was portrayed as misleading. This same principle should lead the reader, and Penn urged his own readers to 'Read... with an Inward as well as with an outward Eye, and Read no faster than he feels and understands in himself'.¹⁰² The overarching theme of Penn's introduction was that nothing should be dictated, as everything must be felt authentically by the individual. It is ironic, then, that Penn should present such a rousing manifesto for uncomplicated and undirected Quaker integrity, whilst himself prescribing what was expected of Quaker writers and readers. Moreover, Penn's observations aimed at something quite apart from incantatory style: direct experience is not equivalent to direct authority, and Penn focused on Whitehead's considerable

⁹⁸ Ibid. 4.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 6.

¹⁰⁰ William Penn, in John Whitehead, *The written Gospel-Labours of... John Whitehead*, ESTC T102457 (London, 1704), sig. A3v-B3v.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. sig. A3v.

¹⁰² Ibid. sig. B1v.

integrity rather than characterising him as a direct mouthpiece of the Divine. This reflected two further notable changes in early Quaker religious experience, both of which encouraged a changed view of divine immanence – namely, the emergence of a group identity, and the loss of individual prophetic vocation.

The Emergence of Group Identity

In practical terms, the first signs of corporate organisation emerged even whilst the movement was still in its embryonic stage. As Arnold Lloyd notes, as early as 1653, William Dewsbury recommended that ‘one or two Friends who are most grown in the power and life, in the pure discerning in the Truth’ should be appointed to ‘take care and charge over the flock of God’.¹⁰³ Also in 1653, a Monthly Meeting was established in Durham to care for poor and suffering Friends. Charles Carter has argued that early notions of Quaker ‘membership’ significantly pre-dated the official establishment of membership in 1737, based on this approach to caring for the poor: whilst no precise list of members was kept, the principle that poor Quakers should be the responsibility of one Meeting rather than another indicated some notion of membership (probably inherited from parish regulations).¹⁰⁴ These early measures were pragmatic, but they implied some sense of group awareness – and, in Dewsbury’s case, even individual submission to the greater spiritual clarity of others.

The tendency towards group decision-making became increasingly ideological over time. As Kate Peters notes, corporate awareness was encouraged by the publication of the first Quaker tracts from 1652, and the appropriation of their nickname through increasingly common references to ‘Quakers’ and ‘quaking’; in 1656, Quaker ministers met together for the first time at Balby in Yorkshire; in April 1660, the first epistle was addressed to the whole Quaker community; and a striking articulation of Friends’ commitment to corporate discernment was issued in 1666.¹⁰⁵ This so-called *Testimony of the Brethren* was written to

¹⁰³ Arnold Lloyd, *Quaker Social History* (London, 1950), 1-3.

¹⁰⁴ Charles Carter, ‘Unsettled Friends: Church Government and the Origins of Membership’, in *JFHS*, 51 (1967), 143-153. See also the work of Richard Vann, on the emergence of distinctive Quaker notions of membership which anticipated the later establishment of an official system. Vann, *Social Development*, 122-157; Richard Vann, ‘Nurture and Conversion in the Early Quaker Family’, in *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 31, 4 (1969), 639-43.

¹⁰⁵ Peters, *Print Culture*, 91; Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, 224; Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, 5. In his journal, Fox tells us that the name ‘Quaker’ was the invention of the ‘Justice [Gervase] Bennet of Derby... because we bid them tremble at the word of God, and this was in the year 1650’. Fox, *Journal*, 58.

Quakers from ‘Friends and Elders in the Counties...whom God hath called to labour and watch for the eternal good of your souls’. In a likely reference to the followers of John Perrot, who were numerous at the time, this epistle denounced the ‘ungrateful fruits... sad consequences and sad effects’ of ‘that spirit, which... leads into a division from, or exaltation above, the body of Friends’. In contrast, the faithful were ‘made... members and overseers’ of ‘the church of Christ Jesus’ by their faithfulness to the continued guidance of ‘the Holy Spirit, that was poured forth upon us’. This ‘church’ was an exclusive and observable group defined by faith, in opposition to those who tried to ‘lay waste [God’s] heritage’.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the *Testimony* asserted that ‘elders and members of the church... ought to judge matters and things which differ’, and denounced the ‘abominable pride’ which drove individuals to reject judgements made against them. In contrast, Quakers should be willing to be ‘tried by the church of Christ Jesus’. The epistle recommended that any travelling in the ‘ministry’ should be approved by their Meetings, and warned Friends not to encourage publications which did not tend towards the Truth.¹⁰⁷

It is of great significance that the *Testimony* used ‘church’ language to describe institutional, external elements of the movement, and so to uphold developing power structures within it. This was an extraordinary endorsement of the authority of group discernment over the individual – in practical terms, that is, the power of the institution over the individual conscience. By referring to the Quaker movement as a ‘body of Friends’ the *Testimony* perhaps also alluded to the notion of the church as the ‘body of Christ’, so conveying a mystical sense of ecclesial union.¹⁰⁸ Yet the authority of the institution was *at least* as important as this mystical ecclesiology: ‘we do declare and testify, that the church, with the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, have power’.¹⁰⁹

The *Testimony* therefore contained an important assertion of Quakerism as the true Church – and in turn, this was used as a hard-hitting reminder that membership of a spiritual community entailed certain responsibilities towards ‘ecclesiastical’ authority. Such statements clearly affected how Quakers might

¹⁰⁶ Abram Rawlinson Barclay (ed.), *Letters, &c., of early Friends* (London, 1841), 318-24, at 318-20.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 320-24; see above, 19n.

¹⁰⁸ 1 Corinthians 12.12-31; John Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London, 1961).

¹⁰⁹ Barclay (ed.), *Letters*, 321.

invest authority in their perceived experience of immediate revelation: faith was not only about one's own journey to deification.

Subsequent developments reiterated the sentiment of the *Testimony*. The following summer, Fox embarked on a national tour in which he encouraged local Quakers to consolidate their bureaucratic structures into regular Monthly Meetings.¹¹⁰ On his return, he strengthened Quaker marriage procedure and established two Quaker schools at Waltham Abbey and Shacklewell.¹¹¹ Perhaps most strikingly, widespread internal censorship (foreshadowed in the *Testimony*) was established in 1673 and entrusted to the Second Day Morning Meeting in London.¹¹² As Kate Peters notes, tactical commissioning and careful distribution of printed sources were nothing new.¹¹³ Yet the Morning Meeting was more ambitious: it required two copies of all Quaker publications and one copy of all anti-Quaker publications to be sent for reference – and if necessary, review – in London. This enabled the active suppression of certain Quaker writings, as respected Friends were assigned to read and edit material for publication. Their control also spread to arbitration of personal disputes and spoken ministry too, as in the case of John Tyso, who preached in both 1689 and 1691 ‘to Friends grief and dissatisfaction’, so that ‘it was desired that Francis Camfield, James Parke & John Elson Speak with him’.¹¹⁴ Nobody was exempt from this process; even George Fox had several of his own works vetted.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, the Morning Meeting also arranged the editing, reprinting and even translation into French of Barclay's *Apology*.¹¹⁶ Thus, the work of the Meeting was not only disciplinary or regulatory, but strategic.

Unsurprisingly, procedural changes were matched by parallel developments in Quaker literary culture. The uniformity of Quaker writings – especially conviction narratives – has been studied extensively, and was undoubtedly encouraged by the influence of Quaker leaders over publication, particularly through the

¹¹⁰ Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, 7. Lloyd notes that this system of governance was already haphazardly in place, having been inherited from the Seekers. Nonetheless, Fox's ‘power and drive’ entailed that by 1668 the movement ran a much more formal system of local and national government.

¹¹¹ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, 254.

¹¹² Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, 150-1. O'Malley, ‘Defying the Powers’, 72-88; Thomas O'Malley, ‘The Press and Quakerism, 1653-59,’ in *JFHS*, 54, 4 (1979), 169-84.

¹¹³ Peters, *Print Culture*, 50-4.

¹¹⁴ Minutes of the Morning Meeting of Ministers and Elders MSS, 10 vols, vol.1, 1689/91, FHL, 113, 139.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 10, 16.

¹¹⁶ Minutes of the Morning Meeting of Ministers and Elders MSS, vol.2, 1695-1700, FHL, 105, 243-44, 274-81, 333.

work of the Second Day Morning Meeting.¹¹⁷ Yet apart from this institutional censorship, an unofficial and organic process of group homogenisation was also underway, by which religious experiences were classified according to a set narrative of religious progress. Publications such as John Banks's 1693 *An epistle to Friends shewing the great difference between a convinced estate and a converted estate* demonstrate the interest of individual authors in tracing the markers of authentic religious experience. Banks equated 'convincement' and 'conversion' with the difference between 'profession' and 'possession' of truth, as different stages marking the respective transformation of mind and will in the religious journey.¹¹⁸ This distinction became the common Quaker position, and was even reflected in their earliest concepts of membership, so that Keith noted the standard identification of 'Two sorts of Quakers' (those who have 'Life', and those who have 'Profession' only) in 1707.¹¹⁹

Of course, this systematic analysis of religious experience did not necessarily mean that the experience itself changed. Yet that such formal analysis was now thought possible was a departure from the earliest Quaker position. Here, Banks was setting out certain traits by which an individual could assess their spiritual health. This ensured acceptable faith and adherence to right authority, as Banks warned his readers against becoming complacent in assuming their own salvation, and encouraged them to heed Christ's commands obediently until they 'come to feel and be sensible of the work of his power and Holy Spirit in [their] Hearts, there to Change [them], to work and Convert [them] into the nature of Truth.'¹²⁰ Matters of faith were to be appraised by nothing other than 'Truth' – itself a claim to religious superiority over other Christian groups – and Quakers were urged to judge their own inner lives accordingly.

Explaining and reinforcing communal values to inexperienced Quakers could be achieved by the provision of role models. Such provision is best demonstrated by the emergence of published Quaker journals as a literary genre.¹²¹ The first Quaker journal to be published was that of William Caton in 1689, and by 1725

¹¹⁷ Luella Wright, *The Literary Life of the Early Friends 1650-1725* (New York, 1932), 57-73, 155-193; Nikki Coffey Tousley, 'The Experience of Regeneration and Erosion of Certainty in the Theology of Second Generation Quakers: No Place for Doubt?', MPhil thesis, University of Birmingham, 2002; Howard Brinton, *Quaker Journals: Varieties of Religious Experience Among Friends*, (Wallingford, 1972).

¹¹⁸ John Banks, *An epistle to Friends*, B652 (London, 1693), 1-2, 13.

¹¹⁹ George Keith, *The magick of Quakerism*, ESTC N4423 (London, 1707), 47.

¹²⁰ Banks, *An epistle*, 4.

¹²¹ For more extended discussions of Quaker journals, see especially Brinton, *Quaker Journals*; Barbour and Roberts, *Early Quaker Writings*, 149-241; Hilary Hinds, "'And The Lord's Power Was Over All': Calvinist Anxiety, Sacred

more than 25 journals were in print.¹²² Keeping a spiritual diary had been central to Puritan religious practice for some time, and these diaries were not simply intended for the authors' personal use. Rather, as Andrew Cambers has convincingly argued, the community was prominent in the construction of Godly life-writing. This role included heavy editing of, and addition to, the original text (raising uncomfortable questions regarding the legitimacy of journals as a means of understanding the individual whose name was attached to them) and occasional publication.¹²³ Thus, the diary of Mancunian nonconformist Henry Newcombe was completed by his son after he was too ill to write, and concluded with his son's written testimony concerning his life.¹²⁴ Moreover, even without the input of the community in the actual construction of the text, diaries were written to be read: they often addressed their readers directly, and mirrored published sources in their formatting and title-pages.¹²⁵ Furthermore, such communal reading was mentioned within the texts themselves; Cambers particularly notes Nehemiah Wallington's mention of reading his diary with his son, concluding that 'what has consistently been taken to be one of the most internalised records of Puritan sin was thus both a process of internalisation and externalisation'.¹²⁶

Throughout the seventeenth century, then, the Godly defined themselves through communal engagement with worthy literature – including the edifying diary – and on this point, Quakerism bears all the hallmarks of the influence of Godly culture. Certainly, the Quaker journal was far from a straightforward account of the individual's life, but combined various elements of Puritan writing to create an exhaustive record of the working of the Spirit in a life: the diary itself, a conversion account, pastoral advice taken from letters, often multiple testimonies on the occasion of the Friend's death, and evidence of outward workings of the Light within (such as the misfortune of enemies or miraculous healings) in addition to this inward

Confidence, and George Fox's Journal', in *English Literary History*, 75, 4 (2008), 841-70; Wright, *Literary Life*, 155-97.

¹²² Wright, *Literary Life*, 156.

¹²³ Andrew Cambers, 'Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England, circa 1580-1720', in *Journal of British Studies*, 46, 4 (2007), 796-825, at 802-3, 817; Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 9, 80, 246. The success of fictional works such as *Robinson Crusoe*, written by the dissenter Daniel Defoe, demonstrate how far the genre had captured the public imagination. Religious life-writing was, then, a major way in which dissenting practice significantly affected popular culture at the time. Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York*, ESTC T72269 (London, 1719), 76-7, 81, 90-91, 105, 112-4, 164, 257-62.

¹²⁴ Cambers, 'Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England', 802.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 805-6.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 818.

experience.¹²⁷ This record might be posthumous, but Quakers were also unusual for publishing their accounts of spiritual experience within the life of the author.¹²⁸ However, Caton's journal was published a full twenty-four years after his death. In the preface to Caton's journal, Fox took credit for the initiative, hoping that Caton's 'Example' would encourage other Quakers, just as 'after he was Converted, he Preach'd the Gospel of Christ and strengthened his Brethren'.¹²⁹ This indicated the primary intention behind the publication of journals as the consolidation of Quaker religious concerns in a pastoral context: it was hoped that the journal would ensure Caton's enduring inspiration and encouragement to other Quakers even after he had passed away. Caton had travelled widely in the ministry, encouraging and upholding the faith of other Quakers and acting as an example by his humility, honesty and purity of heart. Certainly, the publication reflected the appetite within Quakerism for relevant pastoral guidance. Furthermore, the text itself introduced a whole cast of supporting characters – most notably, his parents, the Fells at Swarthmore, George Fox, and John Stubbs (Caton's main travelling companion during his extensive itinerant ministry) – who nourished Caton's faith.¹³⁰

The publication of journals also affirmed the theological value of unity. That is not to say they were all the same; although the uniformity of these journals increased in the eighteenth century, in the early years, Barbour and Roberts even suggest that the letters upon which Richard Hubberthorne's journal was based conformed more obviously to a model framework than the tract itself.¹³¹ Moreover, as Howard Brinton notes, journals rarely addressed theological concerns explicitly. Their purpose was inspirational rather than polemical, and the particulars of the life were intended to shine through.¹³² Nonetheless, this should not preclude identifying common theological insights from the journals, not least because their overarching narratives did often loosely follow the pattern of shorter conviction narratives. Rather, the set patterns

¹²⁷ Barbour and Roberts, *Early Quaker Writings*, 152-3.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 152.

¹²⁹ George Fox, in William Caton, *A journal of the life of*, C1514 (London, 1689), sig. A2r.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 1-5, 13.

¹³¹ Barbour and Roberts, *Early Quaker Writings*, 154.

¹³² Brinton, *Quaker Journals*, 2. A useful comparison can be made with the literary culture of wider Protestantism and the difference between diaries and conversion narratives. Protestant diary-writing became increasingly popular in the seventeenth century, but took such a wide variety of forms so that 'we are forced to admit that the spiritual diary or autobiography was conceived nearly or fully independently'. Yet there were certain clear patterns within Puritan conversion narratives – even to the extent that Patricia Caldwell identifies consistent differences between English and American Puritan writings. Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 299-301; Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge, 1985), 1-39.

of Quaker life writing convey their highest spiritual ideals and aspirations: for example, the author's strong sense of spiritual communion from a young age was often emphasised in contrast to Puritan focus on the depravity of the individual.¹³³ In this manner, 'the Quaker journal was pre-eminently the outgrowth of the Quaker group mind'.¹³⁴

The theological appreciation of unity became increasingly prominent. As noted in the introduction, the Quakers emphasised their status as the 'true church' from the start. As a key indicator of church legitimacy, this meant that securing and demonstrating unity was crucial – especially in a movement which claimed adherence solely to Christ's direct teaching.¹³⁵ In some respects, this was nothing new, and of course, it could be encouraged practically by expanding the power of leaders, increasing control over publication, and the evaluation of personal experience against a set model. Indeed, the preservation of unity was an explicit criterion in the censorial decisions of the Second Day Morning Meeting.¹³⁶ Yet more than this, unity also became more commonly employed as a theological motif, as reflected in the most destructive expression of the tension between group and individual: the Wilkinson-Story separation. This dispute, which lasted many years and came to a peak in the mid-1670s, was precipitated by opposition to the establishment of a separate Women's Meeting. Nonetheless, John Wilkinson and John Story – the protagonists of the dispute – launched a whole catalogue of criticisms against Quaker leaders, many of which directly targeted the increasing power of elders and ministers over ordinary Quakers.¹³⁷ The feud itself did not *necessarily* signal the erosion of the earliest Quaker concerns – after all it was Fox himself (that is, the most prominent spiritual leader in the early years of the movement, if not its founder) who instigated the measures which ignited it. However, it did illustrate the importance of unity as a religious principle. William Penn was particularly vocal on this matter, as his 1676 letter to objectors John Ruance and Charles Harris showed. Penn expressed his deep disagreement with those whose work he judged to be 'not y^t of gathering to but scattering from y^e Lord in this day of temptation'. He wondered whether they

¹³³ Brinton, *Quaker Journals*, 2-4, 6-10.

¹³⁴ Wright, *Literary Life*, 193.

¹³⁵ If the same Christ was in all people, the leadings of that Christ should be consistent with one another. Therefore, opponents appealed to strife amongst Quakers to attack the Quakers' understanding of the Light's infallible authority and sufficiency, and so, to reiterate the need for scriptural guidance. For example, Hicks, *A dialogue*, 27-8.

¹³⁶ Thomas O'Malley, 'Defying the Powers', 84.

¹³⁷ For an extended discussion of the controversy, see Braithwaite, *Second Period*, 290-323.

had any sense of God at all and sardonically questioned whether his own error lay in ‘not suffering loose & libertine sp^{ts} to tread down our hedge... as if y^e Light were inconsistent wth itself, or admitted of unity under not only different but contrary practices in y^e one family & flock of God.’¹³⁸ The imposition of discipline need not be understood as a threat to the core insight of Quakerism, but schismatic Quakers were judged to imply that the Light within was inconsistent. This itself threatened the notion that an individual might be led by a divinely infallible Spirit.

This balancing act between total libertinism and the constriction of the Light by centralised control was discussed explicitly by Robert Barclay (1648-90) in *The anarchy of the ranters*, written in 1674 and published in 1676. In this work, Barclay discussed governance appropriate for ‘the Church of Christ’.¹³⁹ He recognised that Quakers were caught between accusations (and the genuine risk) of libertinism, and the oppression of the Spirit of Christ by heavy-handed Church discipline.¹⁴⁰ Barclay also noted that the Quakers’ use of discipline had been mocked as a sign of hypocrisy by their opponents – and by Quakers themselves, as ‘there are some, that the very Name of a *Church*, and the very Words *Order and Government*, they are affraid of’, because of ‘the great Hypocrisie, Deceit and Oppression that hath been cloaked with the Pretence of these Things’.¹⁴¹ This indicated anxiety amongst Quakers concerning the language of ‘Church’, and probably reflected the ongoing impact of the Wilkinson-Story controversy. Nonetheless, Barclay argued for the necessity of moderation between extremes, through the classic image of the Church as the body of Christ. Thus, he identified the presence of different roles within a functioning Church (for Christ did ‘minister unto every Member a Measure of the same Spirit, yet diverse according to operation, for the Edification of the Body, some Apostles, some Teachers, some Pastors, some Elders’) and mused that problems arise when ‘any Member assumes another Place then is allotted it’.¹⁴² Of course, the image of ‘the Body’ connoted an all-encompassing unity – and its head was ultimately Christ himself, whose Spirit all members of the Church were mandated to follow. Nonetheless, Christ ‘hath laid Care upon

¹³⁸ William Penn, Penington Collection TSS, vol. 4, 11 September 1676, FHL, 132-33.

¹³⁹ Robert Barclay, *The anarchy of the ranters*, B718 (London, 1676), 12.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 6.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 18-19.

¹⁴² Ibid. 10-11.

some beyond others, who watch for the Souls of their Brethren, as they that must give account.’¹⁴³ Indeed, Barclay even included oversight in his definition of ‘Church’ itself, as

a Meeting or Gathering of certain People... gathered together in the Belief of the same Principles, Doctrines and Points of Faith, whereby as a Body they become distinguished from others, and have... a conjunct Interest to the maintaining and propagating these Principles... and therefore have a certain Care, and Oversight over on [sic] another...¹⁴⁴

This was rather more rigid than John Crook’s 1659 observation that the word ‘Church’ derived ‘from a word that signifies to Call out [ἐκκαλέω]; so that the true Church of Christ is a people called out of the Wayes, Wickednesses, Formalities, Customs and Fashions of the World, into the pure obedience to, and worshipping of God in the Spirit by his own living Word’.¹⁴⁵ Here Crook emphasised the individual call, rather than institutional remit. Thus, the Quakers’ collective and institutional sense of themselves as a ‘Church’ was heightened over time, and was explicitly used to argue for increasing centralised control.

In part, this was a result of internal disagreement, and the need to distinguish the Quaker movement from loose ‘Ranterism’.¹⁴⁶ Nonetheless, if it is notable that the specific appeal to ‘unity’ (and to a sense of the movement as a Church) was made by both the *Testimony of the Brethren* and those arguing in favour of centralised control during the Wilkinson-Story separation, it is more striking that unity was also claimed as a key aspiration even by those authors who *objected* to increased institutionalisation. Thus, an anonymous publication from 1673 (attributed to William Mucklow), pointedly entitled *The spirit of the hat*, criticised Fox’s approach to hat honour, stating that ‘the Unity that the Lord approves of, is for every one to act according to his measure and growth in the Truth’, so that ‘in the true Church, Unity stands in

¹⁴³ Ibid. 16.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 32.

¹⁴⁵ Crook, *A defence*, 20.

¹⁴⁶ This need was generated more from fear than any widespread link between the groups. Whilst J.C. Davis’s claim that ‘there was no Ranter movement, no Ranter sect, no Ranter theology’ is extreme, his work provides a useful reminder that social anxiety could inflate the impact of a movement vastly beyond its numerical significance, or organisational and ideological coherence. Davis explicitly suggests that Quakers ‘[used] the charge of Ranterism to discipline and sectarianise their own followers’. This should not be understood exclusively as a cynical mechanism of control. Rather, it indicates that even Quakers held genuine fears that their movement would be hijacked by those they perceived as extremists, and were willing to define themselves negatively against the ‘Ranter sensation’. The popular imagination clearly weighed heavily on the nascent movement. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History*, 124, 88-93.

diversities; But in the false, Unity will not stand without Uniformity'. The author denounced this 'false unity' as 'Foxonian'.¹⁴⁷

The employment of unity as a motif by those arguing against centralised control suggests that a more developed ecclesiology was emerging *per se*, at least to some extent independently of practical or political considerations. Moreover, the result of this process (amongst 'Foxonian' Quakers, at least) was that an individual's attitude to corporate authority became as indicative of true faith as their attitude to Christ's dictates received directly. Thus, an epistle written on 26 May 1673 'from Friends met in London' stressed that

the spirit which despiseth governments and dominion, and speaks evil of dignities, is either a singular, or a self-righteous, self-separating spirit that would itself bear rule and be judge over all, – which also seeks to stumble and darken the simple; or a loose, disobedient, careless spirit, that would not be reformed, but live at ease in the flesh and fleshly liberty; which the power of God will rebuke.¹⁴⁸

This implied that the disobedience of those who would not submit to the Quakers' institutional authorities out of a 'self-righteous, self-separating spirit that would itself bear rule' was equivalent to those who rejected the leadings of God directly ('that would... live at ease in the flesh and fleshly liberty'). Both essentially raised their own judgement over that of the Truth; neither lived up to the Quaker ideal. Thus, whilst the earliest Quakers characterised disobedience to the Light as the archetypal sin (and obedience as the sole path to salvation) their successors envisaged a similar obligation to the community itself. Again, this reinforced the notion that Quakers viewed the movement as a Church not only in a mystical sense (that is, as Christ's body) but an institutional sense, and, therefore, that the emerging organisational machinery of the movement had the authority to demand compliance.

This might not seem so different from Nayler's own criticism of Richard Mires, in which he stated that 'thou y^t calls thy selfe a prophett, & speakes with thy owne will, thy word comes not to pase, therein thou shewest thyselfe a false prophett'.¹⁴⁹ In theory, there should not be any conflict between the individual and

¹⁴⁷ Anon, *The spirit of the hat*, M3035 (London, 1673), 11, 20.

¹⁴⁸ London Yearly Meeting (ed.), *Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (London, 1858), xlix-l.

¹⁴⁹ James Nayler to Anon. (Richard Mires?), Swarthmore Collection TSS, vol. 2, undated, FHL, 851.

the group if both were directly inspired by the spirit of Christ. Nonetheless, in practice, the 1673 epistle suggested that the authority of group discernment surpassed individual leading: whilst denying Christ's guidance was a matter for one's own conscience, the rejection of Quaker leadership could be judged outwardly and collectively. This encouraged the consolidation of a real hierarchy within Quakerism. Just as those who opposed the leadership of Moses and Aaron were swallowed up by the earth, 'the Earthly Part hath swallowed and will swallow up all such Opposers'. Quakers should watch against 'singularity... that will lead to make Rents and Divisions in the Camp of the Lord'.¹⁵⁰ Now, the worldly virtue of 'humility' (more than a theologically-charged desire for obedience) was required, as 'true and deep Humility is Real Christianity'.¹⁵¹

Changing Perfectionism, Prophetic Vocation and the 'Incantatory Style'

An emerging awareness of group identity was not the only change to affect the religious experience of seventeenth-century Quakers. So too, their understanding of vocation and prophecy was profoundly altered. In 1659, the Quaker Rebecca Travers wrote a colourful prophetic broadside, observing that 'Darkness hath covered the earth, and grosse darknesse the people, so you cannot see nor perceive... the signs that have been in the midst of you'. She directly equated the Quakers with Isaiah and Ezekiel, and rejoiced that 'we have his presence which makes us rich in want... and gives peace and joy in our sufferings... and the assured hope of our reward'.¹⁵² Travers was notorious as a close associate of James Nayler, having tended to Nayler's wounds after his punishment and hosted him after his release from prison, and this associated her with one of the boldest and most infamous expressions of spiritual ecstasy in English history. Nonetheless, Travers also went on to wield extensive influence in the Second Day Morning Meeting and the Women's Meeting, and in doing so, occupied a crucial role in the consolidation of Quaker corporate identity as one of the leading female Quakers in London. Travers was quick to repent after the Nayler affair, and she told George Fox explicitly that unity amongst Quakers was one of her central religious concerns.

¹⁵⁰ Numbers 16.31-33; Francis Lea, *Some breathings of the Father's love*, L766 (London, 1673), 3.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* 5.

¹⁵² Rebecca Travers, *This is for any of that generation*, T2064 (s.l., 1659), 1.

Moreover, whilst she remained connected to Quakers across the movement (including her sister, who was a follower of John Perrot), her later involvement in the Morning Meeting suggests an underlying sensitivity to the need for communal discernment.¹⁵³ Perhaps it was these personal qualities which allowed her reputation to recover in the aftermath of the Bristol entry. In any case, her personal journey, from radical prophet in the close circle of James Nayler to leading light in the highest echelons of the Quaker establishment, is a fitting metaphor for the changing face of the entire Quaker movement.

For, twenty years after publishing such colourful prophecy, in 1677, Travers found herself writing the preface to the deathbed testimony of fifteen-year-old Susannah Whitrowe, which was primarily authored by the girl's mother, the London Quaker Joan Whitrowe. Travers reflected that 'I have cause to believe [that Susannah found acceptance with God]' and that 'she was much raised in her Spirit, in the Sense of the Joy that she believed she was entering into'.¹⁵⁴ The tract went on to report that Susannah, a virtuous Quaker, detected the private prayers of those around her, received knowledge of God's positive judgement of her mother and negative judgement of her father, and herself 'obtained mercy from the Lord'.¹⁵⁵ These observations were intended to demonstrate her spiritual authority, which Travers clearly affirmed. However, whilst conveying her firm belief in salvation, she stopped short of absolute assurance. She merely had 'cause to believe' that Susannah 'found acceptance' – the girl herself merely 'believed' that she was entering 'Joy' – and this hesitation undermined the confidence of the whole account, when compared to earlier Quaker writings.

Might Travers simply have been tempering the loftier claims of the girl's mother? The minutes of the Morning Meeting reveal that Joan Whitrowe was specifically requested to submit the publication for review after Friends were 'dissatisfied' with parts that were 'not of service to the Truth'. After Travers herself reviewed it, 'that what is chiefly to [Joan's] praise' was omitted.¹⁵⁶ Joan Whitrowe's relationship with the

¹⁵³ Lotte Mulligan, 'Travers, Rebecca (c.1609–1688)', *ODNB*. <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/27672>> accessed 9 Dec 2016.

¹⁵⁴ Susannah Whitrowe, *The work of God in a dying maid*, W2039 (London, 1677), 4.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 8-13.

¹⁵⁶ Minutes of the Morning Meeting of Ministers and Elders MSS, vol. 1, 1677, FHL, 17-18. In her discussion of the death of Susannah Whitrowe, Phyllis Mack also notes that 'the apocalypse was no longer envisioned as a world turned upside down', but as 'that moment at the end of each person's life when the triumph over "the creature" was put to its final test'. This reflects a retreat into the pre-existing Protestant ideal of the good death as one in which the faith of the departed was central and explicit, and a wider shift in apocalyptic outlook (as discussed more fully in the

Quakers was tumultuous, and she left the movement sometime before 1689. Clearly, Friends felt uncomfortable about how she exploited her daughter's deathbed testimony, although, as Paula McDowell notes, her departure may also have been connected to her increasingly expressive enactment of performative prophecy, which put her at odds with the wider trajectory of the movement (she was called to prophesy in Bristol and London at the time of the plague outbreak of 1665, wearing sackcloth and fasting, whilst offering aid and counsel to plague victims). She may also have offended the community by denouncing Quakers who lived extravagantly alongside those in poverty.¹⁵⁷ Whitrowe was not in complete harmony with her religious community.

Yet that community was still willing to endorse her publicly – in a text that nevertheless remained largely 'to [Joan's] praise'. In this sense, censorship designed to manage Whitrowe's difficult personality cannot entirely explain Travers's reticence. Indeed, such reticence was not the only difference between this text and earlier writings. Similarly, whilst a judgement motif was prominent in the piece throughout, it was used as much to highlight the salvation and spiritual authority of Susannah Whitrowe *and* the righteousness of her mother as it was to denounce non-Quakers. The text began with Travers's observation that 'there was Judgement' but 'they are blessed that can stand in judgement', followed by an account of Susannah's own convincement of the Truth. Moving forward, whilst the girl cursed her father and his community, her judgement of him was continually matched with praise for the righteous Joan – and similar contrast was drawn between 'my heavenly Father', symbolising the comfort of true faith, and the earthly father, who served to remind readers of the judgement awaiting the wicked.¹⁵⁸ Even despite an explicit concern to censor excessive praise of Joan Whitrowe, then, the piece was still balanced more evenly between praise and negative judgement of enemies than earlier Quaker writings. This does not mean that later Quakers had a higher view of themselves than their earlier counterparts; clearly, that would take some doing. However, like Travers's preface, it does suggest that Quaker writers had become more sensitive to the

conclusion). Mack, *Visionary Women*, 393-96; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 460-8; Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England* (Oxford, 2000), 147-99; see below, 243-50.

¹⁵⁷ For a fuller discussion of Joan Whitrowe, see Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730* (Oxford, 1998), 157-9, 180-92; Phyllis Mack, 'Whitrowe, Joan (c.1631–1707)', *ODNB*. <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/45833>> accessed 26 April 2017.

¹⁵⁸ Whitrowe, *The work*, 4-5, 7-10, 14-20, 24-7.

needs of their readers. Enemies were still judged, then, but they were also courted – not only in the measured tone of Travers’s preface, but also in the presentation of several witnesses to the events described. Even the trenchant judgement cast explicitly against the girl’s father was presented largely in terms of Susannah’s compassionate prayers for his salvation.¹⁵⁹ Friends in the 1670s clearly understood the need to articulate exactly what Quakerism could offer outsiders – ‘the sweet Solace of the heavenly Life’ – and so, through a sentimental and harrowing account of a young girl’s fears and hopes for salvation as she lay dying, the Quaker’s curse of her enemies was couched for the hostile reader in compassionate terms of personal salvation.¹⁶⁰ In short, Travers’s own Quakerism – and moreover, the Quakerism of those around her – had itself become more observational, more introverted, and less confrontational.

So too, Frances Taylor’s *A testimony to the Lord’s Power*, published in 1677, was accompanied by a lengthy catalogue of witnesses to demonstrate how the community of the Quaker school at Waltham Abbey – and especially its children – reflected and channelled God’s revelation.¹⁶¹ Taylor presented the religious communion experienced in the school and expressed her delight that God’s presence was manifested primarily through the children, emphasising the joy of knowing God’s love. This was followed by numerous testimonies from teachers and children, most likely intended to corroborate her claims by the proof of multiple witnesses. Thus, whilst Taylor was still concerned to demonstrate the community’s intimate communion with God, she wrote to demonstrate Quaker spirituality, rather than enact it through her own witness. Her account was written ‘for the Use of Friends, and to prevent various Reports, that they may have a True Account in the following Testimonies, given forth by Faithful Witnesses’.¹⁶² This suggests that her motivation was to discredit detractors as well as to bolster Friends’ confidence, so her audience may have extended beyond the movement. Nonetheless, in the universalistic affirmation that ‘all, even from the least to the greatest, may be made sensible and living Monuments of his wonderful Work’, any

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 11, 40-5, 8-11.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 37.

¹⁶¹ Frances Taylor, *A testimony to the Lord’s power*, P683B (s.l., 1679), 7-71.

¹⁶² Ibid. 1.

potential opponents were addressed with open arms, rather than reproach.¹⁶³ This marked a persuasive style, in stark contrast to the confrontational and aggressive prophecies of the earliest Friends.¹⁶⁴

A less confrontational style was even adopted where Quakers had a strong sense of their own personal vocation. The Bristol Quaker Barbara Blaugdone (1608/9-1704) was described by one twentieth-century hagiographer as ‘the most militant of Quaker preachers’, and her early itinerant ministry seems to have been broadly prophetic in tone: she travelled in the ministry, disrupted church services and sought out personal audience with local secular and church leaders.¹⁶⁵ However, the language Blaugdone herself employed in her 1691 memoir (her only published work) was decidedly sanitised in its presentation of this ministry. She described her conviction in 1654 largely in terms of a behavioural shift, as she ‘willingly took up the Cross, and yielded Obedience unto [the Light of Christ], in plainness of Speech and in my Habit’, and the main motifs used to characterise her faith moving forward were of obedience and the preservation in suffering by the Lord’s ‘Power’. Blaugdone was ‘cleansed... by his Power’, and so made ‘a fit Vessel for [the Lord’s] Use’, whereupon she set out in her ministry – but rather than characterising this in terms of a provocative opposition to Christ’s enemies, she instead described ‘speaking’ with opponents. Further to this subdued tone, Blaugdone was also shy to make explicit claims to divine intervention: describing a storm whilst crossing by sea to Ireland, she recalled only that ‘although we had abundance of very Stormy Weather, yet we sustained no manner of loss nor damage; so that the Master said, He could never say before that he was in so much foul Weather, and received no hurt’.¹⁶⁶ This account clearly alluded to all of the key features of the early Quaker experience – confrontation, direct providence, the immanence of Christ – and perhaps she even experienced them in this manner at the time. However, by 1691 she was framing this early experience differently.

¹⁶³ A. Paterson, in *ibid.* 27.

¹⁶⁴ Richard Clark notes that, by the end of the seventeenth century, Quakers perceived a distinction (requiring different publication standards) between apologetic and polemical publications, and those meant for internal consumption. Richard Iain Clark, ‘The Quakers and the Church of England, 1670-1720: A study in ecclesiastical and intellectual history’, PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 1985, 202.

¹⁶⁵ Mabel Richmond Brailsford, *Quaker Women* (London, 1915), 160.

¹⁶⁶ Barbara Blaugdone, *An account of the travels, sufferings... of Barbara Blaugdone*, A410 (London, 1691), 6-9, 13, 18, 22.

Similarly, in the eighteenth-century conversion narrative of the sailor Thomas Lurting (1632-1713), the key moment of commitment to Quakerism – the point at which he truly aligned himself to the Divine will after an extended period of struggle – was simply the point at which he embraced non-violence.¹⁶⁷ Lurting told his readers that God initially opened his understanding, but he was still in his own will. It was only later that God ‘so far chang’d my Heart, that in a Minute before, I setting my whole Strength and Rigor to kill and destroy Mens Lives, and in a Minute after I could not kill or destroy a Man’.¹⁶⁸ Lurting claimed to be unaware of the Quakers’ commitment to non-violence before this moment, investing his realisation with an air of the supernatural – and to this extent, the narrative certainly maintained the spirit-led concern of the earlier Quakers. However, his understanding of his own transformative vocation omitted any hint of eschatological anticipation or deification. Furthermore, whilst Lurting still saw himself as a witness against the non-Quakers on the ship, this confrontation was accompanied by no sense of cosmic battle or urgent prophetic message, and was neither the culmination nor the primary purpose of his vocation. In fact, his convincement need not have affected anybody else at all, had it not been for the pressing matter of violence onboard. Certainly, his account could not have been written in the 1650s. The Quakers’ spiritual aspirations for the earthly life had been scaled down. Lurting conformed to a group vision through his convincement and conversion (that is, he joined a religious community) but this was not the same as taking up arms in the Lamb’s War.

Contrasting Nayler’s ‘unqualified exposition of the truth as he saw it’ in *Love to the lost* (1656) with Edward Burrough’s ‘Quaker point of view’ in *A declaration to all the world* (1658), Rosemary Moore succinctly describes ‘a shift from prophecy to apologetics’ in the aftermath of the Nayler incident, and in his discussion of performative and prophetic denouncements, Hugh Barbour suggests that by 1700, ‘weighty Friends regarded such prophecy as odd’.¹⁶⁹ The Quakers would not necessarily admit as much; in his 1733 letter to Voltaire, whilst explicitly discussing ‘prophesie’ amongst women, Martin Josiah claimed that the Quakers were ‘fixed in the Belief, that so long as the Church of Christ is abiding on Earth... God... will

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Lurting, *The fighting sailor turned peaceable Christian*, ESTC T55213 (London, 1710), 19-20. The prominence of Lurting’s pacifism is more likely to relate to his occupation as a sailor, rather than the indispensability of non-violence to the emerging Quaker identity.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 12, 19.

¹⁶⁹ Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 47; Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England*, 234.

never fail to bestow the Gifts and gracious influences of the holy Spirit'.¹⁷⁰ However, the Quakers' understanding of such spiritual 'Gifts' seems to have been understood differently by the end of the seventeenth century.

A similar shift is implied in an allegorical tale written by the Quaker Stephen Crisp (1628-92), published posthumously in 1711 to a warm reception.¹⁷¹ Crisp's *A short history* ostensibly had more in common with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's progress* than a Quaker convincement narrative, despite its commitment to foundational Quaker concerns.¹⁷² Crisp retold his spiritual journey to the 'house of God' in allegorical form, through realisation of sin, convincement and conversion, emphasising the futility of the priesthood, the religious hypocrisy and spiritual laxity of the contemporary Church, and the potential for transformation of the individual by following the Light. Thus, the narrator crossed the river (a symbol of water baptism) early in his journey, and with notable ease. He recalled his disappointment with his first guide, and the ugly interior of an outwardly charming house. When he confronted his guide about this internal squalor, he replied simply that he 'must expect Men have their humane frailties, and that Men were but Men'.¹⁷³ However, following the more qualified guidance of the 'Light', he arrived at a 'very Great House', called 'Bethel', which was 'Clean and Bright' inside.¹⁷⁴ This house was full of people living in idyllic Christian concord, demonstrating the first guide's complacency and the ability of the 'Light' to guide individuals to truth. The narrator ended by noting that he had been given a 'New Name' in this home, as the 'Name [I had] in my Father's Country' had been lost on the journey, and in a limited sense the publication might even be called 'apocalyptic'.¹⁷⁵

Crisp ostensibly retained the important tenets of Quaker faith. However, the imagery used to present these tenets was sanitised. The final house was a quaint place of rest and harmony. The people there 'were very

¹⁷⁰ Josiah Martin, *A letter from one of the people called Quakers*, ESTC T14250 (Dublin, 1749), 13.

¹⁷¹ Stephen Crisp, *A short history of a long travel*, ESTC N64443 (London, 1711). The work was reprinted over 25 times, in English and German.

¹⁷² For more detailed comparisons of the allegories of Bunyan and Crisp, see Luella Wright, 'John Bunyan and Stephen Crisp', in *The Journal of Religion*, 19 (1939), 95-109. Wright argued for Crisp's greater focus upon inner peace, contrasting Crisp's destination (characterised as a place of peace and 'harmony') with Christian's 'triumphal entry into New Jerusalem' in *Pilgrim's progress*; John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's progress*, B5558 (London, 1678).

¹⁷³ Crisp, *A short history*, 10-11, 14. The significance of this imagery is discussed further in Michael P. Graves, 'Stephen Crisp's *Short History* as Spiritual Journey', in *Quaker Religious Thought*, 81 (1993), 5-23, at 10.

¹⁷⁴ Crisp, *A short history*, 23-5.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 32.

cheerful, and lived very Pleasant Lives, and some of them told me they had lived there for many Years, and wanted for nothing', and their 'Discourses were exceedingly Comfortable to me'. The narrator had to become naked to enter, and was given a 'Garment of pure white Linen' to wear – but there was still 'Work to be done' upon entering.¹⁷⁶ Crisp's vision of sanctification evoked the pleasant fellowship of shared moral innocence and community-building, much more than the spiritual manifestation of Christ in (and therefore, the theological perfection of) the individual Quaker. Certainly, if there was a more controversial belief in literal divine indwelling bubbling beneath this work, it was well-hidden. The 'Light' did not relate personally to Crisp, or dwell within him, but acted simply as an *external* guide – and this suggested a quite different understanding of the work of the immanent Christ. Of course, this vision was not without controversial elements: Protestants in particular would still have railed against the notion of entire sanctification in this life. However, Crisp's protest against religious hypocrisy was a widespread concern of the early modern period and cannot be characterised as exclusively 'Quaker'.

Both Lurting's memoirs and Crisp's allegory demonstrate the diminishing importance of the prophetic vocation to Quakers over time. Gone was the sense of crisis and urgency with which the earliest Quakers proclaimed coming judgement upon their enemies (although Crisp was clear that salvation was only through the Quaker approach) and staunch moral conviction – an exhortation to piety for Quakers and non-Quakers alike – appears much more prominently than any prophetic discourse against a particular opponent. Concurrently, Quakers increasingly portrayed the movement as a moral beacon to others, rather than an expanding, proselytising mission. Thus, Joseph Besse wrote in his preface to Richard Claridge's *The life and posthumous works* (1726) that 'the intention of this work is to promote Purity of Heart, not a Party in Religion', and a letter (almost certainly falsely) attributed to Claridge himself in 1701 described the Quaker movement as 'the Purest Part of the Reformation' and 'the People whom God hath Raised up, in this Dreggy Age of the World, to refine it, and Restore fall'n Christianity to its Primitive State of Perfection and Innocency'.¹⁷⁷ This indicates a reputation increasingly connected to the Quakers' moral purity, rather than

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 25-28.

¹⁷⁷ Joseph Besse, *The life and posthumous works of Richard Claridge*, ESTC T116083 (London, 1726), sig. A2r-v; Richard Claridge, *A letter from a clergy-man in the country to a clergy-man in the City*, ESTC N18875 (Dublin, 1701), 11, 10.

their unsettling propheticism. Similarly, Besse echoed Crisp's emphasis on other-worldly peace and harmony (rather than on the prophetic visitation of the Lord) in his opening reflection that 'in an Inward Retirement and Waiting upon God in Silence and Humility, [the Quakers] have come to Experience Divine Comfort and Refreshment, and that solid Satisfaction of the Soul, which they could never attain by their own Willings, Runnings and Performances'.¹⁷⁸

So, Quakers increasingly observed, validated and justified spiritual authority, rather than assuming that it was self-evident. Distance was acknowledged between the reader and the revelation itself; individual infallibility was not assumed; Quaker authors were more self-aware, and provided testimonial evidence to support their claims. Following from this, Quaker writing became less characterised by direct prophecy against enemies – and still less, by the sense that one had entered an entirely new plane of being. The prophetic witness of the early Friends was simply less central to Quaker experience by the eighteenth century. This move away from exuberant prophecy marked the slow loss of the 'incantatory style' articulated by Jackson Cope: 'as Quakerdom passed on into the third quarter of the seventeenth century, this mode of viewing life as *scriptura rediviva*, like the "incantatory" style, withered and disappeared.'¹⁷⁹ No longer lost in the intensity of their own ecstatic experience, Quakers now displayed flashes of conciliation towards their opponents. 'Much commoner in all later-century Quaker writing, is a self-conscious analogizing through Scripture imagery which sounds only a faint echo of the immediacy of the same phrases on the tongues of the early Publishers of Truth.'¹⁸⁰

Explaining Continuity and Change

The story of religious experience in seventeenth-century Quakerism was, then, a story of change and continuity. Ultimately, this period saw Quakers become increasingly anxious with regards to their own personal experience, as described in Nikki Coffey Tousley's examination of second-generation convincement narratives: 'regeneration in the experience of the second generation is seldom the complete

¹⁷⁸ Besse, *The life*, sig. A3r.

¹⁷⁹ Cope, 'Seventeenth-Century Quaker Style', 749.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. 749.

victory reported by early Friends, and many authors have an ongoing struggle to remain faithful'.¹⁸¹ The Quakers did continue to claim an immanent divine presence. Yet immanence itself was conceived differently over time, reflecting the emergence of group identity and the loss of the prophetic and perfectionist vocation of the first Friends. Faith was now a process of discernment which could not be conducted alone. Individual Quakers sought to legitimise their own religious journey variously by a demonstration of moral goodness or the softer appeal to presence and providence (as opposed to the more dynamic, and therefore challenging, understanding of divine immanence expressed by the first Friends). The claim to prophetic inspiration was either deemed unnecessary or unconvincing.

What drove these changes? It goes without saying that the growing institutionalisation of Quakerism was encouraged by the need to regulate the Society's public image. This was particularly the case following Nayler's scandalous entry into Bristol. The impact of this incident is well-documented as a pivotal moment in the development of early Quakerism, largely because it became such a high-profile case.¹⁸² Thus, it radically coloured the perception of the movement in wider Society: Nayler was found guilty of blasphemy by parliament itself, and 'practically every anti-Quaker book of 1657-58' referred to his downfall.¹⁸³ The Quakers were clearly aware that his condemnation necessitated a response. Likewise, Fox's 1666-7 tour has been explained partially as a response to the increased persecution of the mid-1660s, and the Second Day Morning Meeting was established in the aftermath of the Second Conventicle Act in 1670 and the cancellation of Charles II's 1672 Declaration of Indulgence.¹⁸⁴

However, the need to foster an acceptable public image does not explain these changes alone. First, we must remind ourselves that the 'social respectability' model contains various internal inconsistencies, and many elements of the Quakers' institutional consolidation would have caused greater persecution or

¹⁸¹ Coffey Tousley, 'No Place for Doubt?', 14.

¹⁸² Peters, *Print Culture*, 233-51; Leo Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), 230-272; William Bittle, *James Nayler, 1618-1660: The Quaker Indicted by Parliament* (York, 1986); Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, 43-7, 132-3; Moore and Allen, 'Afterword', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers*, 297; Jordan Penney, 'Change and continuity in Restoration Quakerism, 1660-1700', MA thesis, Dalhousie University, 2005.

¹⁸³ Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, 43. For an account of the trial, see Thomas Burton, *Diary of Thomas Burton, Esq, member in the Parliaments of Oliver and Richard Cromwell, from 1656 to 1659*, 4 vols, vol. 1. (London, 1828), 10-175.

¹⁸⁴ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, 251.

encouraged heightened sectarianism. Yet more than this, it was stressed that any causal factor must explain the *exact* nature of the changes in question. Now that we have established a clearer picture of these changes, then, the limits of existing narratives are brought into sharp relief. For there is no obvious causal link between the desire to produce an acceptable public image and a changed view of divine immanence, an increasing valorisation of corporate discernment and church unity, or the loss of prophetic vocation, without other more fundamental theological changes first taking place. After all, what does the magistrate's opinion matter if Christ himself dwells within you?

Moreover, many of the trends noted above occurred long after 1656. Cope does not locate the loss of the incantatory style until the 1670s, almost twenty years after Nayler's entry and (perhaps more importantly) long after the increased persecution of the Restoration. Admittedly, the timing of some developments can be explained as a result of other specific challenges facing the movement; for example, it was also hoped that Fox's tour would raise Quakers' low morale in the wake of the Perrot controversy and the destruction of Quaker headquarters in the Great Fire of London.¹⁸⁵ Yet this does not explain why the vast majority of changes did not happen sooner, given threats facing the movement even in the 1650s. Neither did the Restoration put an end to apocalyptic discourse. Most notably, Warren Johnston has traced its endurance across denominational boundaries after 1660, identifying instances of Quaker apocalyptic even as the seventeenth century drew to a close; for example, in 1695, the Quaker Elizabeth Redford alluded to the pouring out of the vials in Revelation 16 to warn that 'the Vials of his wrath is [sic] almost full, and the Angel of his Presence stands ready to pour them forth', and in the same year Henry Mollineaux made an intriguing comparison between the behaviour of English monarchs after Edward VI and the characteristics of the beast.¹⁸⁶ Such instances do not compare numerically to the vast swathes of apocalyptic literature produced by Quakers in the 1650s.

Nonetheless, Johnston's research should warn us against employing artificial distinctions between the Quakers of the Interregnum and their successors. In fact, the Restoration in particular seems to have been viewed by some as a renewed opportunity. Thus, in 1661 Dorothy White triumphantly declared that 'this

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 251.

¹⁸⁶ Warren Johnston, *Revelation Restored: The Apocalypse in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge, 2011), 230, 235; see also 160-1, 173, 181.

is the day wherein the Lord is come, to establish the Kingdom of his glorious Son; who must Reign over all as Head', and addressed the Divine – perhaps even the Light within her – as 'my Beloved'.¹⁸⁷ White's epistle was characterised by the immanence of immediate revelation: 'thy King is now come to Reign, and to sit on Davids Throne again'.¹⁸⁸ So too, the vision which William Smyth claimed to receive on the 10th September 1660 was blatantly political. Smyth saw a cloud of darkness expanding and pushing against 'bright circles', eventually breaking forth and raising up briars and thorns, to which people submitted out of fear – yet a 'little remnant that stood in much innocency' would 'not come into friendship wth the Bryars and Thornes'. This 'innocent people' was persecuted, but eventually saved by an arm emerging from a brightness even greater than the dark cloud. The briars continued to oppress the remnant, but were eventually burnt and 'wholly consumed' by a cleansing fire. Smyth claimed to have received this vision a second time on 16 April 1661, 'Some p^{te} of it being fulfilled already'.¹⁸⁹ Given the ongoing political situation at the time – the betrayal of the Declaration of Breda and heightened persecution in the aftermath of Venner's Revolt – and the explicit connection Smyth made between his vision and current affairs, it is reasonable to interpret the episode as prophecy made *because* of the Restoration, not in spite of it.

Furthermore, the impact of the Second Day Morning Meeting – the most obviously political development of all – was ambiguous, and may have been less profound than is sometimes implied. Arthur Lloyd described the Quakers' internal censorship as a 'system which was more rigid and more efficient than that controlled by L'Estrange', yet despite stressing its importance, O'Malley recently noted that the Morning Meeting only rejected around twenty percent of submitted manuscripts, and only 36.1 percent of all Quaker publications were even reviewed by either the Morning Meeting or Meeting for Sufferings.¹⁹⁰ The minutes of the Morning Meeting also suggest that most publications were approved without issue, and it is also worth noting the challenge this poses to O'Malley's own supposition that changing Quaker style was driven by their desire for toleration – that material produced for public consumption after 1672 was 'supplicatory'

¹⁸⁷ Dorothy White, *An epistle of love and of consolation*, W1748 (London, 1661), 8-11.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 11.

¹⁸⁹ William Smyth, Swarthmore Collection MSS, vol. 358, 1661, FHL, item 50.

¹⁹⁰ In support of his argument, Lloyd notes that the Morning Meeting even decided not to publish anything written after 1676 in Barclay's collected folio, although the actual Minutes of the Meeting seem to suggest instead that Friends were simply keen to avoid repetition and idiosyncrasy in the printed works. Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, 150-1. Minutes of the Morning Meeting of Ministers and Elders MSS, 1690/1, FHL, vol.1, 132. O'Malley, 'Defying the Powers', 83.

rather than 'seditious'. That O'Malley does not acknowledge this challenge is a further demonstration of the powerful assumption in Quaker scholarship that persecution drove change.

Certainly, we might expect a loss of spiritual vitality when the faith was passed on to the following generation – not only because the guarantee of new Quakers made conversion less of a practical necessity, but also because those raised in the faith might naturally be less zealous. John Whitehead's encouragement of second-generation Quakers certainly implied the effects of generational shifts on the movement, and this distance from the initial insights of the Quakers would only have been consolidated as the Quakers began to write their own history. This marked the point at which the Quakers began to look back on their own development with a certain distance, albeit as hagiographers, and arguably demonstrates more than anything else that Quakerism had entered a new phase of being.¹⁹¹

In support of this assessment, Vann has noted that after 100 years, eighty to ninety percent of Quakers were actually the children of existing Quakers, and he assigns this high figure to a decline in conversions. This marks a contrast with the first Friends, who are likely to have been more independent: more than ninety percent of Quakers in Buckinghamshire and Norfolk were not converted in the parish of their birth – and, whilst these individuals tended to be similar in age and sex distribution to the general population, 'usually only one child from a family would become a Quaker, and it was almost never the oldest son'.¹⁹² Similarly, whilst the majority of the first converts came to Quakerism from a zealous Puritan background, converts in 1700 would have had little experience of the turbulence of civil war, despite the uncertainty of the Glorious Revolution. As Cope himself observes, their cultural expectations may well have been entirely different – and indeed, whilst the Toleration Act renewed the missionary zeal of Friends, those converted after the Toleration Act simply did not need to be so brave or confrontational as those converted before it.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ See above, 10.

¹⁹² Vann, 'Nurture and Conversion', 641.

¹⁹³ Cope, 'Seventeenth-century Quaker Style', 751; Vann, *Social Development*, 21; Clark, 'The Quakers and the Church of England', 221, 51. Cope is in the minority by explaining this change in terms of such a staunchly theological shift. As the introduction to this thesis argued, others (including Richard Clark) have suggested that it was an attempt to avoid charges of antinomianism or libertinism; still others imply that the change was purely intended to lessen persecution.

Thus, in 1692, London Yearly Meeting ruled that such persons as ‘refuse to submit to truth’s order, or to hear the church of Christ are to be disowned and testified against, according to Christ’s doctrine on that behalf’. This epistle may well have been compiled with the worsening Keithian controversy in mind – but it also gave lengthy advice to parents and even *began* by noting ‘how incident youth is to be corrupted, and how liable to corrupt and hurt one another by evil example and liberty’.¹⁹⁴ This suggests that assimilating the next generation was a crucial concern of early Quakers, and a major motivation for increased central regulation. In this sense, Niebuhr’s model of denominationalism has an air of truth to it.

Nonetheless, those Quakers who did not accept the Quaker message could always leave the movement. Indeed, there was a huge incentive for them to do so, given the persecution and social exclusion associated with Quaker witness – and it seems likely that many of them eventually chose exactly this path, given the declining numbers of the Society in the eighteenth century.¹⁹⁵ Yet the movement reached its peak in numbers in the 1670s, which suggests that persecution did not have the effect we might expect in the immediate aftermath of the Clarendon Code.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, and more importantly for our purposes, the changes in question also affected individual Quakers of the *first* generation: Tickell, Travers and Burrough were all convinced Friends of the 1650s, and therefore received their Quakerism through direct conversion, rather than from their upbringing. That they also bore the hallmarks of change implies that developments were being driven by a cultural or theological shift within Quakerism, beyond a merely sociological adjustment in the profile of the movement or the character of its members.

With all this in mind, this thesis contends that we must look to theological forces driving the religious changes described in this chapter. In particular, the eradication of initial points of inconsistency and radicalism which had featured in the early movement contributed significantly to the changing face of Quakerism. This was ultimately driven by a desire for theological coherence and respectability, rather than

¹⁹⁴ Edward Marsh (ed.), *Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends, Held in London, to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings or Great Britain, Ireland and Elsewhere, from 1681 to 1857, inclusive*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (London, 1858), 63.

¹⁹⁵ This was noted by Voltaire in 1733: Quakerism ‘dwindles away daily in England’, as ‘in all countries where liberty of conscience is allow’d, the establish’d religion will at last swallow up all the rest’, as ‘their children’ are ‘quite asham’d of being call’d Quakers’ and so ‘become converts to the Church of England, merely to be in the fashion’. However, some of this decline can be explained in terms of the emigration of Friends to America, particularly in the 1680s. Voltaire, *Letters*, 33; Thomas Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York, 2003), 28; see above, 30n.

¹⁹⁶ Barbour, *Early Quakers in Puritan England*, 231-2.

socio-political acceptance or reduced persecution. For vitally, unlike desire to reduce persecution, the desire for theological respectability could undoubtedly affect the views of first-generation Quakers, and contribute to existing sectarian tendencies in a movement. Moreover, it explains the specificity of the changes explored above much more comprehensively than the traditional narrative.

Cope himself (along with Hill) attributes the change to a growing Calvinist sensibility and ‘deep-seated pessimism’ towards the human condition which was growing amongst Quakers and promoted by the Second Day Morning Meeting.¹⁹⁷ Certainly, the Quakers did adopt an increasingly negative concern for sin: as Michael Graves notes, extant sermons increasingly emphasised the possibility of (and so, the need to avoid) sinning in the later seventeenth century, rather than the possibility of ascending to the pure state of prelapsarian Adam. Thus, in sermons of the late 1680s, ‘regeneration’ was conceptualised as the avoidance of sin.¹⁹⁸ Whilst this was technically also at the heart of early Quakerism, earlier Friends emphasised the eclipse of personal identity and their lives entirely by the agency of Christ. Now, a more moralistic and legalistic tone was adopted alongside an increased emphasis on the crucifixion and atonement through the life of the historical Jesus: ‘if they have Christ, they have the Benefits of his Death, and of his Blood and sufferings, they that have this Life in them, they are in the Faith, they are Partakers of Justification, and Sanctification, and Adoption’.¹⁹⁹

Yet this changing understanding of perfectionism is not obviously linked to increased Calvinism. On the contrary, it was characterised by a strong belief in the possibility of moral blamelessness. Rather, more foundationally than an increasing awareness of sin, later writings demonstrated a distinct mellowing of Foxonian perfectionism into the less extreme aspiration to moral innocence. In Fox’s description of religious ecstasy, he described how he was brought ‘even into a state in Christ Jesus that should never fall’, and the homage paid to certain Quakers, noted above, suggests that this was understood as perfection in the fullest sense of the term.²⁰⁰ This was a very different experience from Thomas Lurting’s own religious

¹⁹⁷ Cope, ‘Seventeenth-century Quaker Style’, 752-3; Christopher Hill, *Some Intellectual Consequences of the English Revolution* (Wisconsin, 1980), 78.

¹⁹⁸ Graves, *Preaching the Light*, 65.

¹⁹⁹ Robert Barclay, et al., *The concurrence & unanimity of the people called Quakers*, C5715 (London, 1694), 3.

²⁰⁰ Fox, *Journal*, 27.

breakthrough: the realisation that he could never again kill another man. Both expressed innocence, but the scope and pinnacle of that innocence had notably changed.

Conclusion

This chapter has suggested that a sense of divine immanence remained at the heart of Quaker religious experience throughout our period of study. Nonetheless, the Quakers' understanding of what this immanence meant – indeed, the way they analysed, understood and communicated their experience – shifted over time. This shift can be further characterised in terms of an increased corporate identity, the loss of the prophetic vocation, and a changing perfectionism.

Internal and external challenges to the Quaker leadership encouraged these changes, especially with regards to the changing tone of Quaker writing and the increased centralised control of the movement. Likewise, the natural passage of time and the inculcation of Quaker values in a new generation would have encouraged the increasing sense of group identity and the reduced exuberance of their religious language. Nonetheless, these factors explain neither the nature and timescale of the change, nor the loss of spiritual confidence taken as a whole. Moreover, the later pattern of censorship enacted by the Second Day Morning Meeting betrays the presence of a pre-existing, gradual shift in the Quakers' theological priorities, even in the writings of individuals. For example, as Richard Clarke notes, of the 131 publications written by George Fox and considered by the Morning Meeting before 1704, fifty percent written between 1652 and 1660 were retrospectively deemed unacceptable compared to only forty percent written between 1661 and 1670.²⁰¹ This pattern cannot have been caused by Fox's direct response to the concerns of the Morning Meeting, as the publications in question were all written before its foundation. Rather, it suggests that the trajectory towards the later, acceptable 'brand' of Quakerism had begun even before the institution of official censorship.

To explain why the Quakers' initial confidence did not provide them with the necessary assuredness to repel their opponents, then, we must look to theological forces influencing the movement. On this point,

²⁰¹ Clark, 'Quakers and the Church of England', 198.

the critique of Quakerism offered in Charles Leslie's *The present state of Quakerism* (1701) is telling. Leslie was an Irish non-juror residing in London, and had lived in hiding with a Quaker family in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution. Perhaps because of this contact with Quakers, whom he allegedly converted, he proceeded to write extensively against the Friends.²⁰² Leslie's critique was strange: he claimed that the whole Quaker movement had become 'Christian' to the extent that 'whereas Five or Six years ago, I Met with Almost no Quakers, who were not Quakers indeed, and Bare-fac'd Asserted and Maintain'd All Whole Quakerism: I can hardly now in all London, find One of them. They are become Christians, at least in Profession'.²⁰³ Leslie could not resist implying duplicity in this transition to acceptable Christianity; he asserted that the Quakers' intellectual elite had placed a 'Christian' gloss on the earlier views so that most actual Quakers had either left the society, or remained in disunity with their leaders (openly or in secret). Of course, this suggests that a large proportion of Quakers were actually as heterodox as they always had been – yet this should not distract from the central implication here, that Quakers (honest or not) bore increasing resemblance to the wider Christian milieu around them. In turn, this implies that seventeenth-century Quakerism was significantly affected by theological engagement with non-Quakers, and points to a desire for theological respectability, as outlined in the introduction, which warrants a significant corrective to traditional narratives. With this in mind, the remainder of the thesis will examine the Quakers' constructive engagement with non-Quakers over this period in further detail. This examination will focus on early Quaker Christology, and will demonstrate how such engagement facilitated a powerful theological shift within early Quakerism that can be linked directly to the religious changes explored above.

²⁰² Robert D. Cornwall, 'Leslie, Charles (1650–1722)', *ODNB*. <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/16484>> accessed 13 July 2016.

²⁰³ Charles Leslie, *The present state of Quakerism*, ESTC T63781 (London, 1701), sig. A4v.

II. CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT

Now I say, if there be any other Christ but he that was crucified within, he is the false Christ, and the Scripture hold forth this... And he that hath not this Christ that was risen and crucified within is a Reprobate...¹

Any investigation of changing Quaker Christology must begin with an examination of the earliest view. Of course, it is crucial to note the heterogeneity of nascent Quakerism.² We might expect diversity in the initial stages of any religious movement, but it is especially likely given the peculiarities of the Quaker situation: the message in question was inherently experiential and resistant to dogmatic systematisation – the attempt to describe a personal relationship with an immanent, dynamic and charismatic presence will naturally give rise to a variety of expressions – and, as the movement was spread primarily by itinerant preachers across a large geographical area, there was plenty of scope for individual license. Moreover, especially after the institution of internal censorship, earlier sources were edited to present a more moderate image, so that the early Quakerism of the historical record almost certainly appears less extreme (and more unified) than the early Quakerism of reality. Nonetheless, the itineracy of the preaching also involved a small core of individuals asserting spiritual authority, which would have tended towards unity. Therefore, this thesis supposes that general trends are discernible in seventeenth-century Quaker writings, despite the volatility of the early movement.

As mentioned in the introduction, Maurice Creasey provided the classic exposition of the earliest Quaker Christology as a dynamic affirmation of the present Christ – the radicalism of which he downplayed, by denying any metaphysical content to the Quakers' spatial metaphors.³ In contrast, the metaphysical implications of their Christological statements are central in the more recent work of Richard Bailey, whose model of early Quakerism is predicated on a recognition of later censorship. Bailey argues that the first Quakers 'did not disembodify the spirit'. Rather, Fox believed in a doctrine of 'celestial inhabitation'. 'Christ's [glorified] body was in the believer', and 'Christ was not distinct from the believer, their body or

¹ George Fox, *The great mystery of the great whore unfolded*, F1832 (London, 1659), 206.

² Bailey, 'Was Seventeenth-century Quaker Christology Homogenous?', 61-82.

³ See above, 39-41.

their spirit', so that 'Christ may be said to have been transubstantiated in them' (though Bailey accepts that there are 'dangers' to this 'crude analogy').⁴ Bailey distinguishes this view from continental doctrines of celestial flesh, as Fox 'did not share their concern about preserving Christ's heavenly body from corruption'.⁵ Nonetheless, he emphasises that the central metaphysical distinction of early Quakerism was between celestial flesh and carnal flesh. In support of this claim, he points to evidence such as Fox's miraculous deeds, Nayler's claim that 'Christ is not divided', and common descriptions of the inward communion in terms of feeding on Christ's flesh, alluding to the Eucharist.⁶

This chapter proposes an adjustment to both Creasey's and Bailey's accounts. It will argue that Creasey underestimates the metaphysical implications of the Quakers' spatial metaphors, and therefore the radicalism of early Quaker theology; Bailey is right to interpret early Quakerism as a more radical 'doctrine of immanence'.⁷ Nonetheless, Bailey diagnoses this radicalism primarily in the implications of a supposed belief in 'celestial inhabitation' rather than in their perceived neglect of the historical Jesus – that is, ultimately, in the Quakers' theological anthropology, rather than their Christology – and this chapter therefore suggests that he mischaracterises their metaphysical assumptions. First, he downplays the extent to which the early Quakers were suspicious of the 'flesh'. On this point, his understanding of their Eucharistic imagery is particularly problematic, as it does not fully account for the Eucharistic inheritance of seventeenth-century England. Secondly, whilst the early Quakers had similar beliefs about Fox and Christ, even equating the two, this was a subsidiary expression of the more central understanding that all individuals might be perfected in and through Christ. For most people, Quaker faith was not driven by an

⁴ Bailey, *New Light*, 77-80.

⁵ Ibid. 90. The two most influential doctrines of celestial flesh to emerge from the radical Reformation are associated with Caspar Schwenckfeld (1489/90-1563) and Melchior Hoffman (1495-1593) respectively. The more moderate view was articulated by Schwenckfeld, a German reformer who was troubled by the notion of Christ's 'creativity'. He suggested that Christ received his human flesh from Mary, but it was a glorified flesh which did not partake of her flawed creaturely nature. Melchior Hoffman, a Dutch Anabaptist, went further to argue that Christ's flesh was not inherited from Mary at all, but came from heaven and was merely channelled through the Virgin 'as water through a pipe'. Both models were motivated by a concern to avoid tainting Christ's perfection with the fallen flesh of carnal humanity. They were perceived to undermine the Incarnation and Christ's subsequent atoning sacrifice: if Christ had not fully assumed our flesh, how could the crucifixion atone for our sin? In addition to these startling theological implications, the theology of the Northern Anabaptists was also associated with social unrest and bloody violence since the events of the Münster Rebellion in 1534-5. However, celestial flesh remained a central doctrine of the pacifist Mennonite movement, and was also adopted by several leading Baptists. J. Denny Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist: The Origin and Significance of Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, 1987), 77, 83-91; Paul Maier, *Caspar Schwenckfeld on the Person and Work of Christ* (Assen, 1959), 33-6, 52-4; see below, 116.

⁶ Bailey, *New Light*, 47-74, 77-95, 80.

⁷ Ibid. 45.

affirmation of Fox as a messianic figure or avatar, but by a startling belief in their own personal and immediate access to Christ.

Therefore, the chapter will support Bailey's argument that the Quakers affirmed a complete presence of Christ in the individual. However, it will argue that this presence was ordinarily conceived in purely spiritual terms. It should be interpreted primarily in light of their regular contrasts between 'spirit' and 'carnality', taken in their simplest sense to indicate an opposition, rather than as an implied doctrine of celestial flesh. The Quakers rarely implied belief in celestial flesh (either influenced by the radical continental Reformation, or otherwise) but overwhelmingly sought to strip away any 'outward' connotations altogether. Moreover, this was a serious barrier to theological respectability: as criticism from the early Quakers' detractors demonstrates, this undermined their commitment to the historical Jesus, and had serious implications for their beliefs regarding the Trinity, the resurrection of the dead, and the atonement.

The Full Presence of Christ in Nascent Quakerism

As chapter one noted, Fox's initial religious breakthrough comprised a belief in the reality of Christ's personal, transformative presence in people's hearts, as 'the Lord would teach his people himself'. Through obedience to Christ's direct counsel within him, Fox claimed that he had come 'up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God', and 'even into a state in Christ Jesus, that should never fall'.⁸ This endowed early Quakerism with its apocalyptic character, in 'the literal sense of revelation': divine truth was unveiled directly in the hearts of the Children of Light.⁹ Quakers expressed this authoritative presence within them through their denial of personal identity, and denunciation of their enemies. Fox was not writing as a systematic theologian, then, and neither did he locate a single place for the role of Christ. Rather, Christ was the lens through which one's whole life should be viewed.¹⁰

⁸ Fox, *Journal*, 8, 27.

⁹ Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 3.

¹⁰ Maurice Creasey, 'Early Quaker Christology', 1-2.

Nonetheless, the implications of this relational belief became clear when the early Quakers began to express it in writing. In one of the earliest Quaker writings, published in 1653, George Fox wrote that ‘the Lord shall get up early to visit his Vineyard’.¹¹ Elsewhere, Fox spoke about the ‘Life’ received from the ‘righteous seed of God’, and the ‘word of the living God’ which ‘[flies] abroad to the light of Christ in all consciences, that with it the word might be witnessed’.¹² In these images, it was implied that Christ was both present on earth (in the human heart), and in heaven. A similar notion was expressed in the crucial and widespread distinction between the individual’s ‘measure’ of Christ within and the ‘fullness’ of Christ in himself. This was not a qualitative distinction. The ‘measure’ was no *less* Christ: ‘the least measure’ was still perfect, and one could be perfected so far as their personal measure allowed.¹³ Neither was a small measure of Christ less authoritative than the fullness that dwelt in Jesus himself.¹⁴ Rather, the language of ‘fullness’ and ‘measure’ was being employed to express the universal nature of the force – the Son of God – who connected all humans by his presence within them. It was this radical notion that led Lancastrian ministers in 1652 to accuse George Fox of believing ‘that he had the divinitie essentially in him’.¹⁵

It is useful to make explicit that the Quakers were not speaking merely of the conscience when they referred to the Light within them. First, they clarified an explicit difference between them, as the Light dwelt *in* the conscience. Thus, in 1665 George Bishop plainly described the conscience as ‘that Capacity in man which is of an Immortal Nature... which witnesseth to God’, as the ‘seat’ of the ‘Son of God’ who ‘is come into the world’ and ‘judgeth there’ (that is, not the Son of God himself, but his dwelling place within the individual).¹⁶ Secondly, the Light and the conscience differed functionally. As Hugh Barbour has noted, the guidance of the Light was often experienced as explicit, verbal commands – not simply as a vague sense or feeling of righteous action in any given situation.¹⁷ Moreover, the Light did not simply instruct believers towards righteous action but, reflecting its divine status, was the agent of that action as the author of all

¹¹ George Fox and James Nayler, *Saul’s errand to Damascus*, F1894 (London, 1653), sig. A2v.

¹² George Fox, *A declaration against all Profession*, F1784 (London, 1654), 1.

¹³ Nayler, *Love to the lost*, 29.

¹⁴ James Parnell, *Goliahs head cut off*, P531 (London, 1655), 12-13.

¹⁵ Russell S. Mortimer, ‘Allegations against George Fox’, in *JFHS*, 39 (1947), 15-17, at 16.

¹⁶ George Bishop, *A vindication of the principles and practices*, B3014 (London, 1665), 7. Regular references to the ‘light in my conscience’ indicate the same distinction, for example in Dewsbury, *The discovery of the great enmity*, 12, 22. This distinction was preserved throughout the seventeenth century, as in Benjamin Coole, *The Quakers cleared from being apostates*, C6047 (London, 1696), 76-82.

¹⁷ Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England*, 111-15.

good works. Accordingly, it would be a mistake to view the Quakers as Pelagian. Rather, the highest moral imperative for the righteous individual was the sacrifice of their own agency to Christ, as ‘no man is able in his own will, distinct from this light, to adde one cubit unto his stature’.¹⁸ The Light was a perfect and perfecting presence in human hearts, complete in its divine nature, and this offered the universal possibility of union with the Divine, as ‘[children] of Light’.¹⁹

This gave the early Quakers a distinctive understanding of the place of history in faith. Certainly, they did not deny the actual existence of the historical Jesus. Thus, Fox tells us of an incident in 1651, during which he rebuked the ‘Proud Quaker’ Rice Jones firmly for suggesting that there ‘was never any such thing’ as ‘a man that died at Jerusalem’. Clearly, this story was partly included to distance Quakers from such extreme views – ‘from this man and his company was the slander raised upon us that the Quakers should deny Christ that died and suffered at Jerusalem’ – but Fox’s claims do not seem unreasonable given the Quakers’ regular protests against such accusations.²⁰ However, early Quaker theology was *foundationally* motivated by their conviction that seventeenth-century believers enjoyed the same access to Christ as the early Church. Thus, Richard Hubberthorne described how the Quakers ‘walk in the pure light of Christ which shines into the conscience’, and claimed that ‘the power that we have received from Christ... this is the same power that ever was and the same Christ as ever was; and the same eternal words of God.’²¹ Similarly, Richard Farnworth encouraged his ‘Christian Friends’ that ‘you may manifestly declare your selves to be the Epistles of Christ, to be seen and read of all men, you that are in union and fellowship with him’. Farnworth understood these ‘epistles’ to be ‘written, not with pen and ink, but by the Spirit of the living God’.²²

All this led the Quakers to affirm that the Light within was ‘one and the same thing with that person of Christ’.²³ Thus, in a posthumously published epistle, Robert Rich elaborated that

¹⁸ Crook, *A defence*, 10.

¹⁹ James Nayler, *The light of Christ*, N293 (London, 1656), 2.

²⁰ ‘Proud Quakers’ were named such because of their moral pride; a later Quaker described how the group adopted ‘a belief that they may keep their inward unto God, and yield their bodies to comply with outward things’. It is plausible to view Fox’s account here as one example of the use of an exaggerated threat by Quaker leaders for political posturing and church discipline, as described by J.C. Davis (see above, 11n). Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 45-6.

²¹ Richard Hubberthorne, *A true separation between the power of the spirit*, H3238 (London, 1654), 1, 7.

²² Richard Farnworth, *Light risen out of darkness*, F490 (London, 1654), 3-4.

²³ Robert Rich, *A testimony to Truth, as it is in Jesus*, ESTC R470599 (London?, 1679), 8-9, cited in Bailey, *New Light*, 92.

it is the Birth of the Spirit (in all the Sanctified) and not the Humane Nature, that is the Saviour: Not what Jesus did... at Jerusalem, in his own Person only, but what he did, and for ever doth, in the Saints, as he was, is, and for ever shall be, one and the same, God's only begotten Son, the Word in the Heart..²⁴

Here, the challenge implicit in early Quaker belief entered clear sight, for when Rich equated the 'Word in the Heart' with the 'Saviour', rather than 'Jesus ... at Jerusalem', he inevitably subordinated the historical Christ to the Light within.²⁵ Similarly, Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill asked 'is not Christ the same now as ever, and is not the sufferings of Christ satisfactory where ever?'²⁶ Their understanding was that Christ's suffering – and so, the act of atonement – was ongoing within the hearts of individuals, and this implied that the Incarnation was emblematic rather than unique. Most striking of all, in 1660, the Quaker John Crook described how 'the God of all grace hath left in [us] a seed (which) as a confirmation thereof was plentifully manifested in his Son made of a woman in due time'.²⁷ For Crook, Jesus's authority sprang from the full manifestation of the seed within him, rather than the hypostatic union; the Incarnation functioned primarily as an archetype, to confirm Christ's nature as it more generally resided within individuals.

The Quakers' belief in an immanent and essentially (that is, substantially) complete Christ was confirmed by their performative theology. As chapter one explored, the high language addressed to certain individuals directly invoked the presence of Christ within the community. As personal identity was denied, so Christ's presence was made manifest – and it was this which enabled the use of the body as a sign to enact a prophetic message. Indeed, James Nayler later clarified the meaning behind his actions specifically on the basis that honour was not addressed to him, but to Christ within him. Thus, in 1659 he explained that:

for his sake I suffer all things, that he alone may have the Glory of my Change, whose Work alone it is in me... but to ascribe this name, power and virtue to James Nayler (or to that which had a beginning, and must return to dust) or for that to be exalted or worshipped, to me is great idolatry..²⁸

²⁴ Rich, *The epistles*, 81.

²⁵ See also Fox and Nayler, *Saul's errand*, 8-9, 14; Toldervy, *The foot out of the snare*, 21.

²⁶ Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill, *Answers to severall queries*, B5984 (London, 1654), 4.

²⁷ Crook, *A defence*, 10.

²⁸ Nayler, *A collection of sundry books*, xxxv.

In this sense, it was not idolatrous to address Nayler (or any other Quaker) using language appropriate for Christ. Yet this was only because such language was accurately being addressed directly to Christ, as he subsumed the identity of the obedient individual. In other words, Nayler's best defence was predicated precisely on his belief in a full presence of Christ – that is, a presence which one could appropriately worship.

Similarly, in his blasphemy trial at Lancaster, Fox himself explained that 'it was not so spoken, as George Fox was equal with God: but the Father and the Son is one: I and my Father are one; and where the same is revealed, this is witnessed... Let the same minde be in you that was also in Christ Jesus.'²⁹ The implication here was that the relationship between God and the believer was somewhat equivalent to the relationship between Christ and the Father, insofar as the individual was minimised and Christ within them was raised up. Indeed, it was in this sense that the Light was understood to be sufficient for salvation: Christ's work was 'to renew man again to his perfect estate', and 'by this faith' the Quakers denied 'all who say this light is not sufficient without the help and teachings of man to lead and guide in all the ways of God... for these are they who know not the voice of Christ'.³⁰

With all this in mind, we can conclude that Nayler's entry into Bristol was not inconsistent with the fundamentals of Quaker theology at the time, despite the embarrassment it caused. Indeed, his authority in the movement before 1656 may even have rivalled Fox's: in a 1653 letter to Margaret Fell, Dewsbury listed him before Fox several times, and a letter from Hubberthorne was notably addressed 'To Geo: Fox or Ja: Nayler' in 1654.³¹ Nineteen years later, the Baptist Thomas Hicks would consider the Quakers' reluctance to associate with Nayler, asking 'why they should not, I see no reason, except it be... his being too apt to blab out what others of them would have conceal'd though it be their own opinions'.³² As Anthony Pearson (a moderate supporter of Nayler, and never out of unity with Fox) rejoiced following his trial, Nayler had

²⁹ Nayler and Fox, *Saul's errand*, 5.

³⁰ Nayler, *Love to the lost*, 22; Nayler, *A true discoverie of faith*, 1-2.

³¹ William Dewsbury to Margaret Fell, Swarthmore Collection MSS, vol. 355, 17 September 1653, FHL, 130; Richard Hubberthorne, Swarthmore Collection TSS, vol. 2, 1654, FHL, 369.

³² Hicks, *A dialogue*, 79.

preached in the ‘highest Cort in the nation, that god himselfe is come down, to dwell with the sons of men’.³³

The Spiritualised Worldview of the First Friends

It might be tempting to conclude from the Quakers’ frequent reference to the ‘Light of Christ’ or ‘Spirit of Christ’ (instead of simply ‘Christ’) that they were viewed differently in terms of nature or authority. Nonetheless, this largely stems from a modern assumption that ‘Spirit’ and ‘Light’ are inherently derivative or less-than-fully real. Therefore, whilst it is natural for modern readers to interpret language of ‘the Spirit of Christ’ as implying derivation, we must consider very carefully whether the first Quakers shared this assumption. What, for the earliest Quakers, made Christ ‘the Christ’ in the first place? This is a metaphysical question, and requires an examination of the basic assumptions underlying the first Quakers’ descriptions of the indwelling Christ.

It is useful to begin any consideration of Quaker metaphysics with an evaluation of both Creasey’s assertion that the Quakers’ spatial metaphors contained no metaphysical content, and Bailey’s diagnosis of a widespread belief in celestial inhabitation. This section will challenge these claims through an examination of possible influences upon Quaker Christology (namely, the Eucharistic debates of the Reformation, and continental doctrines of celestial flesh) before considering the Quakers’ own positive articulation of their metaphysical position. It will argue that, whilst Quakers did refer to Christ’s ‘spiritual body’, they did so to stress his purely spiritual identity (as opposed to the ‘carnal’ or ‘fleshly’ body of the Incarnation). Their understanding of the ‘spiritual body’ was indistinguishable from that of a purely spiritual entity. Assertions of belief in celestial flesh were anomalous rather than characteristic, and must be viewed in the wider context of the Quakers’ hyper-spiritualised world view. For this reason, Creasey is wrong to divorce the early Quakers’ spatial metaphors from their metaphysical content.

³³ Anthony Pearson to Friends, Swarthmore Collection MSS, vol. 3, 18 November 1656, FHL 78, cited in Peters, *Print Culture*, 240. For an extended discussion of Naylor’s relationship to the wider Quaker movement, see Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus*.

Central to Creasey's view of early Quaker Christology was his supposition that the spatial metaphors of the earliest Friends – especially the distinction between 'inward' and 'outward' – related simply to the distinction between sincere and nominal faith, and did not convey any peculiar metaphysical position.³⁴ Of course, Creasey was right to note the moral implications of this distinction. The early Quakers were drawing on a biblical precedent which regularly contrasted 'outward' and 'inward' forms of expression, understanding, and cleanliness.³⁵ More recently, too, the Reformers had made this distinction a central part of their rhetoric: Calvin urged his readers to 'make [God's promises of mercy] ours by inwardly embracing them'. Nonetheless, especially in a Reformed context, the moral concern for what was inward and spiritual was interwoven with corresponding metaphysical assumptions. Thus, Calvin characterised the difference between the old and new covenants as the difference between spiritual and literal administration, and explained that 'the former he speaks of as carved on tablets of stone, the latter as written upon men's hearts; the former is the preaching of death, the latter of life; the former of condemnation, the latter of righteousness; the former to be made void, the latter to abide [II Cor. 3:6-11]'.³⁶

The metaphysical import of the moral concern for inwardness was demonstrated most forcefully in the Eucharistic controversies of the Reformation, which were underpinned by a Christological disagreement.³⁷ Luther argued that Zwingli's rejection of the Real Presence reflected a veiled Nestorianism, based on his underlying belief that a 'body cannot be in two places at once' – it is in heaven so cannot simultaneously be in the elements – which 'differentiated between the two natures of Christ that they have nearly made two persons out of one'. In opposition, Luther forwarded a stronger configuration of the *communicatio idiomatum*, whereby Christ's divine nature could share the attribute of omnipresence with Christ's human nature, so enabling the ubiquity of Christ's human body. Those Reformed theologians who subsequently became most influential were less extremely opposed to the Lutheran position than Zwingli, clarifying that

³⁴ Creasey, 'Inward and Outward', 7-8.

³⁵ Jeremiah 31.33; Mark 1; Matthew 23.25-8; John 6; Acts 11.1-18; Romans 7.22. c.f. Hubberthorne, *A reply*, 1.

³⁶ Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 'John Calvin's *The Institutes of Christian Religion*', transl, Henry Beveridge, 1845. <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.pdf>>, accessed 30 June 2017. For example, see 1.7.4-5, 2.11.1ff, 2.11.7, 3.1.1, 3.1.4, 3.2.14-16. Indeed, it is common to express spiritual enlightenment in spatial terms; one famous seventeenth-century example is George Herbert's observation, in *The Elixir*, that 'A man that looks on glasse | On it may stay his eye; | Or if he pleaseth, through it passe, | And then the heav'n espie.' George Herbert, *The temple*, H1516 (Cambridge, 1641), 179.

³⁷ AdHoc Image and Text Database on the History of Christianity, 'Transcript of the Marburg Colloquy'. <<http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/FullText.aspx?qc=AdHoc&q=3163&qp=1>> accessed: 15th June 2016.

the spiritual presence was still real and effectual – that is, not merely symbolic in a Zwinglian sense.³⁸ Yet the theological culture of Reformed Christianity remained more focused on the inward, spiritual realm than Lutheranism, and the two parties never reconciled.

The legacy of these debates in the seventeenth-century Church of England is directly relevant to our understanding of Quaker metaphysics in two ways. First, we must recognise that the Church of England's Eucharistic theology was primarily (though not unambiguously) a Reformed doctrine: it ultimately emphasised the spiritual presence, rather than the transubstantiated body of Christ or the sacramental union, and the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice over its repetition in each Eucharistic ritual.³⁹ Second, from the moment that Zwingli defended his non-literal reading of the words of institution, the Reformed tradition fostered a more generous capacity for the use of metaphor in theology.⁴⁰ Not only do these factors underline the inadequacy of Creasey's separation of moral and metaphysical ideas, but they pose a serious challenge to Bailey's diagnosis of 'celestial inhabitation' in the Quakers' use of Eucharistic language. As noted above, Bailey himself accepts the 'dangers' of drawing a direct comparison between transubstantiation and Quaker metaphysics – and yet, he ultimately retains this metaphor as a key pillar of his argument for their belief in an indwelling celestial flesh.

³⁸ B.A. Gerrish, 'Signs and Reality: The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Confessions' in B.A. Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Edinburgh, 1982), 118-130.

³⁹ The Prayer of Invitation in the 1559 Book of Common Prayer reads: 'The bodie of our lord Jesu Christ which was geven for thee, preserve thy body and soule into everlasting life, and take and eat this, in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feede on him in thine heart by faith with thankesgevyng.' This famously collated the 1549 and 1552 formulae to soften the unambiguous evangelicalism of the 1552 version: it now suggested 'a real presence to those who wished to find it' and yet 'the idea of communion as memorial only, in the theological style of Zürich'. This avoided connecting the host with the physical body of Christ, focused on the significance of the Eucharist as a spiritual communion – and as a memorial rather than a sacrifice – and ultimately reflected the legacy of the Reformed Edwardian evangelicals. The 1559 Prayer Book was replaced with the Directory for the Public Worship of God (which also stressed a spiritual presence through the Eucharist) in 1645, but was reinstated in 1662. As Judith Maltby has noted, the Directory was intended as a rejection of set forms of prayer, rather than proposing a new liturgy, and it never enjoyed widespread popularity. Brian Cummings (ed.), *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford, 2011), 137; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603* (Basingstoke, 1990), 26-7; Anon, *A directory for the publique worship of God*, D1547 (London, 1645), 53-4; Judith Maltby, "'Extravagancies and Impertinencies': Set Forms, Conceived and Extempore Prayer in evolutionary England", in Natalie Mears and Alec Ryrie (eds.), *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern Britain* (Farnham, 2013), 221-43; see above, 30n.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 2, 14-18, 66; N.H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity* (Leicester, 1987), 21-2. This phenomenon is also discussed specifically in relation to Fox's rhetoric, in Cope, 'Seventeenth Century Quaker Style', 726-8.

So, when George Fox asked, ‘do not the saints come to eat the flesh of Christ? And if they eat his flesh, is it not within them?’, it is fallacious to read this equation of inward communion and the Lord’s Supper as the expression of a belief in a corporeal presence, or an indwelling celestial flesh (as Bailey explicitly does).⁴¹ Rather, Fox employed Eucharistic language in a metaphorical sense to claim access to an inward, spiritual power comparable to that which his opponents *mistakenly* sought in the outward sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Thus, in his journal he recalled an occasion when he saw ‘through the immediate opening of the invisible Spirit, the blood of Christ... how it came into to heart’, whilst just a few pages later explaining that ‘the Lord God hath opened to me by his invisible power how... every man [is] enlightened by the divine light of Christ’, and declaring the inward presence of a ‘light, spirit and grace, by which all might know their salvation’.⁴² Similarly, when the Quaker William Dewsbury declared in 1655 that ‘the seal of the Covenant was the Spirit of Christ, and no outward element; and the supper was the body and blood of Christ, which the world doth not know’, he did so explicitly to express the alienation he felt during the ritual of the Eucharist – and indeed, just a few lines later, he recalled how he wept for ‘want of the pure spirit that David had that caused him to sing’. Language of Christ’s ‘body and blood’ was metaphorical, and was intended to direct the reader towards a more spiritual understanding of true worship, in line with the Reformed culture in which Dewsbury was raised. To interpret these passages as affirmations of a fleshly presence is to misunderstand the wider Reformed context of Quaker theology.

If the Quakers’ use of Eucharistic language did not demonstrate a widespread belief in a doctrine of celestial flesh *per se*, might there be other grounds for such a connection? Of course, the liturgical heritage of the national Church was not the only theological current flowing in England at the time. There is also some evidence for the Quakers’ general engagement with continental radicalism, especially through Familist connections and the ideas of Jacob Boehme. Evidence for a widespread Quaker affinity with Boehme is limited, as ‘only a minority of early Quaker printed texts and extant manuscripts show familiarity with

⁴¹ Fox, *The great mystery*, 181-2, cited in Bailey, *New Light*, 77. See also Fox to Barclay, in Robert Barclay and David Barclay, *Reliquiae Barclaianae: Correspondence of Colonel David Barclay and Robert Barclay of Urie*, 16 December 1675, FHL, vi, in which Fox used the image of Christ’s body in his descriptions of inward communion as parallel to the orthodox understanding of communion taking place in the Lord’s Supper.

⁴² Fox, *Journal*, 23, 33-5.

Boehme's terms or doctrines'.⁴³ However, there is evidence for some level of connection. Boehme's work was being translated into and published in English just as Quakerism was emerging, from 1645 to 1661, and certain titles were imprinted by the Quakers' own primary publisher, Giles Calvert.⁴⁴ It is not surprising, then, that various Friends read Boehme, including Robert Rich and John Perrot – and, in a Baptist letter concerning the religious beliefs of William Loddington, the Baptists of Reading state that Loddington 'was looked upon by all to be a Quaker, and sometimes a supposed Behmenist', suggesting a relationship between the two in the popular imagination.⁴⁵ More specifically, William Bayly wrote of how he 'heard Jacob Behemens [sic] books, and began to read much in them', but this 'gave not peace', and he found greater fulfilment in his subsequent conviction to Quaker principles.⁴⁶ Bayly's words indicate that he was influenced by Behmenism, but saw Quakerism as distinct from, and superior to, it.⁴⁷ Bayly's collection itself seems to have passed into George Fox's own library, along with copies of Henry Niclaes's folio (though not in English) suggesting that Fox was aware of both authors, even if he did not have a detailed grasp of their writings.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the early Quaker understanding of perfection in terms of the indwelling Christ, and Parousia as a continuously unfolding event in the hearts of believers – that is, their assertion that 'the coming [sic] of Christ is within' – strongly echoed Familist views, and Geoffrey Nuttall has explicitly noted the possible Familist influences upon early Nayler, which gradually melted into a closer affinity for what he terms 'apostolic Christianity'.⁴⁹ This led to regular associations between the two in hostile criticism.⁵⁰

⁴³ Ariel Hessayon, 'Jacob Boehme and the Early Quakers', in *JFHS*, 60, 3 (2005), 191-223.

⁴⁴ Carol Spencer, 'James Nayler', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers*, 75-6.

⁴⁵ William Russell, *Quakerism is paganism*, R2358 (London, 1674), 96.

⁴⁶ Bayly, *A short relation*, 8.

⁴⁷ As much was also suggested by the later minutes of the Second Day Morning Meeting, which decided that it would 'not be of service to the Truth' to publish an epistle written by Richard Fretwell 'to the Behemenists', explaining that the Spirit in which Boehme wrote was not clear and he 'lived in a great Mixture of light & darknes as to his understanding, and sometimes the power of the One prevailed, and sometimes the power of the other'. The attempt to limit any association is further evidence of an initial link, but also a demonstration that this association was not intrinsic to the Quaker identity. Minutes of the Morning Meeting of Ministers and Elders MSS, vol. 1, 1674, FHL, 1-2.

⁴⁸ John L. Nickalls, 'George Fox's Library', in *JFHS*, 28 (1931), 3-21.

⁴⁹ Hubberthorne, *A true separation*, 6; Christopher Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630* (Cambridge, 1994), 17-49; Geoffrey Nuttall, 'James Nayler: A Fresh Approach', in *JFHS*, supplement 26 (1954), 1-20.

⁵⁰ For example, Clapham, *A full discovery*, 11; Henry More, *Two letters of self-love*, ESTC N64274 (London, 1708), 39; Thomas Comber, *Christianity no enthusiasm*, C5441 (London, 1678), 72, 86.

However, neither Familism nor Boehme emphasised a doctrine of celestial flesh (if one was present at all) and evidence for early Quaker links to either Melchiorite or Schwenckfeldian ideas is limited.⁵¹ As noted above, even Bailey does not attempt to make such a link directly. Yet we would surely expect evidence of an Anabaptist association to be forthcoming (at least in hostile sources if not in the Quakers' own writings) if it were the central radical implication of Quaker theology. Moreover, reading Quakerism through either a Melchiorite or Schwenckfeldian lens is problematic from a purely theological perspective (although their writings clearly bore the hallmarks of the same concern to avoid tainting Christ with fallen creaturely nature). Admittedly, Quakers were reluctant to describe Christ as 'humane', and Fox explicitly referred to him as a 'heavenly Man'.⁵² Nonetheless, they also made explicit claims that the flesh of Christ was 'took of the virgin', so shutting down readings of the Incarnation which tried to attach celestial significance to the flesh of the human Christ before His resurrection.⁵³ In this sense, they did not affirm the importance of Christ's flesh whilst denying that it came from Mary – rather, they resisted the significance of the flesh altogether.

This thesis does not seek to deny that Quakerism was affected by continental Anabaptist ideas at all, or that they may have understood the presence of Christ within them as something akin to celestial flesh on occasion – especially given the vast heterogeneity of Quaker theology in the 1650s. However, it resists Bailey's suggestion that a belief in celestial inhabitation was the central insight of the first Quakers. Simply, we must not allow instances where Friends implied an indwelling celestial flesh to distract from the central point that they were highly dualistic in their worldview. Indeed, even where they did imply such a belief, what they affirmed seems not to have differed ontologically from the purely spiritual nature. This is reflected in Richard Hubberthorne's 1654 publication, *The antipathy betwixt flesh and spirit*. The very title of the publication demonstrated Hubberthorne's acutely spiritualised religious concerns – and so, his

⁵¹ In fact, Comber does also mention a Quaker 'affinity' with 'Swenckfeldians' alongside that with the Familists, although associations with Boehme and the Familists were generally much more common. Comber, *Christianity no enthusiasm*, 72.

⁵² George Fox, *A testimony of what we believe of Christ*, F1930 (London, 1677), 20, 80; Fox to Barclay, Reliquiae Barclaianae, 16 December 1675, FHL, vi; George Fox, 'For the Governour, and his Council & Assembly, And all Others in Power, both Civil and Military in this Island, from the People called Quakers', in George Fox, *To the ministers, teachers, and priests*, F1957 (London, 1672), 67.

⁵³ Isaac Penington, *An examination of the grounds... law of banishment*, P1166 (London, 1660), 11-12. See also, George Whitehead, *The divinity of Christ*, W1925 (London, 1669), 17, 34-5, 41.

distinction between ‘terrestrial’ and ‘celestial’ bodies, later in the same publication, must be read in the context of his obvious suspicion of physical matter.⁵⁴ Hubberthorne rejected outward baptism and defended the Quakers’ moral record, particularly describing true baptism as ‘washing away the filth of the flesh’, and identifying Christ (whom he did not explicitly identify as the historical Jesus) as ‘the end of the Prophets... the end of all figures, types, and shaddows [sic]’. Hubberthorne rejoiced that he ‘did fulfil them, for he fulfilled all righteousness’, and encouraged his opponents to heed ‘the light of Christ’ within them.⁵⁵ This drew further attention to Christ’s significance as an archetype and lawgiver, rather than as God Incarnate. The implications of this context are twofold. First, only the ‘celestial’ body seems to have been afforded any real value at all. Secondly, Hubberthorne’s description of the celestial body was indistinguishable from how one might talk about the spirit alone: he did not elaborate on its nature except to distinguish it from carnal flesh. Neither did this passage equate to an affirmation of the centrality of Christ’s humanity or the Incarnation. Rather, he was simply using scriptural language as a shorthand to speak about Christ in a spiritual *rather* than physical sense, entailing the essential superiority of the spirit more strongly than ever – and indeed, this specific criticism would soon be levelled directly against the Quakers.⁵⁶ Again, that is not to say that Hubberthorne denied the Incarnation or the historical Christ: on the contrary, elsewhere he drew extensively on Jesus’s life and teachings to argue against the former royalist chaplain and priest, Richard Sherlock.⁵⁷ Yet this was in the context of his fundamental assertion that the flesh was unable to bring forth ‘the fruits of the spirit’. Thus, Hubberthorne charged Sherlock ‘in the presence of the Lord to be in the flesh, and to follow the flesh, for who are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God’.⁵⁸ In this sense, we should view radical, continental theology as one influence upon early Quakerism – and especially given the variety of early Quaker belief, noted above, we cannot deny its

⁵⁴ Richard Hubberthorne, *The antipathy betwixt flesh and spirit*, H3220 (London, 1654), 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 1-2. Michael Graves notes that the tendency to describe outward forms as types and figures was one of the key rhetorical devices in Fox’s preaching: Graves quotes Fox’s account of his preaching at Firbank Fell, in which he explained how he ‘opened the prophets and the figures and shadows and turned them to Christ the substance, and then opened the parables of Christ and the things that had been hid from the beginning.’ Graves, *Preaching the Inward Light*, 87. See also Fox and Nayler, *Saul’s errand*, 8, in which Fox explained that ‘Christ in his people, is the substance of all figures, types, and shadows, fulfilling them in them’, but that ‘as he is held forth in the Scripture-Letter without them, and in the flesh without them, he is their example or figure’.

⁵⁶ See below, 148.

⁵⁷ Richard Hubberthorne, *A reply to a book set forth*, H3231 (London, 1654), 2, 4.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 8, 12.

significance (or occasional assertions of belief in celestial flesh) altogether. However, these ideas were ultimately subordinate to the wider influence of the national Church and its liturgy.⁵⁹

If a consideration of cultural influences upon early Quakerism does not obviously suggest a widespread belief in celestial inhabitation, what can be gleaned from the Quakers' own, positive articulation of their beliefs? The independence of God *as spirit* was clearly a special concern of the Quakers, as highlighted by their disputes with the Muggletonians. Thus, in 1654, Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill noted that the Muggletonian prophet, John Reeve, had queried whether there could 'be any living Spirit without a body, or person to display its life, in, or from, and must not the Creator of necessity be a glorious personall substance'. The Quakers responded:

That which is not possible with men is possible with God, which God is a Spirit as Jesus Christ saith, and a spirit hath not flesh and bone, nor a created body, but displays it self as it pleases, contrary to thy will, and the will of all men... and all those who worships God in spirit, worships an infinite Spirit, which Spirit inhabiteth eternity, and lives in the consciences of the Saints, and this is not to glory in an imagination, but a witnessing of the same eternall Truth... to the honour of the Man Jesus, who was yesterday, to day, and for ever.⁶⁰

In the Quakers' opinion, John Reeve 'declare[d] the living God, as if he were carnall, and a creature-like substance', whilst in contrast 'the Saints... said that God was a Spirit'. Throughout this dispute, Burrough and Howgill reiterated their belief that the true Christ was 'a spiritual Christ', and that God was 'invisible'.⁶¹ Also in opposition to the Muggletonians, this emphasis on God's spiritual nature was the fundamental basis of the Quakers' electrifying apocalyptic understanding. As Richard Farnworth declared in 1654, now Christ 'is coming in spirit', and

we through him have a free access by one spirit unto the Father... Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner Stone, and the chief builder in us and through us, throwing down the first building of humane wisdom, and carnal reason, building us up into union with himself... through the unfoldings of the divine mystery of his love, which is Christ in us the hope of glory, in whom all the building spiritually groweth, unto an holy Temple in the Lord...⁶²

⁵⁹ Of course, this has implications for any assessment of Quaker origins, as discussed above, 34n.

⁶⁰ Burrough and Howgill, *Answers to severall queries*, 17. For a greater discussion of the disputes between Quakers and Muggletonians, see Greene, 'Muggletonians and Quakers', 102-22.

⁶¹ Burrough and Howgill, *Answers to severall queries*, 9-10, 16, 18.

⁶² Farnworth, *Light risen out of darkness*, 8-9.

In this manner, the early Friends were uncompromising in their understanding of God (and Christ) themselves as pure spirit: ‘there is onely one true God, who is a Spirit’, and ‘we exhort people to the Spirit of Christ, and to his light to enlighten their minds’.⁶³

This emphasis on the unified, spiritual nature of the Divine also anticipated the Quakers’ ambivalence towards Trinitarian theology. The earliest Quakers themselves did not make this a central pillar of their message; they criticised the accepted Trinitarian language of three ‘persons’, as an unscriptural anthropomorphisation of God, but their principal aim was to stress divine unity.⁶⁴ Perhaps this led some Quakers to reject the doctrine altogether. However, Quaker elites resisted such charges – and even the Quakers’ critics noted their claims to believe in ‘God the Father, the Sonne, and the Holy Ghost’, although they contested the meaning of such claims.⁶⁵ Fox’s refusal to grant that God was ‘distinguished into the Father, Son and Holy Ghost’ was particularly often cited as proof of a denial, despite the fact that Fox immediately supported his answer with an affirmation that ‘God is a Spirit and none know him, but the Son, and he to whom the Son is revealed; the Son and Word is one’.⁶⁶ This suggested a distinction within the Godhead, or perhaps even a hierarchy, as Christ was viewed as the revelation of a transcendent Father. Of course, this was a crucial pillar of their defence of the sufficiency of the Light within for salvation. However, given his emphasis on divine unity, it is unlikely that Fox saw this distinction as anything other than economic. In general, Quaker language of ‘Christ’ and the ‘Spirit’ was fluid, suggesting that the Quakers viewed them as interchangeable: the Light was the full presence of Christ, but it could also legitimately be conceived as the Spirit, or the ‘divinitie’, as ‘God is a mystery... and he is but one in all,

⁶³ Edward Burrough, *A declaration to all the world of our faith*, B5995A (Aldersgate, 1658), 1; Nayler, *The light of Christ*, 13. See also, for example, George Whitehead, *The glory of Christ’s light within*, W1930 (London, 1669), 28; George Bishop, *The stumbling-stone and rock of offence*, B3006 (London, 1662), 7.

⁶⁴ Christopher Atkinson, *Ishmael, and his mother*, A4127 (London, 1655), 10-11; Christopher Atkinson, *The sword of the Lord drawn*, A4129 (London, 1654), 3-4. Notably, Fox’s first *catechisme for children*, published in 1657, did not mention the Trinity at all – yet his 1660 edition explicitly rejected the Trinity as an unscriptural invention. Therefore, this position seems to have evolved as part of their consolidation of first principles. George Fox, *A catechisme for children*, F1756 (London, 1657); George Fox, *A catechisme for children*, F1756C (London, 1660), 142.

⁶⁵ John Deacon, *A publick discovery of a secret deceit... James Naylor*, D487 (London, 1656), 13. Thomas Vincent’s account of his later dispute with William Penn and George Whitehead is also telling. Vincent claimed to have heard Quakers denying the Trinity. Penn and Whitehead disputed that charge, but were nevertheless fiercely critical of the language of persons, and the possibility of any division in the Godhead. Thomas Vincent, *The foundation of God standeth sure. Or... imputed*, V438 (London, 1668), 6-15.

⁶⁶ Fox and Nayler, *Saul’s errand*, 12; Clapham, *A full discovery*, 16; Thomas Welde et al., *The perfect pharisee under monkish holinesse*, C5045 (Gateside, 1653), 5; c.f. John 1.18, 14.6.

though ten thousand times ten thousand'.⁶⁷ Their focus was on the simple, unified essence of God – that was, a purely spiritual essence – which probably reflected a modalist theology.⁶⁸ Moreover, as implied by Burrough and Howgill's response to John Reeve, this possibly provided additional impetus for the denial of the hypostatic union, as the Quakers would naturally resist the implication that the manhood was united to the Godhead in its entirety.

This valorisation of the spirit, emerging from a stark separation of 'flesh' and the 'spirit', was ubiquitous amongst early Quaker writings and clearly permeated the Quaker view of reality. Thus, in a set of notes written in 1663, even fifteen years after his initial religious breakthrough, Fox listed numerous instructions to Friends which distinguished inward from outward. His first exhortation was to 'let not your knoleg [sic] be in the flesh one of another but in the spirit'. Yet Fox moved beyond the merely epistemological distinction, stressing that Friends should 'let not your soueles be subject to the lower power which is out of the trooth lest you doe bring destrostshones [destructions] up on youer one selves but let youer soles be subickt to the hyer power that is above the lower power'. He urged Friends to let their minds be 'spiratall', and focus on what is 'godly', 'invisable' and 'incorruptable' rather than what is 'carnall', 'visable' and 'mortal'.⁶⁹ Fox could not make it much clearer that he viewed this distinction in ontological terms: he was radically privileging the spirit.

So too, whilst William Bayly affirmed that the Light was his 'Saviour', he strongly portrayed Christ as a spiritual force – even suggesting that he might be conceived as a spiritual *language*, in opposition to the language of Babel – rather than dwelling on his historical identity. Bayly spoke of 'the light which is ... the originall, Christ, the true Prophet, which all are to heare... his name is called the word of God', and urged his readers to 'turne your minds to light wherewith you are enlightened by Christ Jesus the Saviour which lets you see sinne and evill'.⁷⁰ His view of Christ as the 'true Prophet' and as one who 'lets you see sinne and evill' also implied that Christ was a spiritual and illuminative force: whilst these were revelatory roles,

⁶⁷ Atkinson, *The sword*, 4.

⁶⁸ They would not have used this term, although it is telling that the Norfolk minister Jonathan Clapham began his criticism of the Quakers' Trinitarian position with an assertion that the Scriptures spoke clearly of a Trinity which 'is not a meer notional thing subsisting in the minde and apprehension of man alone, but eternally subsisting in the divine being it self'. Clapham, *A full discovery*, 16-7.

⁶⁹ Notes of George Fox, Swarthmore Collection TSS, vol. 4, 1663, 741-2.

⁷⁰ William Bayly, *A short relation or testimony*, B1537 (London, 1659), 2, 11.

they were not dependent on their connection with a physical person, or the historical event of the Incarnation. The historical body of Jesus was conceived as a vehicle for the eternal Christ – God’s message – not the hypostatic union of human and very God.

It is, then, through this interpretative lens that references to ‘the Spirit of Christ’, and ‘the Light of Christ’ should be understood – not inherently as indications of their understanding of the Light as derivative, but as demonstrations of their belief in the fundamentally spiritual nature of Christ. And therefore, it is also in this manner that we should read Nayler’s assertion, central to Richard Bailey’s argument, that ‘Christ is not divided’. Nayler went on to explain that, ‘Christ fills heaven and earth and is not carnal, but spiritual: for if Christ be in heaven with a carnal body, and the saints with a spiritual body, that is not proportionable’.⁷¹ Against Bailey, this section has argued that the language of the ‘spiritual body’ does not indicate a widespread belief in celestial inhabitation amongst the early Quakers. Rather, it was used metaphorically, and was primarily intended to stress the spiritualisation of Christ’s identity. In other words, the central point of Nayler’s argument was that, even in his fullness, Christ was fundamentally a spiritual being.

Hostile Criticism of Early Quakerism

The Quakers’ understanding of the Light within as Christ, and their common and deep-seated reluctance to grant the flesh (even the flesh of Christ) any positive spiritual value is supported by sources hostile to Quakerism. We must be wary of distortion and exaggeration in hostile sources, given the performative and dramatic aspects of any printed record of an oral disputation.⁷² Nonetheless, they are still useful. First, they highlight aspects of Quaker teaching which were downplayed in subsequent censorship, so helping us understand which Quaker principles were thought to be most important or controversial by their critics

⁷¹ James Nayler, *Memoirs of the Life, Ministry, Trial and Sufferings of... James Nailor*, ESTC T14157 (London, 1719), 7, cited in Bailey, *New Light*, 92. Similarly, at Nayler’s first trial for blasphemy, at Appleby, he was asked, ‘Is Christ in thee?’ Nayler unsurprisingly replied in the affirmative. When asked to clarify if he meant this in a ‘spiritual’ sense, Nayler again affirmed it. Lastly, when asked the difference between him and the ‘Ministers’, he suggested that ‘The ministers affirm Christ to be in heaven with a carnal body, but I with a spiritual body’. Fox and Nayler, *Saul’s errand*, 31.

⁷² Hughes, ‘The Pulpit Guarded’, 36, 40-50.

(rather than those elements which the Quakers emphasised). Secondly, they do so primarily at a local level, so allowing a certain distance from the polished messaging of the Quakers' ministerial writing. For example, in 1653, a group of ministers in Newcastle published a survey of the Quaker's theological errors, in which their first complaints regarded the Quakers' belief in 'equality with God', the lack of 'distinction' between persons in the Godhead, 'that the soule is part of the Divine Essence', that 'Christ is in every man', and that 'Christ in the Flesh... was but a figure, and nothing but an Example'.⁷³ These complaints all stemmed from the Quakers' spiritualised view of Christ, present in individuals as the Light within, and enable us to grasp something of the centrality of this issue in the Quakers' opponents' minds. Thirdly, hostile sources allow us to locate the place of Quakerism in the wider nexus of contested theological orthodoxy because, as will become clear, different pressure points were emphasised by critics of varying theological allegiances.

It is important to note that the Quakers were not alone in affirming belief in a 'Light within' of some kind. Even in Nayler's trial, it was noted that the Quaker belief that 'Christ dwells personally in every believer' was 'near... to that which is a most glorious truth, that the spirit is personally in us'.⁷⁴ Similarly, in reply to James Parnell's query as to 'whether thou art guided by the same infallible Spirit which gave forth the Scriptures', the minister of Abbot's Ripton in Cambridgeshire, Thomas Drayton, was happy to affirm that 'I am, I praise God for it, usually guided and assisted by that Spirit, which is alwayes infallible'.⁷⁵ Drayton himself was identified as 'perfectionist' by Jeremy Taylor.⁷⁶ Yet this did not prevent him taking deep offence at the Quakers' perceived denial of all authority besides the Light (particularly that of the Scriptures) and apparent belief that Christ had no independent existence outside individuals. Clearly, the Quakers' commitment to the historical Christ was questionable despite their distinction between the 'fullness' and the 'measure'. Indeed, when Parnell suggested that those who 'draw people to look for a Christ in a heaven without them' rather than witnessing 'Christ within' were 'reprobates', Drayton replied

⁷³ Welde et al., *The perfect pharisee*, 3-9. The Newcastle dispute is discussed in Peters, *Print Culture*, 188-90.

⁷⁴ Burton, *Diary*, vol. 1, 69.

⁷⁵ Thomas Drayton, *An answer according to truth*, D2147 (London, 1655), 3. Whilst this pamphlet was published anonymously, with a preface by 'W.P.', James Parnell identified the author as Drayton in *Goliaths head cut off*, sig. A1r.

⁷⁶ John Evelyn, *Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. H.B. Whatley (London, 1906), iii, 254-8, cited in Geoffrey Nuttall, 'James Nayler', 7-8.

that ‘I hope you will not deny, that Christ according to the flesh, was at Hierusalem, without us... nor that he is in an heaven without us’.⁷⁷ The offence caused by the Quakers’ Light within was not a result of the belief in itself, then, but of how they explained it – that is, ‘not distinguishing but confounding it with Christ’.⁷⁸

In response to Drayton, Parnell denounced him as ‘void of Christ or his Light’. He viewed him as inconsistent for accepting that ‘they that cannot witness Christ in them, are in a Reprobate condition’ and rejecting any claim to the Kingdom of Christ ‘[other] then what must be within’, whilst simultaneously denying ‘that all who speak of a Christ within them, shall be saved’.⁷⁹ Admittedly Parnell’s distinction between ‘Christ’ and ‘his Light’ implied a distinction between the two, but it was probably intended as no more than the distinction between ‘fullness’ and ‘measure’, for Parnell did not make it a prominent aspect of his defence.⁸⁰ Instead, he chose to dwell on Drayton’s own inconsistencies, despite the fact that he had essentially been accused of denying the Incarnation. The consequences of such an accusation were potentially huge, and yet Parnell did not take the opportunity to vindicate himself. This suggested that he was either reluctant to make a bolder distinction, or did not view the question as important. Either way, the status of the historical Christ in his thought was significantly undermined.

Once again, the hostile recollections of John Toldervy are telling evidence in support of this reading. Looking back on his time as a Quaker, Toldervy recalled that a non-Quaker associate had correctly identified his allegiance to the Quakers precisely when he asked ‘how does thy body do?’, reflecting that ‘as may be observed, we made a separation between Body and the Spirit’.⁸¹ From his later perspective outside the movement, Toldervy viewed dualism as so central to the culture of early Quakerism as to be assumed as a distinctive aspect of their theology. He recalled a Quaker explaining to him that he was sent by ‘the same Christ that the Apostles were; and, that the Person, that Son of God which died at Ierusalem, was not the Redeemer of Man from Sin, but the Redeemer was in every particular Man, that Light by which

⁷⁷ Drayton, *An answer*, 21.

⁷⁸ Richard Baxter, in John Tombes, *True old light exalted*, T1824 (London, 1660), sig. A2r.

⁷⁹ Parnell, *Goliaths head cut off*, 52-3.

⁸⁰ See above, 99.

⁸¹ Toldervy, *The foot out of the snare*, 17.

he was given to see Sin.’⁸² Finally, when he recalled his belief ‘that Christ Jesus that died at Jerusalem was a figure of me, and that I was the true Christ’, he was clear that he did not mean it in a physical sense, as this apparent awareness emerged from his rejection of worldliness in favour of the spiritual realm.⁸³ Toldervy admittedly left the movement under a cloud due to his unrestrained ecstasy. Nonetheless, his account reflects a perceived privileging of the spirit amongst ordinary Quakers.

Unsurprisingly, James Parnell did not escape further scrutiny for his ambivalence towards the historical Jesus; it was on these same grounds that Matthew Caffyn, a General Baptist preacher, criticised the teaching of Nayler and Parnell a year later. Parnell was accused of ‘professing a spirit within him, to be the only Christ, which he supposes was in the fleshly Body of Christ... and is NOW manifested in the likeness of sinful flesh’.⁸⁴ In fact, Caffyn himself would face repeated questioning by Baptist authorities in subsequent decades, on suspicion of affirming a belief in celestial flesh – a controversy which led the Baptists to produce a so-called ‘Orthodox Creed’ in 1678, explicitly rejecting the doctrine.⁸⁵ This demonstrates the controversial nature of these issues in contemporary theological discussion (apart from their implications for Quakerism) and the contested nature of orthodoxy in seventeenth-century theological disputations – but it also strengthens the case against the Quakers’ widespread belief in celestial inhabitation, and illustrates the threat that their spiritualised theology posed to the historical Jesus. For clearly, it was not an implied doctrine of celestial flesh which ignited Caffyn’s rage. Rather, he focused on the implications of the Quakers’ view of the *sinless* flesh of Jesus and their own *sinful* flesh as interchangeable as a vessel for Christ. To Caffyn, enthusiastic to preserve Christ’s own perfection, this was a gross spiritual pride and insult to Christ’s sinless body. Most importantly of all for our purposes, Caffyn also perceived a complete isolation of Christ’s body from his identity in Quaker theology – and this amounted to a belief in the indwelling of the disembodied ‘Christ’. This undermined the atoning significance of the Incarnation, as it was the sacrifice of Christ’s body that enacted atonement: ‘Christ testified that he was the light of the

⁸² Ibid. 7-8.

⁸³ Ibid. 21.

⁸⁴ Matthew Caffyn, *The deceived, and deceiving Quakers discovered*, C206 (London, 1656), 36.

⁸⁵ James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, Ga., 2009), 44-6. See also Thomas Monck, *A cure for the cankering error*, M2410 (London, 1673), sig. A 1r, which criticised Caffyn as a ‘Eutychiean’.

World, not the Spirit in him only, but HE as he was the son of man, the intended Sacrifice of God for to dye for the life of the World'.⁸⁶

Caffyn was not alone in viewing Quakerism as an assault on Christ's perfection, as reflected in critical responses to the notion of a universally indwelling Light – for if opponents were offended at the insinuation that Christ might dwell in the Saints, they were horrified at the possibility that he might dwell in sinners too. This critique comprised both moral and theological elements: the Quakers' own behaviour was fiercely scrutinised to discredit their own perfectionist claims, but their critics also railed against the more general theological absurdity of the notion that a divine indwelling in the soul might not sanctify the individual.⁸⁷ Thus, the Newcastle ministers were staunchly critical of the notion that the Spirit might actually be present in the souls of 'Turks, Indians, Papists, Drunkards, whoremasters, Atheists', where 'there is no... quickning'.⁸⁸ In response, Nayler emphasised the immanent Christ's role as a judge, as well as a saviour, for 'if Christ be not in the most vile in the world, there to see the heart, thoughts, and intents, how shall he judge every one according to their thoughts that come not forth into actions...?'⁸⁹ Yet this did not satisfy his critics: as John Deacon scathingly observed two years later, even Quaker behaviour – which Nayler would hardly include in the 'vile' nature – was 'rather congruant to Antichrist, then the true Messias'.⁹⁰ Simply, if the Light within was a measure of Christ available to all, why were not all reborn into the image of Christ?

Criticism of Quaker Christology was also expressed indirectly, as demonstrated by accusations that they denied the bodily resurrection, and identified the inward rebirth enabled by the Light within as the Parousia (rather than the eschatological return of a personal Christ). Such accusations were not without grounds. For example, in 1656 James Nayler spoke of '[t]he wisdom and power received from above, whereby the heart is set free from Corruption... which is the glorious liberty of the Sons of God, the resurrection from the dead, and the entrance into the everlasting rest', and criticised those who 'delayeth his coming and have

⁸⁶ Caffyn, *The deceived*, 6.

⁸⁷ Clapham, *A full discovery*, 49-61; Tombes, *True old light*, sig. B3r.

⁸⁸ Welde, et al., *A perfect pharisee*, 7.

⁸⁹ James Nayler, *An answer to a book*, N261 (London, 1654), 7.

⁹⁰ Deacon, *A publick discovery*, 14.

put it into another generation', for 'having forgott his coming' and 'persecuting him now which is come in others'.⁹¹ Likewise, whilst Quakers Thomas Lawson and John Slee denied rejecting the resurrection of the dead outright, they reiterated that 'thou must not see God with thy carnall eies, and... flesh, and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God'. They appealed to the Pauline description of a 'spiritual body' in 1 Corinthians 15 to support their claims, but were clearly perceived as envisaging something beyond the biblical understanding – again, emphasising their foundational suspicion of the body in any form – for as Caffyn mused, 'otherwise they cannot say with any pretence, that they are NOW at the end of Faith'.⁹² Similarly, the only specific teachings mentioned in an anonymous description of Richard Hubberthorne's preaching in 1655 were that he claimed to have immediate revelations from God, that he was sent to 'call such into the Light, who were in Darkness', and that he denied 'the Resurrection of the Body, and the Trinity or three Persons in the Godhead'.⁹³ This suggests the prominence of these themes in his preaching – and all derived from an underlying ambivalence towards the Incarnation. To their critics, then, Quaker theology was overwhelmingly characterised by a denial of the outward reality, which was pervasive enough even to include a denial of Christ's resurrection and second coming, and the resurrection of the dead. This was corroborated even by the Quakers' own publications, and should be taken as further evidence of the Quakers' highly spiritualised outlook.

This perceived threat was illustrated succinctly in a critique produced by the Norfolk minister Jonathan Clapham. First, Clapham was cynical concerning the Quakers' sincerity when expressing their beliefs. He complained that they 'will tell you in words they own Jesus Christ come in the flesh; so that if this will prove them good Christians, they shall passe free from this censure, and not be charged with it'. However, whilst they might 'professe in words to own Jesus Christ come in the flesh, and speak of his Death, Resurrection and Ascension... they do in deed and in truth deny all these things'.⁹⁴ Here, Clapham drew a distinction between hollow claims to Christian orthodoxy, and the radical implications of Quaker faith: 'if you... ask them, what Christ it is they own now in the flesh, they will confesse no other Christ but (the

⁹¹ James Nayler, *Love to the lost*, sig. a3r, 46-7.

⁹² Thomas Lawson and John Slee, *An untaught teacher witnessed against*, L729 (London, 1655), 22; Caffyn, *The deceived*, 41.

⁹³ Anon, *Quakers are inchanters*, Q13 (London, 1655), 3; see above, 111.

⁹⁴ Clapham, *A full discovery*, 11.

Christ of the familists) Christ in their flesh', or 'some... will grant, that God took that flesh for a time, but no humane soul with it'. In this sense, some Quakers believed in 'a Christ as is no real and true man', and all ultimately denied 'Christ who is a particular man, personally distinct from other men'.⁹⁵ Clapham claimed that the Quakers had 'said expresly [Christ's] flesh perished', 'utterly' denied the 'humanity or man-hood of Christ', and turned the outward resurrection, heaven and hell into 'allegories'.⁹⁶ In summary,

the Quakers deny Jesus Christ come in the flesh, overthrow his Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Intercession and coming to Judgement, and thereby pull down the maine pillars of Christianity, and overthrow the faith and comfort of Christians, and that while they pretend to be more spiritual (but are indeed deceivers herein) turning all into Allegories, and faining these things done in the true Christ to be but as a shadow of what is now really done in them.⁹⁷

Clapham accused the Quakers of undermining the hypostatic union, and subordinating the Incarnation to the present sanctification of the believer. These errors were intimately related to their theological perfectionism: 'they dare maintain equality with God, and the soul to be one being with God'.⁹⁸ It is noteworthy that Clapham mused that a 'corporeal inhabitation, as if the body of Christ or his humane nature dwelt in us' must be 'the conceit of the Quakers if they hold any man Christ at all, for they deny any Man Christ but in us men'.⁹⁹ However, Clapham concluded that they in fact denied the inclusion of humanity in Christ's identity altogether: perhaps there was some diversity of opinion, but the Quakers undermined the human Christ however they explained the Light within.

Naturally, opponents also used this fluidity of belief to undermine the credibility of the movement. Thus, in 1657 Richard Baxter complained that the Quakers' religion was 'an uncertain thing', as they could agree on little beyond 'a few broken scraps of Doctrine which they never yet set together'.¹⁰⁰ Baxter noted the highly confrontational behaviour of the early Quakers, which generated fractious relations with outsiders, as well as the implications of the Quakers' doctrinal volatility (and their 'false pernicious Doctrines') for

⁹⁵ Ibid. 11-12.

⁹⁶ Ibid. sig. a2r-a2v.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 15.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 19.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 22.

¹⁰⁰ Baxter, *One sheet*, 3.

their aspirations to theological respectability: ‘The very person of Jesus Christ many of them blaspheme, and speak allegorically and equivocally when they mention his name and nature, and so shew that indeed they are not Christians.’¹⁰¹

Conclusion

The earliest Quakers professed an electrifying belief in the full, spiritual presence of Christ within the individual. This belief was sustained by a view of Christ as fundamentally spiritual in nature, in which the Light and Christ were viewed as ontologically equivalent. This can be understood as an outworking of a Reformed culture of spiritualised and metaphorical understanding. There was not a widespread belief in the manifestation of celestial flesh amongst Quakers, then, but the implications of this vision were still extreme. In particular, they were perceived to deny the historical Jesus and the atoning significance of the Incarnation. Moreover, their perfectionism was denounced as spiritual pride. The extent of their radicalism is demonstrated not only by hostile sources, but by their failure to respond adequately to the criticisms of these sources.

All this clearly made relations between Quakers and their opponents tense. Interaction tended to be oppositional and accusatory, and was marked by a suspicion on both sides: opponents were reluctant to validate the Quakers by engaging them in debate, and Quakers perceived themselves as warriors in a ‘Lamb’s War’ against those outside the movement.¹⁰² Yet criticism still demanded a response, and the following chapter will trace the Quakers’ attempts to meet their critics, both negatively and positively, in more detail. Notably, the construction of such a response jeopardised their most precious religious convictions, especially threatening to undermine their central belief in the immanence of Christ. Theological engagement was therefore a balancing act which would precipitate significant shifts in early Quaker theology – and which would ultimately reduce their colourful belief in the total perfection of the believer to a memory.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 3-4.

¹⁰² Peters, *Print Culture*, 177-8.

III. THE EFFECTS OF THE BLOOD

...we do Own and Believe in... Jesus Christ... who was Conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary; in whom we have Redemption through his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins.¹

On 8 May 1660, the Republic once more became a Kingdom. With the return of Charles II, the boundaries of the religious establishment changed, and the Independent Erastian experiment came to an end.² At first this change seemed to bring new hope and new opportunities. For royalists, it signified an end to the chaos and confusion of the Interregnum. For nonconformists, Charles's expressed desire for religious compromise and healing offered the possibility of toleration – and indeed, for Quakers living in the English colonies, the Restoration did bring some respite from suffering: in particular, the new King forced the Boston authorities to abort their scheduled execution of the Quaker Wenlock Christison in 1661.³ Nonetheless, for English Quakers, this window of opportunity soon closed in the aftermath of the Fifth Monarchist uprising of January 1661 and the passage of the legislation known as the Clarendon Code.

As noted in the introduction, the effect of the Restoration upon the development of early Quakerism is disputed, and this thesis supports the argument that its significance has been exaggerated as a turning point in early Quakerism.⁴ Of course, it did spur the Quakers to reassure the authorities of their loyalty, most notably in their Peace Testimony of 1660 (despite the personal cost of pacifism, as many Quakers came from an army background). Yet careful study of the Quakers' writings over this period suggests that the theological impact of the Restoration was not significant. That is not to say that their theology remained static – but rather, that theological changes after 1660 reflected the continuation of trends which began before the Restoration, and can be directly linked to external criticism from the 1650s.

¹ Fox, 'For the Governour', 65-66.

² Jeffrey R. Collins, 'The Church Settlement of Oliver Cromwell', in *History*, 87 (2002), 18-40.

³ George Bishop, *New England judged: The second part*, B3004 (London, 1667), 36-9.

⁴ See above, 12-3.

This chapter will examine the Quakers' initial responses to criticism, noting the first substantial Christological (and in turn, soteriological) changes in early Quaker theology. These developments were part of a greater theological process, which should not hastily be attributed to the effects of political change. The earliest Quaker theology arose in an existing religious culture of Reformed Protestantism, and was guided in subtle ways by the harsh criticisms of those outside the movement from the start. This marked the beginning of a trend which would continue throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century, and was not displaced or hastened significantly by the events of the Restoration. Indeed, instead of interpreting these changes as responses to increased persecution, they might just as easily be understood as the first signs of theological collaboration and thawing tensions between Quakers and their neighbours.⁵

The First Signs of Change in Quaker Christology

As the Quaker movement became more established, some Quakers began to identify a more explicit difference between Christ in himself and the Light within. This process began with simple, verbal distinctions between the two – not necessarily implying derivation or hierarchy. Thus, in 1657 Edward Burrough reiterated that God himself 'is a Spirit, and his presence filleth heaven and earth', but clarified that he believed in Christ 'which was, is, and is to come, who is within us and without'.⁶ Burrough defended the Quaker position on the historical Jesus, explaining that whilst Christ 'is one with the Father, and was with him before the world was', he was also 'made manifest in Judea and Jerusalem... and was persecuted of the Jews, and was crucified... was buried & rose again, according to the Scriptures'. Nonetheless, he went on to state that 'the same that came down from Heaven, is ascended up to Heaven, and the same that descended is he that ascended'.⁷ This suggested a denial of any true hypostatic union, as reinforced by his highly spiritualised understanding throughout the piece, constant reiterations that God is Spirit, and reluctance to talk about Christ's body.

⁵ For parallels in the social situation, see for example Jonathan M. Chu, 'The Social and Political Contexts of Heterodoxy: Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Kittery' in *The New England Quarterly*, 54, 3 (1981), 365-384; John Miller, "'A Suffering People'", 71-103; Dixon, 'Quakers and the London Parish', 229-49.

⁶ Burrough, *A declaration to all the world of our faith*, 1-2.

⁷ Ibid. 2-3.

Burrough expressed a similar sentiment in response to John Bunyan, who, also in 1657, had accused Friends of denying the historical Christ.⁸ Burrough asked Bunyan whether he ‘mayst... not blush to say we own Christ no otherways then as he is within? We own him which was, is, and is to come, who is within us and without us... as the Scripture speaks of him’.⁹ Again, he did not support this claim with any detailed explanation of how this cohered with his Quakerism; the mere acknowledgement that Christ had an outward form did not affect his wider theology in any substantial way. Thus, Burrough sought to appease his critics, but resisted any explicit acknowledgement that the Light was separate or derivative, either in essence or authority. Similarly, in 1660, Whitehead separated the ‘coming of Christ in the flesh...to bear the Sins of many’ as ‘one coming’, and his ‘appearance in Spirit, to save his people from sin’ as ‘another coming’, but implied that the spiritual appearance was the greater culmination of the Incarnation throughout his publication.¹⁰

Of course, we cannot assume that such clarifications were exclusively made in response to hostile sources. A natural process of consolidation was also ongoing, as the initial excitement over a new discovery matured into the call for the next generation to learn it. Thus, in 1657 Fox wrote a catechism for children ‘that they may come to learn of Christ the Light’.¹¹ In this work, the motif of Light as a personal teacher was particularly strong, which perhaps goes some way to explaining how it might be sufficient for salvation.¹² Christ was seen both as the subject and the object of religious education. Yet suggestions that Christ and the Light were not entirely equivalent were much stronger in this catechism than in Fox’s earlier works. Fox urged children to ‘Heed the Light’ so that they might ‘learn of Christ’, going on to explain that the ‘light... comes from Christ the life’.¹³ Therefore, whilst the light had an illuminating function, Christ’s role in its entirety was greater. This suggests that the Quakers were starting to take greater care to distinguish between Christ on earth and Christ in heaven when they explained their beliefs. Whilst Fox’s catechism may have had an educational role, then, it was also responding to the criticisms of opponents – consciously or otherwise. Yet in different passages even in the same publication, Fox still seemed to equate Christ with

⁸ John Bunyan, *A vindication of the book*, B5606 (London, 1657), 2-4.

⁹ Edward Burrough, *Truth (the strongest of all) witnessed*, B6051 (London, 1657), 14.

¹⁰ George Whitehead, *The authority of the true ministry*, W1892 (London, 1660), 2-3, 11, 14.

¹¹ George Fox, *A catechisme* (1658), sig. A1r.

¹² Ibid. 6-8; Richard Hubberthorne, *The light of Christ within*, H3227 (London, 1660), 12.

¹³ Fox, *A catechisme* (1658), 52-53.

the Light more directly, speaking for example of ‘the light which is Christ, which doth enlighten every man’.¹⁴ This demonstrates that his position on the matter was neither finalised nor consistent. Whilst the overall direction of travel was towards a view of the Light somehow as deriving from ‘Christ’ in himself, such a view was far from settled.

Likewise, in 1660, Samuel Fisher implied a relationship of derivation by stating that there was no other way to salvation than through ‘Jesus Christ the Light of the world, by some measure of Light at least shining from himself’.¹⁵ Thus, the Light and Christ were not entirely equivalent, and ‘all that obtain justification, are justified freely, by the grace of the Lord through the Redemption that is made in Jesus Christ alone’.¹⁶ Fisher also clarified that whilst ‘Christ himself... is known to be in all that are not Reprobates’, this did not mean that he was ‘in all men’ – for some had only the ‘measure’, although there ‘is no difference, but what is made by different degrees of light, which do not vary the nature of the thing’. Similarly, ‘We do not affirm Christ himself to be in all men; ... nevertheless all... have some measure or other of his light’.¹⁷ This strengthened the distinction between ‘fullness’ and ‘measure’, thus reinforcing the growing distinction between the Light and Christ. Fisher died of the plague in 1665, and perhaps this distinction would have been made stronger – and his impact on the trajectory of Quaker theology greater – if he had lived longer. Yet as a Quaker in the early 1660s, Fisher still stressed the universality of the Light, emphasised that Christ’s teachings recorded in the New Testament existed from the beginning (rather than being a ‘new thing’), and reiterated the indispensable role of personal righteousness in salvation as ‘there is in no wise any remission of sins unto those, who still accustome themselves to a dayly commission of them’.¹⁸ Furthermore, whilst Fisher’s careful use of language suggests an acute awareness of the need to stress derivation, he continued to emphasise the spiritual identity of Christ as a vital element of his theology,

¹⁴ Ibid. 3.

¹⁵ Samuel Fisher, *Christ’s light springing*, F1050 (s.l., 1660), 4-5.

¹⁶ Ibid. 5.

¹⁷ Ibid. 10; Samuel Fisher, *The testimony of truth exalted*, F1058 (London?, 1679), 783, cited in Hill, *WTUD*, 260. This was almost certainly a response to criticism of the belief that Christ himself might dwell in sinners; see above, 117-8.

¹⁸ Fisher, *Christ’s light*, 2, 8.

referring to ‘the Light within, that comes from, and leads to the Lord himself, Christ Jesus, that Spirit, in whom only the vail is done away’.¹⁹

Therefore, an emphasis on the distinction between inward and outward – Christ within and Christ without – was not enough to reconcile Quaker principles with those of their critics. In fact, on the contrary, such a distinction could even be employed to stress the unique importance of the Light within more boldly, as in the writings of Isaac Penington the Younger (1619-79) – the son of Sir Isaac Penington, a prominent republican and the former Lord Mayor of London. Penington had written several tracts against the use of outward forms in religion before his convincement in 1658, and continued to make the inward-outward dichotomy a bedrock of his theology as a Friend.²⁰ As demonstrated in chapter two, the exact implications of language of ‘inward’ and ‘outward’ can be ambiguous, and it is true that Penington’s usage was partly directed towards an epistemological concern, as he identified ‘true knowledge’ of God at the heart of the religious life, and ‘all the true knowledge... that ever ye had of God’ as flowing directly from ‘a light within’.²¹ Outward forms were not spiritually valuable in themselves: they were merely vessels for the spiritual reality, and valuing them too highly was spiritually corrupting. True knowledge was characterised by its authenticity as a route to communion with God, and ‘faith’ should be understood as a ‘pure mystery’, in contrast with natural modes of understanding.²² Penington’s main concern was, then, to discern the right way of living: ‘a Christian is to be a follower of Christ, and consequently must have the same rule to walk by as Christ had’.²³ Yet his theology, encapsulated in this statement, also contained a radical element. First, it suggested that the historical Christ was guided by a rule, rather than being the rule in his own right. Secondly, the Light which guided the specific person of Jesus of Nazareth was identified as the same Light which could guide the ‘Christian’ in the present time.

¹⁹ Fisher, *Rusticos*, 101.

²⁰ Richard L. Greaves, ‘Penington, Isaac (1616–1679)’, *ODNB*. <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/21841>> accessed 20 June 2016.

²¹ Isaac Penington, *The Jew outward*, P1174 (London, 1659), 25. See also Isaac Penington, *A treatise concerning God’s teachings* (ca. 1671), in *The Works of Isaac Penington: A Minister of the Gospel in the Society of Friends: Including His Collected Letters*, 4 vols (Memphis: General Books LLC, 1999-2012 [1681]), vol. 4, 229-62, at 233, 242-4.

²² Isaac Penington, *A short catechism for the sake of the simple-hearted*, ESTC T175861 (London, 1760), 18.

²³ Isaac Penington, *The way of life and death*, P1219 (London, 1658), 10.

Perhaps Penington spoke more explicitly of Jesus of Nazareth than earlier Friends. Indeed, in a letter to a certain Richard Roberts, he recalled that ‘Timothy Fly, the Anabaptist teacher, did charge me with denying Christ’s humanity, and also the blood of Christ’, and in response, Penington reiterated that Christ was ‘born of the Virgin Mary’ and that he did ‘greatly value that flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ’.²⁴ Nonetheless, his commitment to a strong distinction between ‘inward’ and ‘outward’ seems to have moved beyond the distinction between notional and sincere faith, to associate the flesh itself almost entirely with what was superficial and empty. Thus, in 1660, Penington suggested that Christ in the flesh was a middle stage between the law and his final appearance:

[Quakers] distinguish, according to the Scriptures, between that which is called the Christ, and the bodily garment which he took. The one was flesh, the other spirit. “The flesh profiteth nothing (saith he), the spirit quickeneth; and he that eateth me shall live by me, even as I live by the Father.” John 6:57, 63. This is the manna itself... the other, but the visible or earthen vessel which held it. The body of flesh was but the veil. Heb 10:20. The eternal life was the substance veiled. The one he did partake of, as the rest of the children did; the other was he which did partake thereof... The one was the body which was prepared for the life... The other was the life, or light itself, for whom the body was prepared...²⁵

Elsewhere, Penington described how even in his Incarnation, the ‘children of true wisdom... saw through the veil of [Jesus’s] flesh, and beheld him as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth’, and conceived of the Light within as Christ’s appearance ‘without any veil, without any outward types or shadows of the glory to be revealed’.²⁶ Penington was not necessarily challenging the humanity of Christ’s human flesh – a docetic position – as much as isolating that flesh from Christ’s identity altogether, but the theological problem was not dissimilar. If what was good was equated solely with the ‘inward’, how could the outward death of Christ be in any way necessary to the faith of a Christian?²⁷ And indeed, if fleshly nature – the garment – was irrelevant, or even irredeemably negative, why would Christ appropriate it? The historical Jesus of Nazareth remained a mere exemplar – or even a type, or figure, of the sanctification

²⁴ Isaac Penington, *Letters of Isaac Penington, the Greater Part Not Before Published*, ed. John Barclay (London, 1828), 290-1.

²⁵ Penington, *An examination*, 12.

²⁶ Penington, *Life and immortality*, in *Works*, vol. 4, 75-82.

²⁷ In contrast, Creasey suggested that any shortcomings in Penington’s view reflected a weakness in the model rather than the message itself. In doing so, he underplayed the heterodoxy of the Quaker position, and the extent to which they were concerned to correct it. Creasey, ‘Early Quaker Christology’, 2, 334-35.

which would take place in faithful hearts. Indeed, Penington himself summarised that ‘Christ is the head, his saints the body; and do they not all partake of one nature, one Spirit, one virtue, one life, one righteousness?’²⁸ Even as he attempted to single out Christ as the head of the saints, then, he asserted that saints and Christ alike were transformed by participation in the same spiritual reality. In distinguishing between inward and outward reality more explicitly than earlier Quakers, whilst remaining committed to the priority on inward reality, Penington only undermined the historical Christ more dramatically.

The approach of George Bishop (d.1668) might have offered a more coherent refinement of the early Quakers’ general theological concerns. Bishop was the son of a freeman of Bristol and had served as a captain in the New Model Army prior to his conviction as a Quaker. As a well-educated and influential public figure, he was clearly sensitive to the Christological challenges facing the Quakers if they were to be judged adequately ‘Christian’ by their opponents.²⁹ Thus, in 1662, Bishop strongly affirmed the integrity and atoning role of Christ’s physical body. He considered the phrase ‘body of Christ’ to refer either to ‘his Body the Church’ or ‘The Body which was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory... the Glory of the onely begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth: which was made of a Woman... to redeem... that we might receive the adoption of Sons’.³⁰ Bishop clearly sought to demonstrate the theological respectability of Quakerism, both ecclesologically and Christologically. So, he asserted that Christ now sat in heaven ‘in the very Same Body’, even if ‘as for Flesh, Blood, and Bones; that is to say, that which being in the World is maintained, or lives by that which is of the World, as Meat, Drink, &c. that is not suitable to the Estate of a Spirit or of a Spiritual Body, nor a thing to be conceived as in the Resurrection’.³¹ Here, Bishop drew on Pauline descriptions of the resurrected spiritual body in 1 Corinthians 15, to affirm that the glorified Christ now dwelt in heaven in his human (albeit transformed) body.

Elsewhere, Bishop affirmed the unity of Christ and the Light, stating that ‘by the word Light, and the Light within we mean Christ the Light’, yet explicitly distinguished between Christ and the Light in his bold

²⁸ Penington, *A treatise*, in *Works*, vol. 4, 245.

²⁹ Feola, Maryann S. ‘Bishop, George (d.1668)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press (2004). <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/37195?docPos=2>> accessed 13 June 2017.

³⁰ George Bishop, *A treatise concerning the resurrection*, B3012 (s.l., 1662), 6.

³¹ *Ibid.* 9.

statement that ‘Christ and the light which is within are not two, but one; yet are they not so One as that where Christ is, there is the Body that suffered at Jerusalem’.³² Perhaps this echoed the so-called *extra calvinisticum* – Calvin’s notion that the activity and presence of Christ operates *etiam extra carnem* (even outside of the flesh), rejecting the view that Christ had merely assumed a body in the Incarnation, and so the idea that Christ’s real humanity limited an infinite God within the limitations of a given place – although Bishop was not explicit in this regard.³³ In any case, this statement was clearly made in direct response to those who accused the Quakers of denying the Incarnation. However, he still did not articulate the exact relationship between the Light and Christ in himself, or how belief in the absolute authority of the inward Light could be reconciled with affirmation of a unified Christ.

In all these cases, it is vital to recognise that asserting the importance of the historical Jesus more strongly risked undermining the Quakers’ commitment to Christ’s total immanence. In this sense, the Quakers were between a rock and a hard place – and therefore, it is unsurprising that not all their attempts to find an adequate theological framework resembled mere platitudes directed at the established Church. Instead, some Quakers capitalised on their ‘outsider’ status and spiritualised understanding of Christ, to foster more unusual opportunities and associations. The connection between Collegiant and Quaker communities in Holland during the 1650s and 1660s is particularly worth investigating. Collegiants were the ‘prime targets’ for the earliest Quaker activity in the Netherlands, which began with the 1653 mission led by William Caton (1636-1665) and John Stubbs (c.1618-1675) and was consolidated by William Ames (d.1662).³⁴ Both groups spoke of the illuminative presence of a Light within, making such an association natural. However, relations between them gradually turned sour, before descending into open dispute in 1660. Scholarship has examined the tensions which later arose between the two communities in some detail: Van den Berg has noted the Collegiant millenarian emphasis (as opposed to the Quakers’ assertion that they already enjoyed Christ’s direct, spiritual inspiration) and, as Andrew Fix notes, the Collegiants increasingly equated the Light with reason, so further opposing the apparent spiritualist enthusiasm of the Friends.

³² George Bishop, *A vindication of the principles... Quakers*, B3014 (s.l., 1665), 11, 15.

³³ Heiko Oberman, ‘The ‘extra’ dimension in the theology of Calvin’, in *JEH*, 21 (1970), 43-64, at 55.

³⁴ Andrew C. Fix, *Prophecy and Reason* (Princeton, 1991), 194; Johannes van den Berg, ‘Quakers and Chiliasts: the “contrary thoughts” of William Ames and Petrus Serrarius’, in R. Buick Know (ed.), *Reformation, Conformity and Dissent: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Nuttall* (London, 1977), 180-98, at 181-2.

Meanwhile, the Quakers retained an emphasis on the primacy of the Light above all. These disputes were ‘of great importance for the development of Collegiant rationalism’ as they emboldened the broad move away from free prophecy which characterised the intellectual development of Collegiantism; they may also have encouraged the Quakers’ ingratiation of opponents back in England, as international alliances in defence of a hyper-spiritualised view proved unfruitful.³⁵

Nonetheless, the connection was not severed entirely, as demonstrated by the association of Quakers with the Collegiant tract, *Het licht op den kandelaar* (‘The light upon the candlestick’). The tract was first published in Latin and Dutch in 1662, and its author has been identified as Pieter Balling: a rationalist, Mennonite Collegiant, and friend of Baruch Spinoza, under whose name the tract was eventually published in 1684.³⁶ Andrew Fix even identifies the publication as a ‘product’ of the disputes described above.³⁷ However, the text was later translated into English by Benjamin Furly (1636-1714) in Holland, before its publication in London in 1663, and the title page strongly implied that its author was William Ames.³⁸ Furly was especially important in the foundation of a Quaker community in Rotterdam, where he settled in roughly 1659 and engaged with such high-profile thinkers as John Locke, Pierre Bayle and Jean Le Clerc.³⁹ Notably, the author of *The light upon the candlestick* wrote of ‘this Light Christ &c.’, therefore suggesting that the Light and Christ should be viewed synonymously. This aside, they barely mentioned Christ at all. Instead, the Light was largely conceived impersonally, as that which led to knowledge of God. It was ‘the truth & word of God’, the ‘true Rule’, and ‘a Principle certain and infallible’.⁴⁰ Thus, the Light and Christ were synonymous, but subordinate to God himself.⁴¹ Neither was any connection with Jesus of Nazareth

³⁵ Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, 193, 150-6, 193-205; Van den Berg, ‘Quakers and Chiliasts’, 180-98; William Hull, *The Rise of Quakerism in Amsterdam, 1655-1665* (Philadelphia, 1938), 232-7.

³⁶ E.G.E. van der Wall, ‘De mystieke chiliast Petrus Serrarius (1600-1669) en zijn wereld’, PhD thesis, University of Leiden, 1987, 227, cited in Johannes van den Berg (ed.), *Religious Currents and Cross-Currents: Essays on Early Modern Protestantism* (Leiden, 1999), 117.

³⁷ Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, 193.

³⁸ Van den Berg (ed.), *Religious Currents*, 117; Hull, *The Rise of Quakerism in Amsterdam*, 214-5n; Anon, *The light upon the candlestick*, A3007 (London, 1663), sig. A1r.

³⁹ Richard L. Greaves, ‘Furly, Benjamin (1636-1714)’, *ODNB*. <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/10248>> accessed 7 December 2015.

⁴⁰ Anon, *The light upon the candlestick*, A3007 (London, 1663), 9, 3.

⁴¹ The Quaker emphasis on the fact that the Father could only be known through the Son might suggest that they held a similar view, although they were ultimately suspicious of any attempt to divide the Godhead, as noted above, 111-2.

mentioned. Rather, the Light ‘hath preheminance [sic] before any Writing, Scripture, Doctrine, or anything else that we meet from without’.⁴²

The actual authorship of this tract is ultimately less significant than Furly’s willingness to encourage the association. His claim was not particularly tenable, given the tensions between the two groups at the time. Indeed, Furly even later engaged in his own dispute with the prominent Mennonite and Collegiant, Franz Kuyper, beginning in 1673 (first orally and then in print), demonstrating stark differences as Kuyper criticised Quakerism in favour of his own brand of biblical rationalism.⁴³ Yet the fact that a Quaker of considerable intellectual stature volunteered the connection in 1663, despite the risky implications of owning the text, points to a desire to strengthen the links between the two communities in the face of such tensions. Indeed, that this was even an option – that there was ever any association at all – implies a religious culture within the Quaker movement that focused on the disembodied spiritual guidance of the light much more than the personalised manifestation of a perfecting Christ within the individual. This is corroborated by the fact that, as Van den Berg notes, ‘the spirit of the work is in full conformity with the central emphasis of [Ames’s] authentic publications’.⁴⁴ Thus, in his 1656 description of his conviction, Ames wrote how ‘as I came to minde the Light, I minded the Law of God which Law is Light’, and considered this new understanding superior to his external knowledge of the historical Jesus without clarifying the importance of the crucifixion itself for his salvation.⁴⁵ In this sense, the internationalism of the Quaker movement must be recognised as a force for creativity and theological exploration, even when the primary intellectual force upon the movement drew it further towards the established Church of England.

It is also important to note that Spinoza himself was heavily involved with the Collegiant community in Amsterdam, and it is likely that Quakers crossed paths with him there. Nor did this represent the only potential connection between Friends and the Jewish philosopher. Richard H. Popkin also notes a potential collaboration between Spinoza and Samuel Fisher, as ‘almost every example’ used by Spinoza in the 1670 *Tractatus* also appears in Fisher’s *Rusticos ad academicos*, and argues that Spinoza is overwhelmingly

⁴² Anon, *The light upon*, 9.

⁴³ Hull, *Benjamin Furly*, 36-8; Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, 154.

⁴⁴ Van den Berg, ‘Quaker and Chiliast’, 180.

⁴⁵ William Ames, *A declaration of the witness of God*, A3004A (London, 1656), 1-4.

likely to have been the anonymous Jew who translated Margaret Fell's pamphlets into Hebrew for a Dutch Jewish audience in 1658.⁴⁶ This is largely on the basis of Ames's letter to Fell, mentioning that he had arranged the translation with 'a Jew at Amsterdam that by the Jews is cast out'.⁴⁷ Drawing any conclusions about the implications of the connection in the 1650s is conjectural, as Spinoza was not publishing at this point (although he was deemed radical enough to be expelled from his synagogue in 1656). Nonetheless, he later wrote of knowledge of God 'according to the Spirit and Christ... in him', possibly reflecting the influence of contact with Quakers in his early career.⁴⁸ All this indicates the Quakers' early integration into a radical network which would soon become a powerful force in the early Enlightenment.

More broadly, the connection between Quakers and Jews reflected the inherent tendency (and indeed, flexibility) of Quaker writers to operate aside from constant recourse to the historical Incarnation. Fell was particularly active in this regard. Reaching out to Manasseh ben Israel in 1656, for example, Fell described England as a 'Land of gathering, where the Lord God is fulfilling his promise... in our day', and recalled God's promise to 'make a new Covenant with the house of Israel', to put the Law 'in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts', as a foreshadowing of Quakerism.⁴⁹ In this way, Fell drew on the Quakers' common portrayal of themselves as 'inward Jews', and urged the Jewish people 'to the pure light and Law in the inward parts turne your mindes' – for 'now is the Lord God planting, and now is he gathering unto his Sheep-fould; where there is but one Shepheard'.⁵⁰ Fell concluded by suggesting that 'the figures, and the types, and the shaddows [sic] are ceased, the Lord God is departed out of them, and the Substance of them is come, the holy Seed is risen the substance thereof'.⁵¹ She notably avoided connecting the inward

⁴⁶ Richard H. Popkin, 'Roads that lead beyond Judaism and Christianity', in Richard H. Popkin, *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Leiden, 1992), 351-69, at 356; Richard H. Popkin, 'Spinoza's Relations with the Quakers in Amsterdam', 14-28.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 15.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 27.

⁴⁹ Margaret Fell, *For Manasseh Ben Israel. The call of the Jewes*, F632 (London, 1656), 3, 6. This was published following the 1656 re-entry of Jews into England. Manasseh ben Israel, to whom the tract was primarily addressed, was a high-profile Jewish publisher, lobbyist for the Jewish re-entry, and tutor to Baruch Spinoza. As the doctoral thesis of Lesley Hall Higgins argues, Quakers were particularly open to the Jews and many influential Quakers (including George Fox, William Stubbs, Benjamin Furly, John Perrot, Isaac Penington, and William Tomlinson) engaged with them directly. Lesley Hall Higgins, 'Radical Puritans and Jews in England, 1648-1672', PhD thesis, University of Yale, 1979.

⁵⁰ Fell, *For Manasseh Ben Israel*, 16, 10.

⁵¹ Ibid. 21.

Law, the Shepherd, or the Seed with the historical Jesus, and made no mention of Christ throughout the piece.

Thus, Quakers were engaged on two fronts, as they incorporated the critique of opponents into their theology, and sought out their natural allies. Their attempts to ingratiate English conformists were most prominent, and were demonstrated by their fumbling early distinctions between the inward and outward Christ, and a subsequently greater emphasis upon the historical Jesus. Yet achieving theological respectability also involved seeking out new and creative solutions in conversation across a diverse, creative and international network. Allies were often found in quite unexpected places, as the Quakers were in conversation across a broad intellectual spectrum, even in the early years.

Looking forward, it is tempting to view their early engagement with elements of radical philosophy as a precursor to wider connections with the radical Enlightenment towards the end of the century. Less positively, however, it also encouraged a reluctance to stress the significance of the Incarnation, which left them vulnerable to continued attack. Perhaps a recognition of this vulnerability was what ultimately prevented the Quakers following the Collegiants into a mature philosophical rationalism. Moreover, the fact that the connection between Spinoza and the Quakers remained murky – that is, that it was never emphasised once the philosopher achieved fame – suggests that ultimately, the Quakers had become wary of it. In turn, this is good evidence that they prioritised the prospect of theological respectability in England over the unknown quantity of a Spinozist collaboration in the 1660s.

Justification, Sanctification and Perfection

Part of this vulnerability related to the Quakers' soteriological views, which were inseparable from their Christological position. Chapter one noted a mellowing of perfectionist claims over time, and this section will now consider this trend in greater detail as it related to an increasing sense of the Light as derivative. As noted above, an extreme critique of moral laxity was absolutely central to early Quakerism. The result was a complete conflation of justification and sanctification, which placed the perfection of the individual at the centre of faith. Thus, Nayler stated that

...although the Scriptures mention [justification, sanctification, mortification], yet not to devide [sic] them... but as to show the several effects of that one work of man's redemption, all wrought by one thing in the creature. For the blood and Spirit of Christ washes away the filth, and so puts off the old man, and mortifies the deeds of the body, and so sanctifies, and justifies, the Spirit it mortifies, and sanctifies, and justifies.⁵²

Fox went even further to envisage a return to the 'state in which Adam was before he fell' in this life, reaching beyond sanctification in its most basic sense to the dizzier heights of prelapsarian renewal.⁵³ However, the important role of the crucifixion was increasingly affirmed, and this amounted to a greater soteriological balance between justification and sanctification. This process can be connected directly to the Quakers' increasing sense of the Light within as derivative, as the effects of complete obedience were scaled down.

The subtle signs of departure from this earliest perfectionism are particularly notable in the writings of George Whitehead (1637-1723) during the 1650s and 1660s. Whitehead grew up in the Quaker heartland of Westmorland, and was convinced at some point in the early 1650s, whilst still a teenager. He soon became a prominent itinerant Friend, and was one of the last of the first generation to die, in 1723. Indeed, he was widely considered as the *de facto* leader of the movement following Fox's death. Sin was always a central concern in Whitehead's theology; thus, in *David's enemies discovered*, published in 1655, he stressed the role of the Light as it convinced people of their sin, as well as their urgent need to repent of moral failure.⁵⁴ Along with *Cain's generation discover'd*, also published in 1655, this was his earliest published work. Nonetheless, Whitehead made no mention of the crucifixion itself in either of these two early publications, and his work was highly prophetic in tone. As was typical of the early Quakers, Whitehead signed himself as one 'whose name in the flesh is George Whitehead'.⁵⁵ Thus, he set himself in aggressive opposition to the world, indicating his belief that his earthly identity had been eclipsed as he obediently followed the dictates of the Light within.

⁵² Nayler, *Love to the lost*, 51.

⁵³ Fox, *Journal*, 27.

⁵⁴ Christopher Atkinson et al., *David's enemies discovered*, A4126 (London, 1655), 15-16.

⁵⁵ Whitehead, *Cain's generation discover'd*, sig. A1r.

As Robynne Rogers Healey notes, ‘Whitehead’s confidence in perfection persisted throughout his life’.⁵⁶ However, the necessity of the outward crucifixion as a prerequisite for individual salvation was more prominent in the 1660s than in his earliest works. Thus, in 1669, Whitehead framed perfection as a natural corollary of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. He asked, ‘You that deny Perfection, do ye not deny the One Offering, Christ Jesus, who hath perfected for ever them that are Sanctified? Do ye not deny the Blood of Christ Jesus, in trampling it under your feet, and the Blood of the new Covenant...?’ Whitehead supported this transactional notion of perfectionism with biblical references specifically alluding to freedom from sin, and further asked, ‘did Christ make Satisfaction for the sins of men, that they should live and die in their sins?’⁵⁷ Furthermore, he accused his opponents of placing the power of the law above that of the Gospel, by granting believers an ‘evangelical’ perfection but not a ‘legal’ perfection.⁵⁸ Thus, he went on to emphasise that it was precisely because ‘the effects of [Christ’s] blood’ must be internally transformative that he asserted the possibility of perfection – a statement which alluded to the sanctification of the believer, but only by virtue of a literal, atoning death in Jerusalem, whose effects were powerful enough to be felt universally in the lives of individuals.⁵⁹

This did not necessarily imply that knowledge of the Incarnation was required for salvation, but it at least amounted to a recognition of two stages in atonement – and, to this extent, at least some kind of conceptual distinction between justification and sanctification. Christ made ‘Satisfaction’ for sin in his earthly life, which must subsequently be consummated in the life of the believer. Consequently, comparing this to Whitehead’s position in his earlier works, the emphasis of his perfectionism appears to have shifted. A transactional notion of Christ’s outward sacrifice (and therefore, an account of perfection in terms of sin and sinlessness, rather than the indwelling, spiritual Christ) now played a more prominent role in his

⁵⁶ Robynne Rogers Healey, ‘From Apocalyptic Prophecy to Tolerable Faithfulness: George Whitehead and a Theology for the Eschaton Deferred’, in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers*, 277. Whilst this thesis rejects Healey’s suggestion that Whitehead remained committed to the earliest Quaker position, it should be noted that this in fact supports Healey’s broader argument more than her own claim – namely, that Whitehead sought a theology which allowed Quakers ‘respectability’ and equipped them to deal with the ‘meantime’ (rather than the earliest Quakers’ expectation of an imminent eschaton).

⁵⁷ Whitehead, *The divinity of Christ*, sig. A2r-A2v.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 12b.

theology – and of course, the theoretical possibility of committing no sin is something quite different from perfection conceived as adopted divine sonship.⁶⁰

We must keep this shift constantly in mind when considering motivating factors in the wider development of Quaker Christology, as it reflects the Quakers' recognition of the need for a clearer theology of the atonement. In the first instance, this was politically necessary to avoid accusations of Catholic association and behaviour – as reflected in Whitehead's acknowledgement that his critics had accused the Quakers of 'more grossly erring in the fundamentals of religion than the Papists themselves', just as he explicated his vision of perfection outlined above.⁶¹ Of course, given their early belief in the possibility of prelapsarian renewal, it was, in a certain sense, true to say that the earliest Quakers went further than the Catholics. Yet quite apart from the Quakers' need to distinguish themselves from Catholicism, the shift reflected their understanding that their theological respectability depended on the successful articulation of the significance of the Incarnation. Thus, Whitehead's changing theology did not primarily represent a departure from his basic conviction that faith must be reflected in the righteous life of the believer; he still absolutely denied that righteousness could simply be 'imputed unto Unrighteous men, who live in their sins'.⁶² However, it did reflect an increasing recognition that salvation could not be characterised exclusively as an internal event.

Enduring Metaphysical Concerns

The changes explored above necessitated an increasing respect for outward reality, and were neither comfortable nor entirely palatable to a movement whose central message still ultimately pointed to the

⁶⁰ Ibid. 2-6, 39-41. See, for example, Richard Claridge's affirmation of perfection as 'compleat Freedom from Sin' and the following (and related) discussion of the possibility of complete sanctification in this life, in debates with Baptists John Tombs and William Hankins in late 1697, recorded in Besse, *The life*, 40-51.

⁶¹ Whitehead, *The divinity of Christ*, 2. Whilst Reformed Protestants stress salvation by imputed righteousness, and therefore separate justification from sanctification, Catholics view sanctification as an important feature of justification – which is therefore conceived as a process, rather than an isolated divine decree. The perceived association between Quakers and Catholics was supported by reference to the Quakers' belief in the possibility of perfection or sanctification in this life, and their apparent belief in the universal bestowal of grace sufficient to salvation – as well as less theological accusations of duplicitous, dishonest and disloyal behaviour. See, for example, William Brownsword, *The Quaker-Jesuite, or, Popery in Quakerisme*, B5215 (London, 1660), 1, 9-11; *Athenian Gazette or Casuistical Mercury*, no. 19, 21 November 1691.

⁶² Whitehead, *The divinity of Christ*, sig. A2r.

spiritualisation of Christ and the sanctification of the believer. A total retreat would cleave Quaker principles apart from one another – and therefore, Whitehead still radically privileged the inward spirit over the outward body when compared to his opponents. Thus, in the same publication he also asked ‘Where doth the Scripture speak of a Humane Nature of Christ in Heaven? Is not Christ and his Body Glorified, and he the Lord from Heaven; for is not Christ’s Nature Divine, and his Soul Divine, which comes out from God?’⁶³ This not only suggested that Whitehead affirmed the unorthodox view that the soul of the Incarnate Christ was divine, but also directly challenged the widely-accepted doctrine (incidentally, even affirmed by George Bishop) of the resurrection of Christ’s human body. Moreover, it raised serious questions regarding Whitehead’s claim that Christ’s sacrificial death played a role in atonement for sin. For if his body was just an isolated human body – if there was no hypostatic union – then in what sense could its crucifixion have a special role in anybody else’s salvation? Whitehead was also nervous to imply any attribution of human characteristics to the Divine: whilst he would affirm ‘the Unity of the Three that bear Record in Heaven’, he was opposed to language of three ‘persons’, as such language made God ‘like visible men, or finite creatures’.⁶⁴

That Whitehead was willing to risk such an arsenal of unsavoury theological insinuations reflects just how deep his unease must have been when assigning any supernatural or spiritual value to Christ’s physical body. His absolute theological priority at this point was to stress the divinity of Christ, by equating the person of Christ entirely with the pre-existing divine Logos. Thus, he clarified his understanding that God is ‘a Spirit... and Christ is the Image of the Invisible God, not divided nor separate from him whose Image he is’.⁶⁵

This underlying commitment to the priority of the spirit – despite an increasing value placed on the outward sacrifice of the cross – was further demonstrated in his disagreement with the Presbyterian Stephen Scandrett (c.1631-1706) over the proper relationship between the authority of the Light within and the Bible. Scandrett was son of the yeoman of the wardrobe of Charles I, and had been a chaplain in Cambridge

⁶³ Ibid. sig. A4v.

⁶⁴ Ibid. sig. A1r, C2r.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 19, 20-22, 73-96.

before he was expelled for refusing to read the Prayer Book in the college chapel after the Restoration.⁶⁶ Between January 1668 and July 1669, he engaged in several public disputes with Whitehead, which largely focused on the relationship between the Light within and the Scriptures. Scandrett accused the Quakers of equating the light of stars with the light of the sun itself, ‘As though one should say, If the stars were created by the Spirit of God, they are a full light, able to make it Day.’ Scandrett himself was keen to stress that ‘The Scriptures are as the Sun, a full Light to guide us to Heaven: The Light in every man, but as a Star, no full Light to travel by’.⁶⁷ Scandrett’s (not unusual) criticism was that the Quakers invested equal authority in the Scriptures and their own Light. Yet Whitehead rejected the terms of Scandrett’s accusation, replying:

We are speaking about the Light which is Spiritual, and of God, which his instance of the Stars makes nothing against; nor did we ever read that the Light of the Stars was Spiritual; neither doth it follow that the Light of the Spirit of God is not a sufficient Rule, because it is given by measure, and not in the fullness of it to all; for however, it is pure and holy, the degrees do not alter the property: to every one of us... is given Grace according to the measure of the Gift of Christ.

Whitehead refused to compromise the authority of the Light within: whilst it may not be the fullness of the ‘Spirit of God’, ‘the degrees do not alter the property’.⁶⁸

Underlying this perspective was a fluid Trinitarian understanding, by which Whitehead not only spoke of the Light as the ‘Spirit of God’, but as the ‘Spirit of Christ’ – and the designation of the Light of Christ in the very title of the publication, despite constant references to God’s Light throughout, reiterates Whitehead’s lack of concern for Trinitarian precision.⁶⁹ Yet he also strongly wanted to affirm the atoning benefits of an outward Christ: ‘Christ’s Suffering on the Cross was temporary, yet the Righteousness of Faith still remains, and the blessed effect of his Suffering and Sacrifice is therein enjoyed by true Believers’.⁷⁰ Whitehead clearly recognised the need to affirm the significance of the outward Incarnation,

⁶⁶ Shaw, W. A., ‘Scandrett, Stephen (1631?–1706)’, rev. Caroline L. Leachman, *ODNB*. <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/24778>>, accessed 17 Oct 2016.

⁶⁷ Stephen Scandrett, *An antidote against Quakerisme*, S817 (London, 1671), 6.

⁶⁸ Whitehead, *The glory*, 28.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 11, 28.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 23.

but still ultimately saw the physical body of Christ merely as the vessel for, or even a type of, a spiritual reality which itself exerted full spiritual and moral authority within the individual.

So, Whitehead clearly demonstrated his recognition of the need to harmonise Quaker religious concerns with certain aspects of Reformed Christian orthodoxy, particularly regarding soteriology and the proper place of scripture in the faithful life. This suggests a growing receptivity to the concerns of Christians outside the Quaker movement. Nonetheless, whether defending the divinity of Christ or the primacy of the Light over scripture, he was still committed to a deeply spiritualised worldview – and this led him towards a fundamentally contradictory position. Perhaps most significantly, his reluctance to assign any theological significance to the physical body of Christ outside the specific context of its atoning function made his affirmation of the Incarnation weak and unconvincing. Whitehead only considered the manhood of Christ insofar as it helped to elucidate the soteriological problem facing Quaker thinkers.

The State of Quaker Christology by 1672

Whilst the Quakers made some effort to respond to criticism, then, their protestations sounded hollow without a supporting metaphysical framework – and this lack of theological ingenuity ensured continued accusations of Christological confusion.⁷¹ For whilst Quakers might be creative in their heterodoxy, they were remarkably unimaginative when it came to proving their orthodoxy. A letter apparently written by Fox to the Governor of Barbados, written in 1671 and published in 1672, usefully characterises the Quakers' approach to theological engagement at the time. This letter was produced during Fox's travels in Barbados, and was intended to answer theological and political criticisms of Quakers on the island. Nonetheless, it is unlikely to have been entirely Fox's work: as Howard Brinton observed, even the preamble to the letter in Fox's 1694 journal recalled how he drew up the Paper 'with some other Friends... to go forth in the Name of the People called Quakers for the clearing of Truth and Friends from... false Reports'. Moreover, Fox was still travelling when the letter was published, so it is unlikely that its

⁷¹ For example, see John Newman, *The light within*, N923A (London, 1668), 4, 73.

publication was his own initiative.⁷² These circumstances suggest that it was conceived strategically, to address criticism of the Quaker movement directly as part of a wider demonstration of orthodoxy.

To this end, the authors complained that ‘many Scandalous Lyes and Slanders have been cast upon us, to the rendering us the more Odious’. Critics had implied that Quakers ‘deny God and Christ Jesus, and the Scriptures of Truth’ – despite the fact that ‘all our Books and Declarations (that for these many years have been published to the World) do clearly testifie to the contrary’.⁷³ Concerning Christ and his relationship to the Trinity, they stressed the Quakers’ complete faith in the ‘Beloved and Only Begotten Son’ of God the ‘Creator’, and, quoting from the Apostles’ Creed, they affirmed that Christ was ‘Conceived by the Holy Ghost, and Born of the Virgin Mary’.⁷⁴ Furthermore, they stated that Christ was crucified ‘in the Flesh’, and quoted extensively from Colossians 1.14-16, which, whilst stressing the cosmic significance of Christ as the instrument of creation, the ‘image of the invisible God’ and the ‘firstborn of every creature’, specifically states that forgiveness of sins is through Christ’s blood.⁷⁵

As a strategic defence of Quaker faith, the letter amounted to little more than a blunt regurgitation of Christian doctrine. It was list-like in its explication of Quaker faith and Christian ‘orthodoxy’. The authors went on unflinchingly to state that ‘we have redemption through [Christ’s] blood, even the forgiveness of sins’, and that he ‘was Crucified for us in the Flesh, without the Gates of Jerusalem; and that he was Buried, and Rose again the Third Day, by his own Power, for our Justification; and we do believe, that he Ascended up into Heaven, and now sitteth at the Right Hand of God’ (again, echoing the Apostles’ Creed but strengthening the emphasis on justification). Moreover, Christ ‘tasted Death for every man, shed his Blood for all men: that he is the Propitiation for our Sins’. The letter continued:

he is our Alone Redeemer and Saviour... [who] destroyes the Devil and his Works; he is the Seed of the Woman, that bruises the Serpent's Head, to wit, Christ Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last... he is (as Scriptures of Truth say) our Wisdom, Righteousness, Justification and

⁷² George Fox, *A journal*, F1854 (London, 1694), 357; Stephen Angell, ‘An Early Version of Fox’s Letter to the Governor of Barbados’, in *QS*, 19, 2 (2015), 277-94, at 281.

⁷³ Fox, ‘For the Governour’, 65.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 66.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 66. Colossians 1.14-16 had itself been a source of contested Christological understandings since the early Church, and was used by Arius in support of his extreme subordinationism.

Redemption; neither is there Salvation in any other; for there is none other
Name under Heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved...⁷⁶

Clearly a major intention of this passage, saturated as it was with scriptural allusions, was to quell any suspicion that the Quakers denied the importance of the historical Jesus. It is worth noting the various differences between this text and the later version reproduced in Ellwood's 1694 edition of Fox's journal. As Angell notes, the earlier text stated that Christ was 'made to be as Sin, or an Offence and Curse for us', which was later adjusted to read that he was 'made a sacrifice for sin, who knew no sin'. Furthermore, the 1672 version spoke of Christ being risen 'by his own Power', compared the later phrase, 'by the power of his Father', and the 1694 version omitted 'in our Inward Parts' from the 1672 phrase, '[Christ] hath given us... his Law of Love and of Life in our Inward Parts'.⁷⁷ These changes smoothed over controversial or obscure passages in the original letter – stressing the Trinity and the sacrifice of Christ, and downplaying the emphasis on inwardness – and so, aligned Quakerism further with respectable theological views. Nonetheless, even in its earliest form, the letter reflected Fox's aspirations to demonstrate the Quakers' theological respectability.

Yet it also ultimately reflected how ill-equipped he was to do so. It drew on none of the Quakers' own theological resources or distinctive insights. Fox's use of the Apostles' Creed in his description of God as 'Creator of all things both in heaven and in earth', and of Jesus as 'Conceived by the Holy Ghost, and Born of the Virgin Mary', was particularly surprising in this regard, given the Quakers' general position on conciliar authority. What purpose was served by quoting the creed in this manner, if not to deflect aspersions regarding one's orthodoxy? And yet, Fox did not – could not – speak entirely with his own voice in this regard. This is reiterated by the reception history of the letter in the schisms of nineteenth-century American Quakerism: the letter was used to bolster the position of those who stressed the importance of defining Quakers' religious orthodoxy, whilst those critical of such appeals stressed the incongruity of this text with other Quaker writings of the time, and even with other works written by Fox on the same trip to

⁷⁶ George Fox, 'For the Governour', 66-7; Stephen Angell notes the many biblical allusions in this section, to Isaiah 49.26, 1 John 3.8; Genesis 3.15; Revelation 1.11, Revelation 22.13; 1 Corinthians 1.30 (though it is worth noting that Fox substituted 'sanctification' [*holiness, ἁγιασμός*] for 'justification' here) and Acts 4.12. Angell, 'An early version', 287-90.

⁷⁷ For an extended survey of changes, see Angell, 'An early version', 289-92; Fox, *A journal*, 358-61.

Barbados.⁷⁸ As Rufus Jones – himself a champion of modern, liberal Quakerism – complained, ‘here [Fox] surrendered, at least for the time being, his usual religious attitude’.⁷⁹ This was a conspicuous document when compared to the Quakers’ usual explication of their values.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the Quakers’ earliest strategies in response to the criticism noted in chapter two, and the limited success of these strategies by the early 1670s. Certainly, Friends did not shy away from the need to respond to early criticism. A more explicit distinction between the Light and Christ was one of the earliest symptoms of their constructive response. Quaker soteriology also moved towards Reformed beliefs regarding atonement and justification, and the historical Jesus was mentioned more frequently. If Phyllis Mack claimed that ‘Quakers were attempting to become part of the social and political mainstream’, these amounted to certain collective trends consistent with a shift towards the ‘theological mainstream’ – that is, the first steps in what Leslie referred to as the ‘Christianisation’ of Quakerism and what I have characterised as the quest for theological respectability.⁸⁰

Alongside these developments, Quakers were also engaging with other natural allies. These links were indicative of their continued commitment to the spiritual Christ, as well as foreshadowing their later engagement with elements of the radical Enlightenment. Perhaps it is for this reason that the Quakers’ theological ingratiation of their opponents did not extend to their most fundamental theological assumptions – most notably, their spiritualised world-view – and the Friends’ detractors were, unsurprisingly, unsatisfied. Nonetheless, these alliances were ultimately unsustainable, and the theological trajectory of Quakerism would not ultimately align with Dutch Collegiantism as much as the established Church of England. Meanwhile, whilst Fox’s letter to the Governor of Barbados clearly reflected a heightened concern to prove Quaker orthodoxy, saturated as it was with biblical and creedal material, it

⁷⁸ Angell, ‘An Early Version’, 284; Thomas Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends 1800-1907* (Bloomington, 1992), 17.

⁷⁹ Rufus Jones to Harry Keates, 26th November 1924, cited in Angell, ‘An Early Version’, 285.

⁸⁰ See above, 15, 95.

also bore witness to the starkly different voices employed by Quakers when addressing critics and sympathisers. Moreover, criticism of Quaker theology was arguably becoming easier, as there was now a large enough corpus of Quaker writings (and so, an adequate degree of precision in Quaker teaching) that opponents could articulate exactly how Quakerism conflicted with their own doctrinal concerns. In short, there was still work to be done: it was one thing to claim one's orthodoxy, and quite another to support these claims with good evidence.

IV. THE CHRISTIAN QUAKER

We do not say that the Light in every Man is Christ, but of Christ.... Such an Absurdity never fell from us, not our Doctrine.¹

As Quakerism entered its third decade, a slight reduction in persecution following the Great Fire of London, followed by the Declaration of Indulgence of 1672 – a ‘surprise sprung on an unsuspecting nation’ – created new space for theological dispute.² This was reflected by a flurry of contrived ‘dialogues’ criticising Quaker beliefs. Of course, it was common even in the 1650s to address Quakers through a series of queries and replies, reflecting the method of disputation taught in universities at the time. Yet the construction of contrived exchanges, described explicitly as ‘dialogues’, was distinctive to the early 1670s. Several such dialogues were released in this period, where such pieces were rare beforehand. These dialogues reconstructed typical arguments from both sides, and suggest that conversation between groups was relatively common by this time.³ As Dean Freiday notes, ‘it is difficult to distinguish dialogue from polemics’, and clearly engagement did not always entail a fruitful discussion.⁴ Dialogues depicting conversations between Quakers and Catholics serve as a reminder that the format could also be used to implicate Quakers in collusion with dangerous enemies, and to disparage their frustrating debating habits. Nonetheless, the very format of works such as Thomas Hicks’s *A dialogue between a Christian and a*

¹ William Penn and George Whitehead, *The Christian-Quaker*, P1266 (London?, 1674), pt 1, 91.

² Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, 61.

³ The Quakers themselves rejected the clerical method of disputation, preferring to interrupt church services or bypass the trained clergy altogether by preaching directly to large crowds gathered outside. Nonetheless, the existence of contrived ‘dialogues’ suggests that informal discussion was actually relatively common, and perhaps reflects the thawing of earlier hostility between Quakers and non-Quakers. One exception to these trends (an earlier dialogue, produced by a Quaker rather than an opponent) was Solomon Eccles’s *A musick-lector* (1667), which presented a conversation between an Anglican musician, a Baptist, and a Quaker, concerning the place of music in worship. A second wave of ‘dialogues’ was also ignited within Quakerism by the Keithian controversy, in the 1690s and 1700s. Peters, *Print Culture*, 161; Solomon Eccles, *A musick-lector: or, the art of musick*, E129 (London, 1667); compare Richard Sherlock, *The Quakers wilde questions*, S3255 (London, 1656), Anon, *The Quakers Pedigree*, Q28 (London, 1674), and in reply, John Moon, *A Jesuitical design discovered*, M2524B (London, 1674).

⁴ Freiday, ‘Quaker Dialogue in the Seventeenth Century’, 42.

Quaker, published in 1672, also suggested that interactions were becoming more subtly grounded in dialogue rather than simple, vicious attacks on character and behaviour.⁵

Despite thinking that the Quakers were entirely mistaken – despite their ‘vain Boasts’, which betrayed their ‘pride and error’ and put them ‘in danger of eternal Ruine’ – Hicks’s decision to present his argument essentially as a discussion (and, at least to start with, a relatively civil one) implies that at least some Quakers had proven themselves capable of rational conversation.⁶ Admittedly, the characterisation of nonconformists as homogenous and inherently irrational was largely a construct of their enemies – so, as a Baptist, Hicks would not have accepted it. Nonetheless, stressing the irrationality and enthusiasm of Quakers would still have been tactically useful as he sought to distance his own religious community from those he perceived as genuine extremists. Therefore, it is reasonable to interpret Hicks’s presentation as indicating a shift in perception. In short, the Friends had secured some intellectual capital by the 1670s.

Whilst chapter three located initial signs of the Quakers’ response to criticism, this chapter will explore the continuation of this process in the dialogue and public disputes of the 1670s. It will focus on two disputes involving William Penn, first with the Baptist Thomas Hicks, and secondly with the Independent John Faldo.⁷ Penn became a Quaker in the late 1660s and, as the son of a prominent admiral, he was perhaps the most affluent of all the seventeenth-century Quakers. His social contacts were unrivalled: the future James II apparently even specially noted his family’s attendance at his brother’s coronation in 1661.⁸ Most notably, he would later found the Quaker colony in Pennsylvania. Nonetheless, this chapter will focus on his earlier theological engagement. Such an investigation allows an assessment of the state of Quaker

⁵ The title of Fox’s extensive account of the Quakers’ disputes with opponents in 1659 is telling: *The great mystery of the great whore unfolded*. Popular and political tensions between Quakers and their adversaries are discussed in Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, 49-100.

⁶ Hicks, *A dialogue*, 84, 48. The title page of this publication is dated 1673, and the ESTC described it as ‘incorrectly’ dated by Wing to 1672, although it is listed in the Stationers’ Catalogue on November 16th, 1672 and Whitehead’s early response, *The dipperplung’d*, was also published in 1672.

⁷ The legacies of these disputes were particularly long-lasting: Keith singled them out as examples of Quakers being accused of denying the ‘True Christ’, in an account of his dispute with Christian Lodowick published in 1692. George Keith, *The Christian faith of the people of God*, K151 (Philadelphia, 1692), 5.

⁸ Mary K. Geiter, ‘Penn, William (1644–1718)’, *ODNB*. <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/21857>> accessed 16 Dec 2016; Andrew R. Murphy, *Liberty, Conscience and Toleration: The Political Thought of William Penn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1.

Christology up to the mid-1670s, which exhibited signs of increasing engagement with underlying metaphysical issues.

Thomas Hicks and the Christian Quaker (1672-74)

From the number of reprints of the dialogue and replies from wounded Quakers, it is clear that Hicks's work was perceived as a serious threat to the Quakers' reputation: it provoked responses from seven different Friends, as well as other Baptists, sparking the publication of twenty books within two years, and two major public debates (held at the Baptists' Barbican Hall and the Wheeler Street Meeting House).⁹ Moreover, this blistering controversy ultimately provoked one of the most significant seventeenth-century defences of Quaker theology: William Penn and George Whitehead's *Christian-Quaker*, published in 1674.

The dialogue itself retold a contrived conversation between two men, whom Hicks provocatively labelled a 'Christian' and a 'Quaker'. It began with the Christian's summary of the Quaker's main errors:

it is said you deny the Authority of the Holy Scriptures as the Rule of Faith...
and that you deny the Person of Jesus Christ, and the Resurrection of the Body;
and that you maintain that the Light in every Man is sufficient to guide unto
Salvation... and also that Perfection is attainable in this life.

Hicks's Quaker replied, 'This is false, we deny not the Scriptures, nor the Person of Christ, nor the Resurrection of the dead; but indeed it is true, we do affirm the light in every man is sufficient... and likewise we hold perfection'.¹⁰ Nonetheless, Hicks set out to prove that affirming the sufficiency of the Light entailed the very denial of the Scriptures and person of Christ that the Quakers protested.

Fundamentally, Hicks's Christian rejected the possibility that the Light could usurp the scriptural revelation of God's will.¹¹ He did not deny the existence of a Light within each person but refused to accept that it was Christ or the Word of God. Rather, his own account resembled the human conscience: 'every man' was 'inlightened' with something that 'checks for many evils, and excites to many good things', but this

⁹ Hugh Barbour, 'The Young Controversialist', in Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn (eds.), *The World of William Penn* (Pennsylvania, 2015), 15-36, at 28.

¹⁰ Hicks, *A dialogue*, 1-2.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 31-2.

‘common light’ could not provide God’s direct revelation, and so could not be sufficient.¹² Christians needed a further ‘Rule’ to prevent falling away from the Truth – namely, the Bible – and so, ‘the great difference’ in this disagreement was ‘concerning the way and manner of the manifestation of Gods will to us’.¹³ Hicks further argued that the Quakers’ belief that the Light was sufficient for salvation had serious implications for their beliefs concerning Christ. He mocked the Quakers’ numerous denials of Christ in the flesh, made alongside an unconvincing insistence that ‘we do believe in that Christ which died at Jerusalem’, and accused Quakers of affirming the outward Christ merely as an exemplar.¹⁴ This was the foundation upon which the Quakers’ unorthodox views on perfection and the resurrection of the body rested, and ultimately meant that ‘the death of Christ was in vain and to no purpose’.¹⁵

Hicks himself was keen to stress the importance of the inner life. Nonetheless, he asserted that ‘the native and direct tendency’ of Quaker belief was to ‘make void that one Saviour and Mediator Jesus Christ’. In contrast, he called for ‘Harmony between the work of Christ without thee, and the work of the Spirit within thee’, and ‘Reverence’ for the authority of the Bible.¹⁶ Hicks’s frustration with the Quakers’ refusal to pin down their exact meaning was palpable throughout his work, with him snidely remarking that it was ‘almost impossible for a Quaker to speak or write concerning Christ without self-contradiction’.¹⁷ Thus, his Christian noted how ‘sometimes you say it is Christ; another time it is onely a Measure of Christ’. The Quaker denied this ambiguity, but implicitly proved it by his response: again, he would go no further than to state that the Light was either ‘Christ, or a Measure of Christ’.¹⁸ Hicks recognised that the Quakers’ emphasis on sanctification could be alluring, and did not make the enthusiasm of the movement central to his critique. However, his humorous exchange carried a serious message: Friends were a pernicious threat to the core principles of Christian faith.

The ‘Christianity’ of the Quakers was the central concern of Hicks’s project, then – not only in its title, but also in the nature of its theological critique, focusing on questions of religious authority and the Incarnation.

¹² Ibid. 5-19, 8.

¹³ Ibid. 31.

¹⁴ Ibid. 43-48, 45.

¹⁵ Ibid. 82, 48-56, 56-63.

¹⁶ Ibid. 88-9.

¹⁷ Ibid. 79.

¹⁸ Ibid. 3-6.

Similarly, in the same year, a posthumous letter written by William Prynne (1600-69) was published which explicitly appealed to the threat Quakers posed to belief in the Incarnation, to associate them with other faiths. He characterised Mohammed as the first Quaker prophet, writing snidely to John Audland that 'it appears that ye have a Turk as well as a Pope in your bellies'. Prynne accused the Quakers of emphasising personal prophetic and sanctifying vocation (which was inaccurately thought to align them with Islamic beliefs about Mohammed) over the distinctive tenets of Christian faith in Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁹

Recalling the Quakers' theological engagement in the 1660s, Hicks's portrait of their simultaneous affirmation of the historical Jesus and denial of Christ's fleshly identity does not seem entirely foreign. Neither was his identification of an ambiguity between a derived Light and a literal indwelling Christ unfounded. How, then, did the Quakers now react? Possibly provoked by Hicks's ungenerous accusation that he was a 'false deceitful man', George Whitehead was the first to respond.²⁰ In *The dipper plung'd*, Whitehead's central complaint was Hicks's failure to appreciate either the divinity of the Light, or its separation from the human soul: the Quakers were not merely asserting that the Rule of Faith was 'the best thing in thee', but that it was 'the Spirit of God'.²¹ In contrast, Hicks's identification of Scriptures as the 'means of knowing God' was 'idoltrous', as it failed to honour the ultimate source of their authority: the same Spirit which inspired true believers in the present day.²² Whitehead thought Hicks's refusal to accept the Rule of the Light was inconsistent, as he was prepared to accept its existence, and even exhorted the Quakers to obey it, whilst criticising them for investing it with any authority.²³ Furthermore, he targeted his opponents' belief in the resurrection of a physical body, instead arguing for the resurrection of a 'Spiritual Glorious Body' and subsequently for the continuation of the soul. Once more demonstrating his dualism, Whitehead asked

is he of the mind of some of his Brethren, that hold the Mortality of the Soul, that it Dyeth... with the Body; and that it remains so till a future Day, expected for the raising up of both: But we are not of their Mind... but that there is an Immediate Separation made between the Soul and Body upon

¹⁹ William Prynne, in Samuel Butler, *Two letters*, B6336A (London, 1672), 11.

²⁰ Hicks, *A dialogue*, 53.

²¹ George Whitehead, *The dipper plung'd, or, Thomas Hicks*, W1923 (London, 1672), 6.

²² *Ibid.* 13.

²³ *Ibid.* 5.

Dissolution, and that the Soul is Immortal... either in a state of Felicity, or Misery according to the Image that it did bear in the World.²⁴

Responding in 1673, Hicks issued *A continuation of the dialogue*, this time focusing more explicitly on the Quakers' denial of the person of Christ. He complained that 'when they talk of the blood of Christ, they delude their hearers or readers. For, by that blood, they mean nothing but the Life and Light within', thus supporting the contention of chapter two that Quakers understood spiritual bodies essentially as pure spirit, with none of the attributes of a material 'body' at all.²⁵ Certainly, Whitehead's affirmation of the resurrection of a celestial body, followed by such ardent defence of the immortality of the soul, supported Hicks's accusation. In addition, Hicks accused the Quakers of viewing Jesus of Nazareth merely as a 'a type, figure, shadow, that is past away', and of denying any second coming of Christ except that which had already occurred 'by his Spirit'.²⁶

The most important response to Hicks, *The Christian-Quaker*, came later, in 1674. It was split into two parts, written by William Penn and George Whitehead respectively. Penn now expressed a much greater respect for the outward form of Christ than previous Quaker authors, and explicitly stated the derivative nature of the Light within. Unsurprisingly, he emphasised the divinity of Christ, in that 'what God is' is 'Light' and the 'Light is Christ'.²⁷ Yet he explicitly accepted the non-equivalence of the Light within ordinary people and Christ in himself, and even denied that the Quakers had ever claimed that the full Christ was within the individual: 'We do not say that the Light in every Man is Christ, but of Christ.... Such an Absurdity never fell from us, not our Doctrine.'²⁸ As chapter two demonstrates, this claim was patently untrue. Nonetheless, it showed Penn's intention to break with the past, and established an unmistakable distance between the Quakerism of the 1670s and that of the 1650s. Elsewhere, Penn distinguished between the Quakers' own potential in the Light, and Christ as the 'Proper Body prepared of God'. This separated more strongly the 'fullness of the Godhead' in Christ himself, and the 'measurable'

²⁴ Ibid. 15.

²⁵ Thomas Hicks, *A continuation of the dialogue*, H1919 (London, 1673), sig. A3v. See above, 108-9.

²⁶ Ibid. 75.

²⁷ Penn and Whitehead, *The Christian-Quaker*, pt 1, 23, 13, 114.

²⁸ Ibid. 91.

manifestation of Christ in others, as well as identifying the sacrificial ‘proper Body’ as a sign of Christ’s unique status, so embracing the fleshly body more positively.²⁹

Was this Christological change fundamentally an attempt to scale back the Quakers’ vision of the Light within, or an expansion of their appreciation of the historical Jesus? The latter is more likely as, again, Penn’s view went hand in hand with his soteriological concerns. Thus, like Whitehead, his argument for the uniqueness of the historical Christ lay in his role as a ‘Sacrifice for Sin’. Nonetheless, in terms of his ‘daily Duty unto Acceptance with God’, Penn admitted that he still saw Christ as an exemplar.³⁰ This suggested that it was the need to explain the soteriological significance of the historical Jesus, rather than a changing metaphysical framework in the abstract, which drove this change – for outside their specific reflections upon the crucifixion, the Quakers still viewed the moral example of Jesus as his main significance.

In short, Quaker theology was changing – and it was changing directly in response to the theological concerns of opponents, which put external pressure on the movement. For their own part, Quakers responded to these pressures in a fundamentally theological way. Nonetheless, Penn and Whitehead still radically spiritualised Christian teaching, and they certainly did not ‘solve’ the problems with Quaker Christology. Whitehead still associated Christ’s second coming with this inward communion and, even more surprisingly, explicitly denied ‘that the glorious hypostacical [sic] Union consists of a human and divine Nature, or that they are hypostatically one’, so denying that human nature might be united to the Divine.³¹ Whilst he claimed that this denial was because ‘we cannot own these to be Scripture-Language’, it was not just a semantic issue: he also claimed that to believe that ‘the Son of God doth consist or is made up of human Flesh and Blood, or that these and the divine Nature are one Substance’ was ‘contrary to the Son being the Brightness of his Glory & the express Character (or Image) of his Substance, Heb. 1.3’.³² However, perhaps in direct response to Hicks’s criticism, he did now argue that the resurrected Christ consisted of a heavenly but created body, which he described as ‘angelical’ and with ‘flesh and bones’.³³

²⁹ William Penn, *The counterfeit Christian detected*, P1271 (s.l., 1674), 80-1.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 24.

³¹ Penn and Whitehead, *Christian-Quaker*, pt 2, 131-2, 140-1.

³² *Ibid.* 141.

³³ *Ibid.* 168.

This suggested an apparent contrast to his earlier position regarding the stark separation of soul and body – indeed, it implied an attempt to forward some kind of theology of celestial flesh, albeit less problematically as he referred to the post-Resurrection Christ – and is an example of the subtle changes affecting Quakerism as they attempted to incorporate the concerns of their opponents.

So too, the acceptance of a derivative relationship between Light and Christ allowed Penn to revise the earlier Quaker view of the relationship between the Light in itself, and the Light within individual believers. Indeed, he even utilised the metaphor of the Sun which Whitehead had likened to the Light within only a few years earlier, this time to imply the derivation of the ‘Light’ from the ‘Sun’ of the Godhead. He stated:

By Light I understand not the frequent Metaphorical Use of the Word; as when Christ said You are the Light of the World... neither the meer Spirit or Reason of Man, but that Glorious Sun of Righteousness, and Heavenly Luminary of the Intellectual or Invisible World, represented... most exactly by the Great Sun of this Sensible and Visible World, that as his natural Light ariseth upon all... so that Divine Light arises upon all, and gives Light to all, that will receive it.³⁴

Penn’s explicit description of the Light within as derivative was intended as a line in the sand, separating the movement from its uncomfortable past. Elsewhere, Penn complained that he had been misquoted in a way which suggested that the Light within was the ‘whole, entire’ divinity itself, making it very clear that a development in Quaker thought had occurred since the early 1650s. And indeed, startlingly, he even rebuked his opponents for suggesting that Fox’s own position on the divinity of the soul was the position of the whole Society.³⁵

Nonetheless, whilst at least one influential Quaker viewed Fox’s view as outdated and problematic, the *de facto* founder of Quakerism was still publishing and was still influential. As Bailey notes, it is misleading to overstate the homogeneity of Quaker theology, particularly where Christology is concerned.³⁶ And indeed, even in the same publication that Penn employed the sun as a metaphor, Whitehead accused his opponents of denying ‘the infiniteness of God’ by comparing Christ and the Light within to the sun and its

³⁴ Penn and Whitehead, *Christian-Quaker*, pt 1, 12.

³⁵ Penn, *The counterfeit Christian*, 55, 58, 68.

³⁶ Richard Bailey, ‘Was Seventeenth-century Quaker Christology Homogenous?’, 61-82.

rays. He argued that this metaphor implied God's materiality, and instead suggested that as an eye directed to the sun ('in the least Beam thereof') sees the sun directly, so the 'Eye of the Soul' being directed to God by even 'the least Appearance of his divine and immediate Shining or Illumination' has sight of God.³⁷ This not only demonstrates the fluidity with which metaphor was employed – but also the deep anxiety underlying the Quaker position. Ultimately, Whitehead confirmed, they '[could not] own... That Jesus Christ consisteth of human Flesh and Bone' or 'that the glorious hypostacical Union consists of a human and divine Nature, or that they are hypostatically one'.³⁸

William Penn and John Faldo (1672-75)

The Hicks dispute unfolded alongside Penn's exchange with the nonconformist minister John Faldo (1633/4-91), which in turn grew out of Penn's quite separate disagreement with the Socinians. In 1672, Penn had written against an anonymous Socinian critic who was later identified as Henry Hedworth, the prominent Socinian who coined use of the Latin term 'unitarian' in English. Against Hedworth, Penn argued that 'Christ's Person (which he prejudicially sayes we deny) is... an Unscriptural Expression', and explained that Quakers 'reverently confess to Christ's Appearance, both in Flesh and Spirit' but 'dare not say, That the intire Christ was that visible Body that was crucified'.³⁹ Penn argued against the Socinian rejection of Christ's pre-existence in the Godhead, to complain that they did not 'distinguish betwixt the Form of God, and Likeness of Men; that which came into the World to do the Will of God, and the Body He took, in which to perform it'. This was 'a piece of Sacrilege and Ingratitude I almost tremble to think on, that because [Christ] was pleased to descend in the Likeness of men, in order to the Salvation of Mankind... [Hedworth] should unworthily robb Him of all Pre-existence in the Form of God'.⁴⁰ As a Quaker (unsurprisingly) affirming the possibility of salvation before the Incarnation, Penn presented a detailed critical analysis and reception history of John 1.9 to prove 'the constant use of the Word throughout

³⁷ Penn and Whitehead, *Christian-Quaker*, pt 2, 102-3.

³⁸ Ibid. 96, 141.

³⁹ William Penn, *The spirit of truth vindicated*, P1375 (London, 1672), 11; c.f. Henry Hedworth, *The spirit of the Quakers tried*, H1352 (London, 1672), 2, 17.

⁴⁰ Penn, *The spirit of truth*, 104.

both the Old and New Testament'.⁴¹ Thus, Christ who 'took upon him the Seed of Abraham according to the Flesh, was, and is, and is to come, God over all blessed forever: which Perswasion I know to be most Heritical [sic] in this Adversaries Apprehension, and no part of his Biddlea[n] Creed'.⁴²

Penn was probably trying to clear himself from a suspected Socinian association; only a few years earlier he had spent nine months in the Tower of London for apparent anti-Trinitarianism and Socinianism detected in his 1668 *The sandy foundation*.⁴³ Nonetheless, his defence was of limited success, and provoked further criticism of his position, insofar as it strayed from Nicene and Chalcedonian orthodoxy. In January 1673, John Faldo produced *Quakerism no Christianity* in response to the pamphlet. This was the opening blow of a dispute which lasted a further two years. Faldo, who was probably an Independent, defined a Christian 'in the narrowest sense' as one who 'owns the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent to be the Lord and Saviour', whereas a Quaker was one who 'professes the light within every man to be the only Lord and Saviour, and very God'. The Quakers 'preached a Christ within, in opposition to, and contempt of a Christ without'.⁴⁴

Faldo's argument largely centred around the Quakers' supposed denial of the Scriptures, and arrogant claims to infallibility.⁴⁵ Yet underlying these errors, he perceived 'the grand and root-errour of the Quakers' to be that they 'disown and deny the Christ of God, and set up a false Christ in his room and stead; and attribute all to that false Christ, which is due and peculiar to the true Christ'. Critically, Faldo distinguished between the belief that the Christ had once *been* human in the Incarnation (but ultimately was the pre-existent Word), and the truly Christian confession that Christ was born at Jerusalem and was still 'constituted of the humane nature' as 'the high Priest in the Heavens'. Thus, Faldo made the now familiar accusation that Quakers rejected the hypostatic union – not unreasonably, as Whitehead's comments make clear.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Ibid. 53-62, 62; see also Penn and Whitehead, *Christian-Quaker*, pt 1, 96.

⁴² Penn, *The spirit of truth*, 12. Penn here referenced the prominent English Socinian, John Biddle, and implicitly affirmed his own Trinitarianism in these passages.

⁴³ Vincent Buranelli, 'William Penn and the Socinians', in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 83, 4 (1959), 369-81, at 370.

⁴⁴ John Faldo, *Quakerism no Christianity*, F302 (London, 1673), pt 1, 3, 6, 8.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 18-136.

⁴⁶ Faldo, *Quakerism no Christianity* (1673), pt 2, 70-8.

Again, Faldo's Christological criticism was ultimately underpinned by a metaphysical dispute, although Hicks and Faldo's reading of Quaker metaphysics were slightly different. Thus, whilst Faldo complained about the Quakers' spiritualised Christ, he mused that

The flesh and bloud, and bones or body of Christ which they own, is of a heavenly and eternal nature; but the body which Christ took on him of our nature is earthly and perishing: and therefore they can never call that or own that to be Christ.⁴⁷

This ostensibly suggested the Quakers' belief in 'heavenly flesh', and Faldo elaborated that they conceived of the Light within as a 'heavenly, spiritual, divine body, constituted of flesh, bloud and bones, in which Christ came from Heaven', which they 'put... into the other body of our nature, which he took of the Virgin' (and 'that outermost body of our nature he left behind, when he ascended into Heaven, no body knows where').⁴⁸ What are we to make of this? It seems unlikely that Faldo was accusing the Quakers of a Melchiorite understanding here, not least because if this had been his damning accusation, it would have been more effective to mention it explicitly. Rather, Faldo accepted that Quakers affirmed that Jesus's human body came from Mary, but thought they did not view this human nature as the *actual* 'body' of Christ in any spiritually significant sense. That body, instead, 'came from Heaven'. So, Faldo defined the Quakers' 'Body of Christ' as 'Not that which was crucified without the Gates of Jerusalem in Judea; but the spiritual Body aforesaid, which they say took up its Habitation, and Tabernacled in the Body of Jesus the Son of Mary; and so the Body of Christ is as much in them as it was in him', and their 'Man Christ' as 'The Spiritual Body, Blood and Bones, which they say descended from Heaven, and dwelt in the Body of the Son of Mary, and doth also now in every Quaker'.⁴⁹

Faldo complained that, whilst Quakers were willing to talk about spiritual flesh and blood, they denied the importance of the flesh: 'the man Christ that was nail'd to the Cross, the Quakers do not believe to be in them, nor that he hath a being or life, nor can he be in them in his person as a man'.⁵⁰ Their use of 'body' language was simply a smokescreen for the denial of the historical Jesus, and 'while the faith in Christ is

⁴⁷Ibid. 70-1.

⁴⁸Ibid. 81.

⁴⁹Faldo, *Quakerism no Christianity* (1673), pt 3, 64.

⁵⁰Faldo, *Quakerism no Christianity* (1673), pt 2, 100.

in the heart, the man Christ in his person, or if you will, his glorified body, flesh, blood and bones, is as far from them as beyond the visible Heavens'.⁵¹

Fundamentally, then, according to Faldo the Quakers rejected carnal nature entirely. Yet his claims suggest that he had interacted with at least some Quakers who took a more unusual metaphysical position: namely, a belief in the *separate* heavenly body of Christ. The same was implied by Whitehead's somewhat spasmodic assertion of belief in an 'angelical' body of Christ, and it is worth noting that this view was similar to an alternative metaphysical framework developing in the intellectual circle surrounding Lady Anne Conway. This framework will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. Nonetheless, whilst it asserted itself strongly in the mid-1670s, here it was merely implied. Indeed, for the time being, Penn's response to Faldo is of more immediate relevance, and demonstrates the limits of his departure from early Quaker metaphysics. Penn addressed this issue directly and was keen to distinguish the metaphysical implications of these terms from their moral connotations:

We would not that any should think that we intend by Natural and Carnal the worst Sense that may attend these words; for sometimes they import a Wicked and Accursed State; but simply as they are opposed to things supernatural and spiritual, and in this Sense, all parts of this visible World may fall under their Signification. Outward relates to the same thing, and so doth elementary, as vulgarly understood... I know that Words in Philosophy do carry a quite other Sense then what they bear in common Conversation. I opposed Natural to Supernatural; Carnal to Spiritual; Outward to Inward; and Elementary, which relates to any of these Worlds Elements, to the Nature of that Food which comes down from above.⁵²

The implications of this passage are twofold. First, it demonstrates that Friends were beginning to engage directly with the metaphysical issue. Penn claimed not to be disregarding the outward sacrifice of Christ by his metaphysical position alone: he admitted his own metaphysical dualism but denied investing it with moral significance, so did not think that it entailed a complete rejection of the flesh or a denial of the Incarnation. Secondly, Penn's opposition of 'natural' to 'supernatural' (and so on) indicates that he still

⁵¹ Ibid. 77-9.

⁵² William Penn, *The invalidity of John Faldo's vindication*, P1305 (s.l., 1673), 266.

basically viewed the world in a dualistic manner. This exchange suggests murmurings – but no more – of a changed metaphysical outlook within Quakerism.

In any case, Penn then turned from defensive to offensive, to address the issue of sanctification. Simply, he asked Faldo: ‘May not, nay, do not People rely upon those external Transactions of Christ (as recorded in Scripture Story) so as to neglect the whole Work of Redemption and Sanctification by the Power of Christ within?’⁵³ Thus, Penn cast Quakerism merely as an innocuous rebalancing of Christianity, away from the staunch Protestant focus on justification to a wider vision of sanctifying faith. Likewise, he rejected the insinuation that he denied a true hypostatic union, claiming that he was not denying that Christ *had* a body now, but just that he *was* a body: that is, ‘Christ qualified that Body for his Service, but that Body did not constitute Christ’.⁵⁴

Of course, as has already been noted, just a year after he wrote this passage, Penn would issue a joint publication (*The Christian-Quaker*) in which Whitehead expressed obvious reticence regarding Christ’s humanity and the hypostatic union. Yet even if we disregard this blatant contradiction, Penn’s version of the union arguably amounted to the same thing – that the human body was not really a necessary part of Christ’s identity. Moreover, Penn’s position suggested the denial of a real Trinity, as it admitted ‘no distinction’ between Father and Son – most likely a reference to the Quaker emphasis on the unity of the Godhead.⁵⁵ Answering this attack directly, Penn denied the influence of Socinian writings on his work, particularly on *The sandy foundation shaken*, claiming that he ‘had never read any one Socinian Book in all [his] Life’.⁵⁶ Yet regardless of Socinian influence, his ambivalence towards Trinitarian doctrine is clear from his own writings.

⁵³ Ibid. 274.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 299-300. Thomas Ellwood particularly associated Penn’s attempt ‘to Perswade People not to rest barely in a historical belief of Christ’s Incarnation, and Manifestation of that Body in Flesh’ with the Faldo dispute, in Ellwood, *An answer*, 84.

⁵⁵ Faldo, *Quakerism no Christianity* (1673), pt 2, 31; see above, 111-12.

⁵⁶ Penn, *The invalidity*, 413. For a greater discussion of Penn’s Trinitarian thought, and his association with Socinianism, see Buranelli, ‘William Penn and the Socinians’, 369-81.

The State of Quaker Christology by 1675

At this point, then, Quaker Christology remained diverse and problematic as Friends attempted to balance their own theological priorities with those of the wider religious milieu. Thus, an epistle also attached to the 1674 edition of *Quakerism no Christianity*, attributed to 21 divines, made an ultimately negative assessment of the Quakers' theological respectability. In some ways, the account was quite charitable: the divines complained that most Quakers could not give a 'methodical or intelligible account of what they themselves or their party hold', but largely because the movement had so attracted many people who 'being convinced of the evil of sin, the necessity and goodness of a Religious Life, and not having knowledge enough to perceive the true Nature, Reasons, and Foundations of the Christian faith... have [fallen] in with the Quakers'. Whilst ultimately damning, the Quakers' strong moral concern was specifically noted, in sharp contrast to accusations of debauchery and sexual impropriety which the Quakers endured for much of their early history, and the divines ultimately accepted that many Quakers were simply 'honest well-meaning ignorant persons'.⁵⁷ However, despite this, 'the whole Body of this People seem to be judicially deserted of God'.⁵⁸ The Quakers were infected with spiritual pride, refusing to accept those outside the movement as worthy of their religious communion and displaying an 'unwearied industry to make proselytes'.⁵⁹ Moreover, whilst discussion of the precise Quaker doctrines which opposed Christianity was left to the rest of the publication, the epistle lamented more generally that they dressed up their ideas 'under Scripture and Orthodox phrases; of which while their hearers take their meanings to be the same with the generally-received import of the words, they intend by them quite another thing'.⁶⁰ This was an acknowledgement of the Quakers' attempt to secure theological respectability, but also implied that their claims to orthodoxy were no more than tactical attempts to deceive their listeners. Ultimately, then, this assessment was an indictment of their success.

Isaac Pennington's *The flesh and blood of Christ*, published in 1675, adeptly demonstrated the intransigence of Quaker theologians. Even after the furore of the Barbican debates, the publication did not engage with

⁵⁷ John Faldo 'The Epistles of Many Learned and Worthy Divines', in *Quakerism no Christianity* (1674), 2; see above 116-7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 2-3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 3-5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 4.

the strongest arguments against Quakerism. In the preface to this work, a certain 'J.P.' claimed that they had been very concerned to reject the charge that Quakers 'account the blood of Christ, no more than a common thing', but had no opportunity to do so as it was not covered in the Barbican debate. They also noted that they had 'often heard [the Quakers] (even the ancient ones of them) own Christ, both inwardly and outwardly'.⁶¹ These comments alluded to the greater radicalism of 'ancient' Friends, and so tacitly acknowledged the changing face of Quaker theology, and a Christological tension between the first Quakers and their successors. Yet they also demonstrated that the metaphysical issue was still not met by Quakers – for the charge was really a corollary of denial of the person of Christ (challenging their inadequate theology of Incarnation and the positive role of the flesh) which was tackled at length in the debate.

This reading is confirmed by the discussion which followed. Penington began by denying that he had described Christ as a 'spiritual man consisting of Flesh, Blood and Bones', presumably to distance himself from Melchiorite Christology and to affirm the genuine particularity of the human Christ. He then proceeded to state that 'true, Christ inwardly, or to his inward being, was a Spirit, or God blessed for ever manifested in Flesh, which (to speak properly) cannot have Flesh, Blood and Bones, as man hath'.⁶² Penington stressed that the motivation for his convictions was primarily religious, rather than metaphysical. The Quakers do not intend to 'vilifie the Flesh and Blood of Christ'. Indeed, 'by owning the mystery, and receiving the mystery, we are not taught of God to deny any thing of the outward Flesh and Blood, or of his obedience and sufferings in the Flesh, but rather are taught and enabled there rightly to understand it, and to reap the benefits and precious fruits of it'.⁶³ Here, Penington echoed Penn's words in *The invalidity*. Nonetheless, he could not explain why Christ's human body was valuable – why Christ's human *death* was effective – and therefore he left the main thrust of his opponents' criticism unanswered. Penington stated simply that 'if I should speak vehemently concerning mens neglecting the mystery, and setting up that which is outward instead of it, and without it; I should not be condemned, but justified of the Lord in so doing'.⁶⁴ His protestation was intended to reassure opponents of his orthodoxy, but lacked any real content.

⁶¹ Isaac Penington, *The flesh & blood of Christ*, P1168 (London?, 1675), sig. A2r-A2v.

⁶² *Ibid.* 2.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 5, 14.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 17.

Moreover, he still affirmed that ‘Flesh and Blood cannot reveal’, and that ‘still [the flesh of Christ] was a veil, and the mystery was the thing’.⁶⁵

Nonetheless, alongside this intransigence – and despite Penn’s tenuous claims and contradictions – the Quakers won at least some support in their efforts against Faldo. The Cambridge Platonist Henry More bought all the major works of the Faldo dispute, and wrote to Penn in 1675 to congratulate his performance:

I met with several excellent Passages in them, that are very expressive of a vigorous Resentment, and Experience of what appertains to Life and Holiness; and that I exceedingly rejoice that the Quakers have emerged above the low Beginning of an heartless and hopeless Familism, that quitting the Expectation of a glorious Immortality after this Life, quitted also a Dependence or Relation to our Saviour’s Person as Man, believing his Soul as mortal... and that there is nothing surviving of him, but that Light that was ever, and is common to all Men.⁶⁶

Thus, More perceived that the Quakers had progressed towards a satisfactory demonstration of their belief in eternal rewards, and their acceptance of Christ as Saviour. He acknowledged that the Christological issue was a major factor in his own opinion of the group – and it is important to note that Penn seems to have convinced at least one weighty intellectual that the Quakers were less Christologically radical than they had been. As the next chapter will indicate, More’s intellectual influence upon the movement would soon become more explicit. Perhaps this letter points to the Faldo dispute as necessary groundwork for crucial engagement in subsequent years.

Conclusion

The disputes of the 1670s demonstrated the great challenges facing any intellectual outworking of the Quakers’ belief in the immanent Christ. By this time, Quaker apologists accepted openly that the Light within was derivative of ‘Christ’ in himself, and at least some engaged directly with the metaphysical issue. This indicated the greater willingness of later Quakers to compromise, in order to confirm their Christian

⁶⁵ Ibid. 37, 32.

⁶⁶ More, *Two letters*, 39.

respectability. Even the title of Penn and Whitehead's *The Christian-Quaker* indicates the centrality of this motivation in doctrinal developments during this period.

Friends had still not articulated a full account of Christ's ontology (or indeed, the role of the outward Christ at all, outside a soteriological concern), and their greater engagement with the metaphysical issue was ultimately confused and inconsistent; no watertight response had been offered by the middle of the 1670s. Nonetheless, there were subtle signs of change during these years, and the support offered by Henry More was not incidental. Rather, it indicated the growing intersection of Quakers with an intellectual cluster around Lady Anne Conway (More's student, and an eventual convert to Quakerism). This association would provide new possibilities for the clarification of Quaker theology, and it is not surprising that in the years that followed, Quaker Christology was largely shaped by those who considered the underlying ontological question much more explicitly. This was most true of Robert Barclay and George Keith, as their close involvement with Conway increased in the mid-1670s.

V. THE VEHICULUM DEI

[W]e understand a Spiritual, heavenly and invisible Principle, in which God, as Father, Son, and Spirit, dwells: a measure of which Divine and glorious Life is in all men, as a Seed, which, of its own natur, draws, invites, and inclines to God, and this we call *Vehiculum Dei*, or the Spiritual body of Christ, the flesh and blood of Christ which came down from heaven, of which all the Saints do feed, and are thereby nourished unto eternal Life.¹

It was at this vulnerable and transitional stage in the development of Quaker theology, in 1676, that Robert Barclay published his *Theologiae verè Christianae apologia*. The work was a significant expansion of fifteen theological theses, published separately in Amsterdam a year earlier, which Barclay had defended with George Keith (at that time, a fellow Quaker in Aberdeen).² Barclay's concern for '*Theologiae verè Christianae*' in the title alone demonstrated his concern for theological respectability, as a quest for 'true Christianity', and his understanding of his work as an '*apologia*' underlined his understanding of the task as one operating in conversation with the wider intellectual milieu.³ Two years later, he published his own English translation of this work as the renowned *Apology for the true Christian divinity*. Barclay's own summary description of the measure of Christ, taken from this work, is given above. This chapter will examine the meaning and intellectual origins of the *Vehiculum Dei*, demonstrating the indispensable role of non-Quakers in the formation of this central notion.

Robert Barclay was socially empowered, as a distant relation of the royal family and the eldest son of the laird of Ury, and his education suggested an obvious talent for theological communication. In 1659, as the failure of the Cromwellian regime threatened further civil wars, the ten-year-old Barclay was transferred from his strict Calvinist education in Scotland to the Scots College in Paris – which aimed to train Catholic priests to reconvert Scotland – where his uncle was principal, and where he won book prizes from his tutors.

¹ Robert Barclay, *An apology for the true Christian divinity*, B720 (Aberdeen, 1678), 94.

² Robert Barclay, *Theses theologicae*, B737 (Amsterdam, 1675); Robert Barclay and George Keith, *Quakerism confirmed, or, a vindication*, B733 (London, 1676).

³ The classic templates for Christian apologetic literature were the second-century responses to Greco-Roman and Jewish criticism, for example the writings of Justin Martyr and Tertullian. Against Hugh S. Pyper, Barclay's decision to write an apology does not prevent us viewing the work also as a piece of 'systematic theology'. Hugh S. Pyper, 'Robert Barclay: The Art of Apologetics', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers*, 207-223, at 208.

Yet Barclay rejected Catholicism after his return to Scotland in 1663, and his subsequent conversion to Quakerism in 1666-67 completed a religious exploration which, along with his father's description of him as 'very ambitious of Knowledge', is suggestive of intellectual questing.⁴ Unsurprisingly, the primary intended audience of the *Apology* was the educated elite, demonstrated by the dedication to Charles II at the beginning of the work (dated November 1675) and Barclay's decision initially to write in Latin.⁵

Perhaps as a reaction against Barclay's erudition, scholars have often portrayed him as a corrupting influence upon earlier Quakerism – most notably (for Creasey) through the introduction of 'quasi-philosophical dualism', or (for Bailey) through the reduction of a 'radically christopresent theology' to a 'Spirit theology'.⁶ Changes affecting early Christology are firmly associated with Barclay's contribution, and his thought is cast in terms of an unhelpful addition of a pessimistic, Calvinist theological anthropology to the Quakers' own more optimistic view. However, this thesis has already demonstrated various important shifts affecting Quaker theology before he wrote the *Apology* – indeed, even before he embraced Quakerism. Moreover, Barclay's explicit emphasis upon the universal possibility of salvation and rejection of the doctrine of imputed righteousness made clear his opposition to Reformed Protestantism as it was stated in the Westminster Confession.⁷ Of the fifteen propositions which formed the structure of the *Apology*, two were devoted to a discussion of universal redemption and, though he accepted the doctrine of the Fall and the inevitability of sin whilst remaining in the earthly nature, he did not believe that humans carried the guilt of sin 'until they make it theirs by the like acts of disobedience': he unashamedly adopted the unorthodox position that babies were born sinless.⁸ Indeed, as Creasey himself notes, Barclay was no more negative about humanity than his predecessors – and in conversation with those outside the movement he would have seemed remarkably positive.⁹ The real issue, then, is whether the escape from sin in this life

⁴ Gordon DesBrisay, 'Barclay, Robert, of Ury (1648–1690)', *ODNB*. <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/1347>> accessed 2 April 2015; Pyper, 'Robert Barclay', 207.

⁵ The use of Latin was probably necessary, as the work was first published in Amsterdam. Latin remained the *lingua franca* of the time, and would have given the work a wider reach outside the Atlantic Isles. Nonetheless, it would have restricted its influence amongst ordinary English Quakers – indicating its primary intention as apologetic, rather than as an educational tool.

⁶ See above, 41-2.

⁷ Westminster Assembly. *The humble advice of the Assembly... concerning a confession of faith, presented by them*, W1427, (London, 1647), 8-9, 13.

⁸ Barclay, *An apology*, 63.

⁹ Creasey, 'Early Quaker Christology', 7.

which Barclay envisaged was a departure from the beliefs of earlier Quakers – and if so, we must locate the driving force of his theology somewhere other than a covertly Calvinist understanding of total depravity.

This chapter will argue that, despite significant amendments to the earlier model of sanctification, Barclay was carried by the same theological tide that directed Quaker Christological development from the start. Accordingly, both Bailey and Creasey underplay the theological problems associated with the Quakers' existing Christology, and therefore underestimate the ways in which Barclay strengthened earlier claims. Thus, viewing Barclay's defence as a response to the Christological questions facing Quakerism (rather than as the infiltration of the Quaker message) brings his main innovations into sharper relief. For, crucially, Barclay's position employed a different metaphysical framework, giving 'body' genuine conceptual integrity in Quaker Christology. Barclay was not diluting early Quaker theology, but attempting to correct inherent tensions within it.

This can be inferred from the Quakers' reaction to Barclay's work, which was noted even by their opponents. In 1692, the prominent Oxford divine John Norris (1657-1712) spoke of the 'the general Exultation and Triumph that is among the Quakers upon the late Publication of Mr. Barclay's Works in Folio.'¹⁰ The success of the *Apology* was extraordinary: it has since been reprinted over sixty times, of which nine new editions were issued in its first hundred years.¹¹ Moreover, George Fox encouraged Barclay to publish. Writing to him on 10 December 1675, Fox turned to discuss Barclay's 'books' and concluded that 'it is well that they are sent, & keep within the Rule of the Spirit of Life which will lead into all truth'.¹² This statement was written just after the dedication of the *Apology* to Charles II was penned, in November 1675, and Fox was almost certainly including the work in his advice here. Fox's endorsement serves a serious blow to any notion that Barclay was undermining the original insight of Quakerism. This is worth stressing: the Quakers themselves seem to have delighted in his contribution.

¹⁰ John Norris, *Two treatises concerning the divine light*, N1276 (London, 1692), pt 2, 1.

¹¹ Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, ed. Peter D. Sippel (Farmington, 2002), iii. British Library, 'Search: Apology for the True Christian Divinity', ESTC Catalogue, <<http://estc.bl.uk/F/HM3RQMKTkX5GETV3JPKUSDDQF1PAAPD1YJS77X3G3AB6SHPSJ-53139?func=short-jump&jump=000001>>, accessed 5th February 2016.

¹² Fox to Barclay, *Reliquiae Barclaianae*, 16 December 1675, FHL, vii.

The *Vehiculum Dei* and Christ in Barclay's Apology

One can only understand the precise role of Christ for Barclay by understanding a little of his whole theological framework. In Barclay's view, 'true knowledge' was at the heart of a saving faith, and he identified this knowledge as the inward revelation of Christ, occurring 'in, and by the Spirit'.¹³ Thus, whilst Barclay was keen to place Christ at the heart of revelation, he also asserted that the believer was led to Christ by the Spirit. His distinction between Christ and Spirit in the process of revelation is often fluid, but his use of scriptural citations provides clarity. 'No man can know Jesus to be Lord, but by the Holy Ghost', and it was primarily 'a manifestation of the Spirit' which was 'given to every man, to profit withal'.¹⁴ This points to the central role of the Holy Spirit in conversion – a well-established Reformed principle at the time – which adds weight to Geoffrey Nuttall's assertion that Quakerism emerged as the logical, radical conclusion of the spiritualist emphasis in Puritanism.¹⁵ The Spirit was that which drew the believer into communion with Christ. Barclay's argument began with pneumatology, and the first three of his propositions focus primarily on the Spirit, not Christ (although, typically for a Quaker, his language was notably fluid).¹⁶

Nonetheless, the Quaker understanding of universal salvation necessitated that this inward presence must involve the direct presence of Christ in some sense. For Barclay, sin was the loss of 'the sensation... of this Inward Testimony, or Seed, of God' – a lost spiritual awareness – and redemption came through participation in 'the mystery of [Jesus's] death', when individuals 'suffer[ed] his Seed, and Light (inlightening [sic] their hearts)'.¹⁷ Barclay affirmed the truth of substitutionary atonement, but stressed that Christ's death and resurrection occurred continually and inwardly, so that salvation was a possibility for all (because the Light was within all people as a Seed).¹⁸ The Light within was the *Vehiculum Dei* ('vehicle

¹³ Barclay, *An apology*, 1, 3.

¹⁴ Ibid. 13, 21. (1 Cor. 12.3, 7.)

¹⁵ See above, 39n.

¹⁶ See above, 111; below, 168.

¹⁷ Barclay, *An apology*, 61, 73.

¹⁸ Ibid. 87. Hugh Barbour suggests that Barclay was one of several Quaker theologians who distinguished the 'Seed' from the 'Light', motivated by challenges to the notion that Christ might be in sinners as well as believers. Nonetheless, any possible distinction seems to be expressing different stages of spiritual maturity, exploiting the distinctive metaphorical connotations of seeds (which grow into something greater) and light (which represents goodness, divinity, and the agency of Christ in the believer), rather than the existence of distinct entities within the soul. That they were generally understood to be interchangeable is clear from the widespread use of both terms alongside one another, as well as Claridge's citation of Keith describing the Light in all people (that is, the Light as

of God') described at the beginning of this chapter.¹⁹ And because it was the body of Christ, the individual could either crucify this body, or feed upon it in divine communion. This was an immanent, inward encounter with Christ.

The immediacy of encounter with Christ was clearly important to Barclay. Even in 1670, he wrote that:

It is not the works, of Christ wrought in us, nor the works which wee work, in his Spirit, and power; that wee rest and relye upon, as the Ground and foundation of our justification; but it is Christ himselfe, the worker revealed in us, and his Spirit, his life covering us, wee feel our justification and peace with God in him, and through him, the alone Mediatour betwixt God, and Man.²⁰

This quotation serves as a reminder that Barclay was still committed to affirming the presence of a literal Christ within the individual in some sense, even as he entered the 1670s, as well as indicating the importance of Christ as a mediator in Barclay's thought.

This mediatory role of Christ would soon take on ontological significance for Barclay, as by 1675 his understanding of Christ's body no longer conformed to the Cartesian dualism with which his thought has been associated. Now, Barclay collapsed the dichotomy between flesh and spirit altogether: the *Vehiculum Dei* was 'Spiritual' but also 'Flesh and bone'. This was not the spiritualised body of 1 Corinthians 15 (that is, the human yet glorified body of Christ, and the 'first fruits' of our own resurrection). For this was the 'flesh and blood' body of the unique Christ, and yet the 'Divine... Life', within which God (as Father, Son and Spirit) dwelt. Thus, it was neither 'man's nature... in that we make it a distinct, separate thing from man's soul', nor 'the proper essence and natur [sic] of God, precisely taken, which is not devisible into parts and measurs', nor even an 'accident' of God (according to the Aristotelian categories), but a 'real Spiritual Substance'. It therefore displayed aspects of both humanity and divinity. Barclay was also clear that he was not proposing the union of the literal fullness of Christ with each individual, although he did

an immature spiritual presence), and Whitehead's reference to Christ as a 'Seed'. Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England*, 109-110; George Keith, *The way to the city of God, described*, K235 (Aberdeen, 1678), 155-56; Richard Claridge, *The divinity, universality and sufficiency of the Light within*, ESTC N008155 (London, 1701), 1; George Whitehead, *The Christian doctrine* [sic], W1905 (London, 1693), 8.

¹⁹ Ibid. 94.

²⁰ Robert Barclay, *Truth cleared of calumnies*, B738 (s.l., 1670), 34.

accept that ‘Christ is in all men, as in a Seed’ and ‘never is, nor can be, separate from that Holy, Pure Seed and Light which is in all men.’²¹

It is telling that in the original Latin Barclay even described the entity as a ‘*principium et organum*’.²² The word ‘*principium*’ refers to an origin, cause, or foundational principle. ‘*Organum*’ classically referred to a musical instrument, but was later used to refer to the jugular vein or bodily organs, and conveyed undertones of agency and the means of communication (referencing the tongue, organ, or power of speech, and even specifically the ‘mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost’ on occasion).²³ Therefore, Barclay’s Latin description evoked both physical and conceptual connotations, and might be understood to refer to an immediate and animating instrument of God’s revelation. In his English translation, which described the *Vehiculum Dei* as a ‘Spiritual, heavenly and invisible Principle’, Barclay collated all these meanings to reduce the emphasis on the physical, and dilute its characterisation as human. Yet, it was nonetheless still portrayed as something transformed beyond any of the ordinary categories by which pre-resurrection humans conceived of the world. In short, Barclay rejected the polarisation of physical and spiritual nature. Barclay left the term *Vehiculum Dei* untranslated in the English *Apology*, as if to emphasise the innovative nature of his account (and perhaps also the mystique of the *Vehiculum Dei* itself). Later, he explained that the term was inspired by Song of Songs 3.9, noting that in this passage, ‘King Solomon made unto himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon’ and ‘that by Solomon is mystically understood Christ, of whom Solomon was a figur, or type, none who are spiritually minded can deny, and consequently that this chariot or vehicle must be mystically and spiritually understood’. He therefore claimed, against his opponents, that the term was scriptural, even pointing to Bixtorf’s lexicon of Hebrew to defend his translation of the term *merkabah*.²⁴ Furthermore, whilst earlier Quakers had implied that the historical Jesus was a type of the

²¹ Ibid. 95-8.

²² Robert Barclay, *Theologiae verè Christianae apologia*, B736 (Amsterdam, 1676), 83.

²³ Charlton Lewis, *An Elementary Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1963), 572, 650; R.E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List* (Oxford, 1980), 325, 272.

²⁴ Barclay, *Robert Barclay’s apology... vindicated*, 162. Notably, the connotations of this term were not limited to Song of Songs 3.9 in contemporary discussion. John Norris conflated the Quakers’ understanding of the *Vehiculum Dei* with their view of Christ’s spiritual body as it was drawn from John 6. John Donne also referred to creatures as ‘*vehicula Dei*’, before describing them as ‘chariots, which convey God, and bring him to our sight’, and this could also refer to the chariot in Ezekiel 1-3. The *merkabah* of Ezekiel held a deep significance in early Jewish *merkabah* mysticism, and Barclay’s description of the chariot of Solomon in ‘mystical’ terms suggests that he viewed himself as operating within a mystical tradition. This view became less fashionable in Quaker scholarship since Geoffrey

Light within, Barclay now emphasised how Old Testament types and figures foreshadowed Christ.²⁵ Therefore, he continued to emphasise a spiritual or figurative reading, but subtly placed greater emphasis on the outward, historical Jesus.

This was, then, a body which was experienced in a locality; it was a measure of Christ's essence but not the fullness of Christ himself; it was neither spirit nor body in isolation; and it was, strictly speaking, neither simply God nor simply human. This was a significant development of his earlier ideas regarding the importance of mediation: the 'real Spiritual Substance' was an additional supernatural category which allowed for the salvation of all humanity, providing both the body to be crucified or raised up, and the means by which God was revealed to the individual (in and by the measure of the Spirit of God within in each person). Despite his high regard for the spirit, the Apologist placed the category of 'body' at the very heart of his religious and theological exploration and, in reconsidering it, allowed 'spirit' to interact with and encompass human, divine, spiritual and physical properties.

Hugh Pyper helpfully describes the *Vehiculum Dei* as a 'buffer between God's perfection and human imperfection', and the *Apology* was not the only place in which Barclay alluded to the need for this buffer.²⁶ So too, in a letter written to the Dutch Ambassador Adrian Paets, written in November 1676 and published in English in 1686, Barclay wrote of a

certain Principle, which is a body in naturals in Relation to the Spirituall World; And therefore may be called a Divine Body; Not as if it were a part of GOD, who is a most pure Spirit, but the Organ or Instrument of God, by which he worketh in us and stirreth up in us these Ideas of Divine things, This is that Flesh and Blood of Christ, by which the Saints are nurished [sic], which is a Mystery to all unregeneated and meer natural Men...²⁷

Nuttall's influential work on the Puritan origins of Quakerism. However, as Michael Birkel more recently noted, Barclay also referred to Knorr's *Kabbala Denudata* – a translation of Kabbalistic texts – in his own explanation of the term. Similarly, Edward Grubb noted the allusion to the chariot in Song of Songs alongside Rufus Jones's discussion of this image in Schwenckfeld's theology. John Norris, *Two treatises*, pt 1, 38; Henry Alford, *The Works of John Donne: With a Memoir by H. Alford*, 10 vols, vol. 4 (London, 1870), 177; Edward Grubb, *Quaker Thought & History: A Volume of Essays* (New York, 1925), 1-16, 13-4; Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1961), 42; Michael Birkel, 'Immediate Revelation, Kabbalah, and Magic: The Primacy of Experience in the Theology of George Keith', in Dandelion and Angell (eds.), *Early Quakers*, 256-272, at 263.

²⁵ See above, 108-9, 119.

²⁶ Pyper, 'Robert Barclay', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers*, 207-233, at 216.

²⁷ Robert Barclay, *The possibility & necessity of the inward immediate revelation*, B732 (London, 1686), 18.

Barclay suggested that the purpose of this body was to ‘stir up’ divine and supernatural ideas within us, and so, to enable the possibility of inward, infallible knowledge from God. This letter has been used to argue for his Cartesian sympathies: Trueblood used it to claim that Barclay was ‘in an ever deeper sense’ more Cartesian than he was Newtonian, based on his notion of separate inward and outward senses (which he may well have inherited from Keith).²⁸ Certainly the wider context of the letter, proposing a sharp distinction between these forms of knowledge and arguing strongly for innate ideas, demonstrated Barclay’s operation in a broadly Cartesian intellectual world (and indeed, he directly cited Descartes as an ally).²⁹ Yet, his understanding of a ‘Divine Body’ was not straightforwardly Cartesian at all. This passage, written at the same time as the *Apology*, elucidates Barclay’s understanding of the *Vehiculum Dei* as a mediating force (both in a metaphysical sense, and as the enabler of our salvation), allowing divinity to operate within us, but staunchly as separate from us.

As Christ’s body, the *Vehiculum Dei* was clearly of Christological importance to Barclay. It is especially important as an interpretative tool given the sparse attention Barclay gave to the Christological question directly. He relied heavily on scripture to answer to the most fundamental Christological questions, and when deviating from this trend he certainly seemed to be aiming at orthodoxy. He described Christ as ‘having been with God from all eternity, being himself God, and also in time partaking of the natur [sic] of man’, and celebrated how ‘through him, is the goodness and love of God conveyed to mankind, and by him again man receiveth and partaketh of these mercys’.³⁰ Yet the *Vehiculum Dei* posed a challenge to Chalcedonian orthodoxy: it not only suggested a blend of the Divine and human natures in Christ (so violating the Chalcedonian principle that Christ’s natures were united ‘unconfusedly, unalterably,

²⁸ Trueblood, *Robert Barclay*, 133. As Alison Coudert notes, Keith did help Barclay write the letter to Paets. However, pushing against Trueblood’s interpretation, the suggestion of ‘spiritual senses’ echoed Origen much more than Descartes. Origen had argued that outward, non-spiritual senses could only detect outward phenomena, so that inward senses were necessary to detect spiritual phenomena. The seventeenth-century witnessed something of an Origenist revival, which was supported by Keith’s associates, Henry More and Anne Conway. That said, Keith did not go so far as Origen in defining five separate spiritual senses, and whilst Origen’s language was notably ‘sensory’ (for example, writing of spiritual ‘smelling’, and ‘the eyes of the mind’), Keith argued simply for the authority of the Light, divorced from the more sensory implications of the Christian tradition before him. Alison Coudert, ‘A Quaker-Kabbalist Controversy: George Fox’s Reaction to Francis Mercury Van Helmont’, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 39 (1976), 171-189, at 180-1; Mark J. McNroy, ‘Origen of Alexandria’, in Sarah Coakley and Paul Gavrilyuk (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge, 2011), 20-35, at 21; Hutton, *Anne Conway*, 69-72. For a more detailed discussion of Keith’s notion of the spiritual senses, see below, 171.

²⁹ Barclay, *The possibility & necessity*, 16.

³⁰ Barclay, *An apology*, 11.

undividedly’ so that ‘the character of each nature is preserved’) but also the direct inclusion of all three persons of the Godhead in Christ’s divine identity. So, whilst Christ’s Incarnate identity comprised a human body united to God in all three persons, his body had also, even *before* the resurrection (because salvation was universal throughout the ages), taken a spiritual form with divine and human qualities.

This also had clear ramifications for his ideas on the Trinity. We might be tempted to understand Barclay’s description of the *Vehiculum Dei* as that ‘in which God, as Father, Son, and Spirit, dwells’ as an attempt to avoid modalism, as all three were present alongside one another. However, suggestions of modalism in Barclay’s other works make a conflation of the three more likely. For example, in his 1673 *A catechism and confession of faith*, he seemed to conflate ‘Spirit’, ‘Christ’, and ‘Spirit of Christ’, before quoting Colossians 2.9 that in Christ ‘dwelleth all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily’, to explain the relationship of Jesus to the Godhead.³¹ Similarly, Barclay understood the process of sanctification to be facilitated by a ‘measur [sic] of the Light of his own Son, a measur of Grace, or a measur of the Spirit; which the Scriptur expresses by several names’.³² In this light, we should read Barclay’s reference to the three hypostases in the *Vehiculum Dei* not as a subtle reinforcement of his Trinitarian orthodoxy, but as a denial of separate hypostases (though not a denial of separate roles). ‘God’, ‘humanity’ and the ‘Vehiculum Dei’ were the main categories of being, and the Trinity was conceived in terms of function, rather than person.

Therefore, the orthodoxy and coherence of Barclay’s hypostatic union was undermined where Barclay’s Quaker heritage took precedent. Nevertheless, this framework did at least allow him to explain the inward Light in a manner which maintained Christ’s immanence alongside a genuine appreciation for the human, fleshly element of Christ’s identity – and in this sense, Barclay sought to address a major criticism of Quaker theology. Indeed, whilst Paets did not reply to Barclay in writing, the apologist claimed that Paets admitted ‘he had been mistaken in his opinion of the Quakers, for he found they could make a Reasonable Plea for the foundation of their Religion’.³³ This claim prefaced the publication of the letter, indicating that theological respectability was a central motivation of the decision to publish. Moreover, if we accept the claim as reliable, it suggests that Quakerism was garnering sympathy from outsiders *as intellectual equals*,

³¹ Robert Barclay, *A catechism and confession of faith*, B725 (London, 1673), 15-16, 25.

³² Barclay, *An apology*, 90.

³³ Barclay, *The possibility & necessity*, sig. A1v.

if not as converts. Perhaps this, not global conversion, should be understood as the true mark of theological respectability.

Of course, the motif of Christ's unique spiritual body had been employed before Barclay. Certainly, it echoed the *extra calvinisticum*, and whilst Barclay's theological anthropology amounted to a rejection of his Calvinist upbringing, his view of Christ's spiritual body certainly reflected something of its influence. Yet the notion of a 'middle substance' went beyond Calvin. Alternatively, Barclay's implication of a bodily Christ even before the incarnation might be thought to align him more closely with elements of the radical reformation. Yet again, in contrast to Hoffman, there was nothing to suggest that Barclay's *physically* Incarnate Christ was not fully human, 'in the flesh'. Rather, he drew the Quaker position further towards the more acceptable Reformed theological milieu of the time, speaking positively of the Incarnate 'Flesh Christ'. Whilst he distinguished this from the more general 'body' of Christ and the 'Spiritual... flesh' of the *Vehiculum Dei*, both belong to Christ's identity as related stages of his existence.³⁴ In this sense, here Barclay was amplifying ideas hinted at in the dispute between Faldo and Penn, and this further suggests his place in a coherent process of theological refinement.

Thus, despite Barclay's retained pneumatological and modalist tendencies (and his departure from Chalcedonian orthodoxy at several points in his Christology), his model represented a significant attempt to reconcile the doctrine of the Light with a necessary respect for physicality at the heart of Christianity. This was achieved by a metaphysical framework in which spirit and body were not necessarily entirely opposed, and in which Christ's body possessed both divine and human qualities.

Robert Barclay and George Keith

What were the main influences facilitating Barclay's contribution? His close friendship with George Keith was of undeniable importance. The connection between the two men is uncontroversial and well-documented, most extensively in the 1946 doctoral thesis of Philip Wragge, which argues that Keith

³⁴ Barclay, *A catechism*, 20-29. See also, Barclay, *The possibility & necessity*, 3-4. Barclay denied the necessity of knowledge of the historical Incarnation for salvation, but he asserted the truth of the facts nonetheless, classifying them as 'integral' to faith, but not 'essential'.

profoundly influenced Barclay's thinking.³⁵ Keith was a gifted and well-connected philosopher who knew Barclay in Aberdeen, and he was almost certainly the primary influence upon Barclay's thought. The two published and travelled together, and Keith himself even ascribed Barclay's *Vehiculum Dei* to his own influence: writing in 1702, he noted that 'as he had the term, so he had the Notion of it from me.'³⁶ Keith was not a wholly reliable source, as he used this connection largely to demonstrate his own credentials in dismissing the *Vehiculum Dei* during his later disagreement with the Quakers.³⁷ Moreover, as Trueblood notes, he also left unmentioned the various occasions on which Barclay had written sections of his own books for him.³⁸ Therefore, he probably exaggerated his own influence to serve his reputation and his later theological crusade against Quakerism. Nonetheless, as the *Apology* grew out of Keith and Barclay's joint defence of the fifteen theses at Aberdeen, of course Keith's input can be assumed.

The extent and nature of the influence is harder to determine. Clearly, their work bears similarities. In the first instance, parallels can be drawn between Barclay's description of the *Vehiculum Dei* and Keith's early discussion of the Light within in *Immediate revelation*. Thus, in 1668, Keith described the Light within as

not a particle, or portion, of the Godhead, as the outward body of flesh and blood, is a particle of the great outward world, for the God-head is not divisible, nor discernible unto particles... but it is of the heavenly, spiritual and invisible substance and being, that is the most glorious being and principle, in which God, as Father, Son, and holy Ghost doth dwell... and out of these heavens, doth the seed of God come, who giveth it from himself out of Heaven, and soweth it in the heart of man... whereby this seed groweth up into a perfect substantial birth of one heavenly and incorruptible nature... which is Christ formed within, the body of Christ, his flesh and blood, which cometh down from heaven.³⁹

Keith's language notably anticipated Barclay's description of the *Vehiculum Dei*, particularly with regards to language of a 'Spiritual, heavenly and invisible Principle' and an emphasis on the indivisible nature of God.⁴⁰ To this extent, this passage indicates Keith's direct influence upon Barclay. Nonetheless, aside from these linguistic similarities, his account did not reflect the most novel elements of Barclay's understanding.

³⁵ Wragge, 'The Debt'.

³⁶ George Keith, *The standard of the Quakers examined*, ESTC T85248 (London, 1702), 212.

³⁷ See below, 208-38.

³⁸ Trueblood, *Robert Barclay*, 47.

³⁹ George Keith, *Immediate revelation*, K175 (Aberdeen, 1668), 7.

⁴⁰ Barclay, *An apology*, 94.

Whilst his understanding of spiritual flesh was an important affirmation of the physicality of the Light within, without the crucial description of a middle substance he could merely be referring to something resembling the *extra calvinisticum*. His description of the Godhead as not ‘discerptible’ indicates that he was receptive to the metaphysical writings of Henry More, who coined the term in his discussion of physical and spiritual entities.⁴¹ Yet his fluid understanding of the Trinity was unexceptional amongst early Quakers, and at this stage, there was nothing more to suggest that Keith’s own metaphysical understanding was anything other than standard.

Furthermore, Keith was eager to stress the limited use of outward forms when understanding spiritual reality: ‘alone appearance and revelation of God in his own seed and birth in man, is the most near, and most immediate; and giveth unto man, the most intuitive, and clear, and open and satisfactory knowledge of God, that he is capable of in his highest supernatural elevation’.⁴² He argued for the existence of ‘spiritual senses’, which are described in scripture using the language of the physical senses. Keith mused that the ‘sensible’ forms, such as manna, flesh, and bread, in which God formerly revealed himself might be seen as ‘only but metaphors and figures’ by the ‘natural man’. However, ‘the spiritual misteries represented under them, and signified by them, are real and substantial things, as really affecting the spiritual senses of the spiritual man... as the outward things affect the natural or animal senses of the natural man’. Therefore,

outward things are but figures of the inward and spiritual, which as far exceed and transcend them in life, glory and beauty, and excellency, as a living body doth the shadow, so that this whole visible world with all the glory of it, is but a shadow in respect of the spiritual and inward, signified thereby.⁴³

As noted above, the notion of ‘inward senses’ has been characterised as Keith and Barclay’s innovation.⁴⁴ However, it had strong precedent in the earliest Quaker vision. For example, we might compare it with Whitehead’s earlier reiteration that the Light must be spiritual (that is, not natural) if it were to discern

⁴¹ More was attempting to avoid the unhelpful associations implied in the ordinary language of ‘division’. He noted that it was possible to conceive of distinctions within an entity that did not correspond to its actual metaphysical nature, thus mentally separating what was more properly understood as indivisible (that is, indiscerpible). Therefore, More clarified that a spiritual entity was ‘*intellectually* divisible, but *Physically* indiscerpible’. Jasper Reid, *The Metaphysics of Henry More* (Dordrecht, 2012), 48, 187-188, 212.

⁴² Keith, *Immediate revelation*, 11.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 10-11.

⁴⁴ See above, 40, 167.

spiritual matters, or Christopher Atkinson's denial that Quakers followed a 'naturall light'.⁴⁵ This reflected their concern to distinguish between human conscience and the Light, and was necessary to rebut accusations that they followed human authority over the divine authority of Scripture. In fact, then, Keith was consolidating and systematising a standard Quaker view. Admittedly, since the fall, he emphasised that the 'unregenerate' man was unable to comprehend the 'spiritual world' – but ultimately, there was 'no other way to God, but by the Revelation of his Son, he dwells in the light inaccessible, which the mortal or natural understanding cannot approach unto clouds and round about him'.⁴⁶ Similarly, in his earliest Quaker publication, in 1670, Barclay stressed that 'The knowledge of Christ his crosse within which is his power, that crucifies unto the world, is more then the knowledge of the outward, and to know Christ after the Spirit is more, then to know him after the flesh'.⁴⁷ Ultimately, as Michael Birkel has noted, in the early years Keith sounded 'much like other early Quakers did when writing letters of spiritual counsel, filled with biblical allusions and apocalyptic urgency'.⁴⁸

More significant is Keith's description of the middle substance in *The way to the city of God*, published in 1678, although Keith claimed to have written it 'in the year 1669 ... In the time of his being a close Prisoner... in Edinburgh'. Keith wrote of the Incarnate Jesus himself as 'neither ... the God-head ... nor yet is it a particle or portion thereof' (again, because the God-head is not 'discerpible'), nor simply a man: rather, he was 'a certain middle nature, substance, or being, betwixt the God-head and mankind, that is as far, yea and much farther transcendent in Glory above the common nature of man, as the nature of man is above the nature of the beasts; yea it is even above the nature of Angels'. Keith was explicit: 'the Heavenly or Divine Substance or Essence, of which the Divine Birth was both conceived in Mary, and is inwardly conceived in the Saints, is of a middle nature'.⁴⁹ He was keen to clarify his orthodoxy, stressing that he viewed Jesus as 'Son of God and Son of Man'.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, his metaphysical understanding was clearly atypical, and a year later in *The true Christ owned as he is*, Keith posited that Christ was composed of

⁴⁵ Whitehead, *The glory*, 4; Atkinson et al., *Dauids enemies*, 16.

⁴⁶ Keith, *Immediate revelation*, 23, 34.

⁴⁷ Barclay, *Truth cleared*, 20.

⁴⁸ Birkel, 'Immediate Revelation, Kabbalah, and Magic', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers*, 257.

⁴⁹ Keith, *The way to the city of God, described*, sig. A1r, 130-33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 134.

‘Heavenly Flesh’ from the beginning, so that he was both God and ‘Heavenly Adam’ in Heaven even prior to the Incarnation.⁵¹

Accepting Keith’s description of the textual history of *The way to the city of God* wholesale would mean that Keith conceived of Jesus’s middle nature six years before Barclay wrote his *Apology*. The crucial question is, then, whether Barclay’s *Vehiculum Dei* was inspired by Keith’s ideas, as he articulated them here. At first sight it would certainly seem so – and Keith’s claims have been more or less accepted in recent scholarship, despite Trueblood’s caution as to his reliability.⁵² However, the fact that these ideas were not mirrored in any of his other works at this time, that he took so long to publish *The way to the city of God*, and that its final release coincided precisely with the English *Apology*, should give us cause to consider the date of this source in more detail.

Certainly, Keith’s later Quaker works demonstrated his strong support for Barclay’s understanding. In 1694, Keith even explicitly referenced Barclay to affirm the existence of ‘a middle being betwixt the Godhead and the souls of men, which is that Mediatory Spirit, and Divine Nature of Christ, as he was the Heavenly Man, Mediator, Head and High Priest and Husband of his Church from the beginning of the World’ and again, that ‘that divine vertue and influence of Light... is not the Godhead, but some Middle Being, called by some *Vehiculum Dei*’.⁵³ Yet in the 1660s, it simply was not so: Keith’s explanation of the inward Light in *Immediate revelation* was significantly less developed as a metaphysical statement than his account in *The way to the city of God*.

Not only this, but there was no mention of the *Vehiculum Dei* or any ‘middle being’ in the published accounts of Keith and Barclay’s disputation at Aberdeen, upon which the *Apology* was based. Indeed, even in 1676 they even explicitly stressed that ‘Christ in us, or the seed, is not a third spirituall nature, distinct from that which was in the man Christ Jesus’ and that in Jesus there were three natures: ‘the Godhead is one nature, the nature of the soul, is a second, and the nature of the body is the third’.⁵⁴ The soul is unlikely to be the middle nature posited by Keith and Barclay elsewhere, as it is part of human nature, which forces

⁵¹ George Keith, *The true Christ owned*, K219 (s.l., 1679), 6.

⁵² Pyper, ‘Robert Barclay’, in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers*, 216.

⁵³ George Keith, *The arraignment of worldly philosophy*, K143 (London, 1694), 20.

⁵⁴ Barclay and Keith, *Quakerism confirmed*, 32-3.

us to conclude that Barclay's understanding of the middle nature was a late addition to his argument. Certainly, if Keith had written *The way to the city of God* in its final form in the 1660s, the metaphysical understanding of the passages above would have been a striking anomaly. Likewise, given the intimate connection of Keith and Barclay throughout this period, it seems strange that this argument should not be found in Barclay's earlier writings. In Barclay's *A catechism and confession of faith* (1673), Barclay spoke quite straightforwardly of Jesus as God, writing that 'we know that the Son of God is come... and we are... in his Son Jesus Christ: This is the true God, and Eternal Life'.⁵⁵

More likely than Keith's direct influence, then, is that Keith conceived of the kernel of this notion as early as the late 1660s without expressing it in a mature form, but was encouraged to refine his old manuscript for publication by circumstances in the mid-1670s. Of course, one such circumstance may have been the positive reception of Barclay's *Apology* itself after their joint defence of the *Fifteen theological theses*. Yet more telling is Keith's description of the Godhead as not 'discerpible' in the passages above. That Henry More influenced Keith is uncontroversial; it was even rumoured that Keith's conviction in 1662 was due to his reading of More's *Mystery of godliness*.⁵⁶ Yet Keith's use of this unusual term demonstrates that Keith was considering More as a metaphysical thinker, even in the late 1660s. Elsewhere, More mentioned that he actually made comments on 'the first part' of *Immediate revelation*, which he intended to communicate to him (but entrusted to William Penn to pass on instead).⁵⁷ Nonetheless, the connection of both Keith and Barclay with More and a number of his close acquaintances would gather momentum just as the *Apology* was being written, and it is likely that this association significantly encouraged the amplification of this unusual metaphysics in defence of the Light within.

⁵⁵ Barclay, *A catechism*, 22.

⁵⁶ Sarah Hutton and Marjorie Nicolson (eds.), *The Conway Letters* (Oxford, 1992), 341; Ethyn Kirby Williams, *George Keith, 1638-1716* (New York, 1942), 7-8; Henry Cadbury, 'George Keith to Henry More', in *JFHS*, 46, 1 (1954), 59-63; Sarah Hutton, *Anne Conway: A Woman Philosopher* (Cambridge, 2004), 188-9.

⁵⁷ More, *Two letters*, 38.

Robert Barclay and the Intellectual Circle of Ragley Hall

Neither Keith nor Barclay conceived of the *Vehiculum Dei* in a vacuum; rather, the idea grew out of the convergence of the Quakers' own Christological discussions with much wider conversations regarding the nature of matter and spirit in the later seventeenth century. As noted above, the connection between More and Keith is widely recognised. Furthermore, Allison Coudert has contextualised this association as part of More's correspondence with Lady Anne Conway and her intellectual circle.⁵⁸ Keith's visit to Ragley Hall in William Penn's stead is well-evidenced, and has therefore taken the limelight in terms of scholarly consideration.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, evidence for Barclay's personal connection with Conway is also extensive and requires further attention. This section will expand discussion of the direct influence of this group upon Barclay, so questioning Keith's claim that he wrote the pertinent sections of *The way to the city of God* in 1669.

That Keith and Barclay were so distinctive from other Quakers, had so much in common, and were both in contact with Lady Anne Conway (1631-79) at Ragley Hall is strong evidence for the significant impact of this connection upon them both. Conway was certainly no unlearned radical, as posthumous daughter of the Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Heneage Finch, and sister of the eventual Lord Chancellor, also named Heneage Finch. However, as a woman she was still excluded from a formal university education. Therefore, most of her philosophical exploration was conducted through unofficial correspondence with Henry More – her brother's tutor in Cambridge at the time. The alchemist Francis Mercury van Helmont arrived at Ragley in 1670, after being invited as an attempt to find a cure for her debilitating headaches. Van Helmont was the son of the distinguished Paracelsian alchemist, Jan Baptiste van Helmont, and More was 'one of the most eminent philosophical authorities in England' at the time.⁶⁰ Conversations between Conway, More and van Helmont produced novel approaches to ontological questions, and these approaches clearly influenced the views of Keith and Barclay.

⁵⁸ Allison P. Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century: The Life and Thought of Francis Mercury van Helmont (1614-1698)* (Leiden, 1999), 153-307.

⁵⁹ Hutton and Nicolson (eds.), *Conway Letters*, 401-403.

⁶⁰ Hutton, *Anne Conway*, 15-7, 30, 146, 141; Reid, *The Metaphysics of Henry More*, 1.

In particular, it is likely that Keith developed his belief in the transmigration of souls from his conversations with van Helmont.⁶¹ In fact, More criticised Keith's theory of 'the soul of Christ extended everywhere out of his body through the whole Creation'. Yet their acquaintance also seems to have been warm; in the 1670s, More wished for '[Keith] and his friend Barclay' to be delivered from prison.⁶² Other similarities confirm an intimate connection. Henry More explicitly noted in a letter to Conway that Keith 'gave me a little book, which he had told into English of the Orientall Philosophy, and particularly the profound wisdom of Hai Ebn Yokdan'.⁶³ This is a tantalising reference in light of the fact that Barclay also discusses the story of Hai Ebn Yokdan in his *Apology*.⁶⁴ Barclay and Keith were not only sharing ideas which eventually appeared in Barclay's published work; they were sharing the *same* ideas with a wider intellectual circle at Ragley Hall.

Based on the strength of Keith's connection, it seems likely that Keith enabled Barclay's connection to the group. Nonetheless, focus upon Keith has obscured the importance of their direct influence upon Barclay at a critical time. For example, Hull explores the connection between Keith and Van Helmont, as well as the wider influence of Ragley Hall upon Keith's belief in transmigration of souls, without mentioning Barclay once.⁶⁵ In particular, the group's role in Barclay's approach to the spirit-flesh dichotomy (and so, in guiding a critical development in early Quaker theology) has not been explored, meaning that Keith's influence has been viewed in isolation, and Barclay's independent departure from previous Quaker metaphysical approaches has been obscured.

There is good evidence that Barclay's own direct association with the circle began shortly before the dedication of Barclay's *Apology* was penned. The earliest evidence of an actual meeting between More and Barclay dates to August 1674, when More mentioned that Barclay had previously visited him, in a letter to

⁶¹ The pre-existence of souls is also an Origenist view, which Henry More notably adopted based on his study of Origen's writings (Hutton, *Anne Conway*, 69-72). However, evidence that Keith was convinced of the doctrine of transmigration through the Kabbalah is found in Christian Lodowick, *A letter*, 6.

⁶² Hutton and Nicolson (eds.), *Conway Letters*, 431.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 392.

⁶⁴ Barclay, *An apology*, 134. The Second Day Morning Meeting decided to reprint Barclay's *Apology* without this passage in 1779; clearly, it was viewed as divisive by later Friends. Joseph Smith, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books*, 3 vols, vol. 1 (London, 1863), 182.

⁶⁵ Hull, *Benjamin Furly*, 111-120. See also, for example, Nicolson, 'George Keith and the Cambridge Platonists', 36-55.

Anne Conway.⁶⁶ This was over a year before the *Apology* was completed, leaving plenty of time for his ideas to develop. It is less clear when Barclay first met Conway, but Keith probably introduced the two: the earliest evidence for Keith's own connection to Ragley Hall is found in a letter to Conway from another visitor mentioning his presence, dated 10 November 1670, and More's earlier influence on Keith has already been noted.⁶⁷ Significantly, Keith encouraged Barclay to meet Conway 'again' in May 1676, and this suggests that they were in direct contact when the *Apology* was being composed.⁶⁸

Indeed, Barclay's involvement with the group seems to have intensified dramatically at this time, and Barclay and Keith even seem to have organised the construction of a Meeting House in Aberdeen under Conway's benefaction in 1675.⁶⁹ In his correspondence of the mid-1670s, he frequently mentioned Conway (referring to her as 'that truly noble & virtuous Lady'), and wrote to van Helmont in November 1677 as his 'real friend'.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, Barclay's alteration of his description of the *Vehiculum Dei* between Latin and English editions suggests that this was an idea he was particularly considering at the time.

More generally, William Penn's description of the 'generall fame of [Conway's] desires after the best things' as he planned to visit her in October 1675 is strongly suggestive of Conway's great reputation – and the fact that such a visit had been planned just as Barclay was defending his theses is good evidence that Ragley Hall and the Quakers were converging on a common intellectual concern in the mid-1670s.⁷¹ Penn also passed on Penington's 'love, and a smal present' to Conway in 1675.⁷² Indeed, in a letter to Princess Elizabeth in 1677, Barclay even revealed that he planned to 'pass by the way of Ragly', suggesting that he was still in direct conversation with Conway even after he had written the Latin *Apology*.⁷³

⁶⁶ Hutton and Nicolson (eds.), *Conway Letters*, 391.

⁶⁷ Norman Penney (ed.), *Extracts from State Papers relating to Friends 1654-1672* (London, 1913), 323. See also Hutton and Nicolson (eds.), *Conway Letters*, 402, 407.

⁶⁸ Keith to Barclay, *Reliquiae Barclaianae*, 12 May 1676, FHL, x.

⁶⁹ Wragge, 'The Debt', 14.

⁷⁰ Barclay to van Helmont, *Reliquiae Barclaianae*, 17 November 1677, FHL, 30-1, 10.

⁷¹ Hutton and Nicolson (eds.), *Conway Letters*, 401-403.

⁷² Ibid. 403. Nicolson and Hutton note Penington's role in Conway's intellectual conversion to Quakerism. Penington wrote several times to Conway in the later 1670s, and whilst they were mainly pastoral letters of comfort in the 'troublesome and dismal times' of her illness, his correspondence is evidence of both her conversion to Quakerism (Penington writes with a sense of religious fellowship by referring to her as a 'friend', lending her his spiritual counsel regarding the 'Spirit', and noting her 'love to truth') and the Quakers' high opinion of her. Hutton and Nicolson (eds.), *Conway Letters*, 411; Penington, *Works*, vol. 3, 463-5, 519-21; Penington, *Works*, vol. 4 supplement, 2-3.

⁷³ Barclay to Princess Elizabeth, *Reliquiae Barclaianae*, 12 September 1677, FHL, 29.

However, the most reliable evidence for a heightened convergence is the theological correlation between Barclay's ideas and those of the Ragley group (though More would not have admitted it). In particular, Barclay's consideration of the spiritual and physical natures echoed More's rejection of the Cartesian view that 'extension' – that is, the quality of occupying space – was the distinguishing property of non-spiritual beings. Instead, More defined spiritual being as 'indiscerpible' and 'penetrable', and material being as 'discerpible' and 'impenetrable'. Thus, 'impenetrability' and 'discerpibility' – not extension – were the distinguishing features of physical nature. More's underlying motivation in assigning extension to spiritual entities was his belief that it was inherent to being, so that a non-extended entity did not really exist. He feared the materialistic implications of Cartesianism and referred to the Cartesians as 'nullibists', who believed that spiritual entities were not actually present anywhere in the physical world. In More's view, the extension of spiritual matter had lower and upper limits (it could not be infinite or non-extended), and spiritual entities could expand and shrink to fit bodies which they occupied. This imbued his understanding of spiritual extension with an apparent 'physicality', endowing spirit and body with an equivalent integrity that they had not previously been afforded.⁷⁴ His concerns connected him to the wider intellectual culture of Cambridge at the time; Goldie notes that other 'Cambridge Platonists' were similarly afraid of atheistic materialism and sought to unite spirit and matter in some sense as two forms of the same substance.⁷⁵

Whilst he may have utilised these ideas for different reasons, Barclay's notion of the *Vehiculum Dei*, possessing qualities which were usually separated between body and spirit, correlated closely with this intellectual concern. Of course, in the Quaker context it was the fleshly body which was viewed as morally and ontologically inferior, but the suggestion of a substantial relationship between body and spirit in this strand of seventeenth-century metaphysics was nonetheless echoed in Barclay's interpretation of Quakerism.

This suggestion was significantly expanded by Conway, who strikingly argued that body and spirit were of the same essence. In her only existing work, *The principles of the most ancient and modern philosophy*

⁷⁴ More, *The immortality of the soul*, M2663 (London, 1659), sig. B3r-B4v, 13-20; Reid, *The Metaphysics of Henry More*, 12, 46-70, 147-57, 185-212; Hutton, *Anne Conway*, 43.

⁷⁵ Mark Goldie, 'Cambridge Platonists (act. 1630s-1680s)', ODNB. <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/94274>>, accessed 21 January 2016.

(published posthumously in 1692), Conway argued that reality was divided essentially into three categories: the immutable God, mutable creatures, and Christ as mediator between the two.⁷⁶ This view notably minimised the importance of the Trinity: as Hutton notes, in *Principles*, Conway ‘proposed rewriting... the doctrine of the Trinity by removing any reference to three distinct persons’, conceiving instead of a modalist ‘triplicity of God, divine wisdom and divine will’.⁷⁷ Perhaps more notably, she united the created essence, affirming that ‘every Body may be turned into a Spirit’, which she saw as a movement towards God as ‘a Spirit... is more excellent in the Natural Order of Things’.⁷⁸ The only essential distinctions were between God, Christ and humanity. Conway’s main task in writing was to demonstrate that ‘every Body is a Spirit’, so the two were not fundamentally opposed. This was motivated by her explicit rejection of both Cartesian philosophy, in which she argued that Body was seen as ‘merely dead mass’, and Hobbesian philosophy, in which God Himself was ‘Material and Corporeal’.⁷⁹

Both More’s rejection of extension as the definitive property of physical bodies, and Conway’s account of Christ’s mediating nature, were developed in conversation with Jewish Kabbalah. Henry More was openly sympathetic to some aspects of the Kabbalah and wrote about this in *Conjectura cabbalistica*.⁸⁰ Again, his interest reflected his eagerness to reject Cartesian dualism; Kabbalists included place, *maqom*, as an attribute of God, thus supporting his supposition that extension was crucial to any meaningful definition of existence.⁸¹ Yet it was more likely that Conway’s own interest was ignited by her friendship with Francis Mercury van Helmont: the alchemist was introduced to the system by the well-known German Hebraist, Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, and later assisted von Rosenroth with the translation of genuine Kabbalist

⁷⁶ Anne Conway, *Principles*, C5989 (London, 1692), 10-12, 53-56, 35-36.

⁷⁷ Hutton, *Anne Conway*, 65.

⁷⁸ Conway, *Principles*, 81-87.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 147-148.

⁸⁰ See Alison Coudert, ‘Henry More, the Kabbalah and the Quakers’, in Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft and Perez Zagorin (eds.), *Philosophy, Science and Religion in England, 1640-1700* (Cambridge, 1992), 31-67; Henry More, *Conjectura cabbalistica. Or, a conjectural essay*, M2647 (London, 1653).

⁸¹ Coudert, ‘Henry More, the Kabbalah and the Quakers’, 34-7. Dmitri Levitin argues that More’s interest in the Kabbalah renders the Cambridge Platonists too intellectually diverse to be viewed as a coherent ‘school’. However, the fact that More was active across the philosophical spectrum has also been used to argue for his great influence, in Jasper Reid, *The Metaphysics of Henry More*, 1-7. Perhaps Levitin’s notion of intellectual connection is too rigid, then, and a model of intellectual connections as a series of overlapping circles, which may include a wide range of interests, is more tenable. Whilst Levitin views More as an intellectual outlier, it is arguable that he relies on the same narrow stereotypes regarding what is ‘radical’ and what is ‘mainstream’ that are criticised by Nicholas McDowell above, 8-11; Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom*, 127-38.

works into Latin, in his *Kabbalah denudata* ('Kabbalah unveiled').⁸² Conway openly acknowledged the influence of the Jewish Kabbalistic tradition throughout *Principles*. Drawing on the Lurianic doctrine of the Imperfection of Beginning, in which the infinite *Ein Sof* withdrew from its own infinity to make a space for the emanation of *Adam Kadmon* ('original man') and the ten *sefirot*, Conway viewed creation as a process of God 'diminish[ing]...the highest Degree of his most intense Light, that there might be room for his Creatures', this space subsequently being filled with the Idea of himself: 'the Soul of the *Messias*, called by the Hebrews, *Adam Kadmon*'.⁸³ Conway therefore identified the *Adam Kadmon* with Christ, pointing to an association between Adam and Christ, as the earthly and heavenly seminal men, which stretched back even to Paul.⁸⁴ For Conway, Christ was *lesser* than God himself, of a middle nature between creature and Creator, yet nonetheless absolutely necessary for the existence of the created order.

Keith was certainly impressed by the Kabbalah, and he wrote twice to von Rosenroth (also in Latin) to discuss his work in 1676/7.⁸⁵ This makes explicit the influence of Kabbalistic texts upon his own thought, and strengthens the argument for a common concern between Ragley Hall and the Friends, implicit in the writings of both Barclay and Keith from the mid-1670s onwards. Moreover, whilst this chapter intends to stress Barclay and Keith's convergence upon such concerns, so viewing the intellectual influence between these two prominent Quaker defenders as collaborative more than unidirectional, it would not be complete without overt recognition of the influence of the Kabbalah upon George Keith. This influence is particularly demonstrated in his *The way cast up* and *The true Christ owned as he is*, published in 1677 and 1679 respectively. As Birkel notes, in *The way cast up*, Keith described how Christ was 'extended into us in his Divine Seed and Body, which is his Heavenly flesh and blood', and that this occurred 'by way of emanation'.⁸⁶ This echoed the emanation of divinity through creation in the Kabbalah. And in *The true Christ owned as he is*, Keith wrote of how 'the Heavenly Adam himself, was from the beginning, and was the Word made Flesh, and gave unto the Saints from the beginning', demonstrating not only the equation of Christ with the *Adam Kadmon*, but also a collapse of flesh and spirit in the cosmic Christ from the

⁸² Coudert, 'A Quaker-Kabbalist Controversy', 172.

⁸³ Conway, *Principles*, 5-7; Joseph Dan, *Kabbalah: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2006), 74-77.

⁸⁴ 1 Corinthians 15.45-50.

⁸⁵ Birkel, 'Robert Barclay and Kabbalah', 6.

⁸⁶ George Keith, *The way cast up and the stumbling-blockes removed*, K233 (Aberdeen, 1677), 123, 129, cited in Birkel, 'Robert Barclay and Kabbalah', 8-9.

beginning of time.⁸⁷ Keith did not deny the reality of a physical Incarnation, but also identified a bodily element in the emanation of the Light within.⁸⁸ Writing of Christ's spiritual body having ears, eyes, feet and so on, Keith clarified that 'though these words are metaphorical, they have also somewhat that is real, understood by them by way of Analogy.'⁸⁹ Likewise, Keith spoke of the penetration of the spiritual body through other bodies, and explicitly distinguished what was heavenly both from what was 'humane' and what was part of the Godhead, in his discussion of the soul.⁹⁰ Furthermore, he was clear that 'I altogether deny... That, because the Essence of God is in us, that therefore the Fulness of the Godhead can be said to dwell in us bodily: for that is only proper unto Christ, who is the Mediator betwixt God and Us'.⁹¹ Here, he drew extensively on the metaphysical assumptions of the Kabbalah and Barclay's *Apology*. This work demonstrated the maturation of the alternative Quaker Christology developed in collaboration with the intellectual circle surrounding Ragley Hall.

Yet its direct influence upon Barclay's *Vehiculum Dei* – a spiritual body, technically apart from God and Man but with elements of both, and crucial for transformative salvation – is also striking. Returning to consider the *Vehiculum Dei*, then, firstly, Barclay's reluctance to employ the spirit-flesh dichotomy, which had guided so much of Quaker thought to this point, is reminiscent of both Conway and More. In particular, when applied to Quaker Christology, an understanding of the transformation between spirit and body allowed an incorporation of Christ's own body into the Light within, as it provided a framework for explaining how physical existence could be made spiritual whilst retaining individual continuity and humanity. This should give us cause to challenge the notion that Barclay was a Cartesian; in fact, he was involved in the more complicated reception history of Cartesianism which reacted strongly against some of its most fundamental implications.

Secondly, the understanding of Christ as a third essence, between God and man, which was suggested by Conway and van Helmont seems to have been echoed in Barclay's understanding of the divine and human attributes of the *Vehiculum Dei*. Whilst Barclay does not introduce such an explicit typology, his account

⁸⁷ Keith, *The true Christ owned*, 6.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 6-11, 35.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 11-12.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 15, 20, 77.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 53.

makes immediately more sense in light of Conway's three-fold categorisation. As noted above, he drew on aspects both of humanity and divinity to describe the body of Christ, whilst denying that it was fully either, which certainly seems to suggest that his view was closer to Conway than the orthodoxy. Furthermore, whilst Conway did think that Christ was also joined to humanity in the Incarnation, she seemed more concerned to emphasise the main differences between these categories than their exact relationship in Christ.⁹² Similar ambiguities in Barclay's Christology and Trinitarian understanding certainly suggest that Barclay and Conway shared similar intellectual priorities.

Clearly, the Quakers were not isolated from the seventeenth-century intellectual milieu. Rather, they were involved in a conversation regarding the nature of matter and spirit which was central to a much wider process of identity-making in the aftermath of the Restoration. This was a two-way street: both van Helmont and Conway became Quakers in the later 1670s, reiterating the strength of the association. Of course, this discussion does not mark the first exploration of links between Quakers and the Cambridge Platonists. Most explicitly, in 1930, Marjorie Nicolson posited that 'Quakerism was but one aspect of a widespread religious movement, which had its source in a revolt against non-essentials in religion'.⁹³ Nicolson even claimed that they were 'integral parts of the same movement', as 'inevitable aspects of a whole' that was distinguished by its commitment to a belief in the Light within, so heralding a new optimism regarding human nature. Yet Nicolson neglected the Christological significance of the Quaker doctrine by casting it primarily as a statement of positive anthropology, and downplayed the genuine philosophical collaboration by stressing instead a vague moral affinity between these parties. Moreover, she excluded Barclay from the perceived affinity altogether, claiming (with Bailey) that he sparked 'a change [in] the Quaker Doctrine', defined by renewed emphasis upon fallen man.⁹⁴ As this chapter has shown, a consideration of Barclay's theological motivation, and especially his links with Ragley Hall, demonstrates the inadequacy of viewing him as a crypto-Calvinist, and allows a greater understanding of the specific links between Quakers and the intellectual milieu in which they operated.

⁹² Conway, *Principles*, 35-36.

⁹³ Nicolson, 'George Keith and the Cambridge Platonists', 36-55, at 36.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 36-7, 38.

Conclusion

The Quakers' connection to Ragley Hall did not endure for long; Anne Conway died in 1679 and Francis Mercury van Helmont left the Quaker movement when it became clear that their sympathies for the Kabbalah were not as keen as he had hoped (Fox himself was quite disturbed by his views).⁹⁵ Robert Barclay had also warned van Helmont against enthusiasm in discernment, suggesting that he was aware of the weaknesses of his temperament as well as the strengths of his philosophical innovation.⁹⁶ However, this examination of Barclay's intellectual world has suggested his own notable connection to the scholarly community circulating Ragley Hall. Their intellectual influence was immortalised in Quaker theology by Barclay's *Apology*.

That such an important contribution towards the Quakers' understanding of Christ's body was produced out of conversations regarding the most pressing philosophical issues of the day demonstrates strikingly how the development of Quaker theology was guided directly by wider intellectual trends of the seventeenth century. In particular, the dual influence of the Kabbalah and More's metaphysical framework, expanded by Conway and van Helmont, provided Barclay with new categories by which to explain the Light within, encompassing Christ's whole identity in this principle, and therefore opening up new avenues by which to defend the notion of Christ's saving presence within each person.

Barclay was clearly trying to address concerns over the Quakers' orthodoxy, but he did not resolve the puzzles of Quaker Christology entirely. Partly, this was due to a lack of consensus within the movement. Thus, despite his approval of Barclay's work, in 1677 Fox emphasised the heavenly nature of Christ (in contrast to the 'earthly man' whom he saves), and once again criticised the extra-biblical terminology of the 'Humane body' and 'humanity' of Christ.⁹⁷ Fox only died in 1691, and the ease with which he employed various, conflicting images in a didactic (not systematic) manner clearly continued to influence Quaker theology into the 1690s. Nonetheless, whilst it did not solve all the problems with early Quaker theology,

⁹⁵ Coudert, 'A Quaker-Kabbalist Controversy', 182.

⁹⁶ Barclay to van Helmont, *Reliquiae Barclaianae*, 17 November 1677, FHL, 9-10.

⁹⁷ Fox, *A testimony of what we believe*, 20, 33.

Barclay's *Apology* would soon become a touchstone for Quakers understanding their own faith, as the following chapter will illustrate.

VI. THE QUAKERS AND THE EARLY ENLIGHTENMENT

The Soul that's truly Just, and Kind;
Truth, hid from subtle Wits, shall Find.¹

The previous chapter argued for the significance of Robert Barclay's *Vehiculum Dei*, and particularly the notion of a middle nature between the Godhead and humanity, as a response to those who accused the Quakers of neglecting (or even denying) Christ's humanity. The *Apology* became the fundamental expression of Quaker theology for advocates and opponents of the movement alike. Nonetheless, Barclay's contribution did not end the Quakers' struggle to secure theological respectability. This chapter will examine the impact of Barclay's legacy on the Quakers' intellectual engagement during the early Enlightenment, paying special attention to the pamphlet dispute between John Norris and Richard Vickris. This dispute points both to the Quakers' positive engagement with thinkers across a broad spectrum, and to the tensions between the emerging rhetorical and intellectual culture and their own religious priorities.

The contentious nature of Barclay's framework can be demonstrated even by a brief consideration of its earliest criticism. In 1678, before the ink of the English *Apology* was dry, the Church of Scotland minister John Brown published a response to the Latin original. Brown was no conformist: as a staunch Covenanter he had been arrested and deprived of his living following the Act of Uniformity in 1662, and had been living in exile in Rotterdam ever since.² Yet, like most other nonconformists, he still despised Quakerism. *Quakerisme the path-way to paganisme* presented a whole catalogue of Brown's concerns regarding Quaker theology – some more accurate than others – in the course of which, he complained that Quakers believed the Light within to be the 'Essence' of God.³ However, in the discussion that followed, Brown also accused the Quakers of Pelagianism based on their belief in the universality of the Light. After all,

¹ Sophocles, quoted in Edmund Elys, *Reflections upon some passages in a book, entitled Reflections upon the conduct of human life*, E690 (London, c.1690), 2.

² His connection with Friends is likely to have been personal, then, as Rotterdam hosted a strong Quaker community. See above, 129; below, 208; Ginny Gardner, 'Brown, John (c.1610–1679)', *ODNB*. <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/3618>>, accessed 6 Feb 2016.

³ John Brown, *Quakerisme the path-way to paganisme*, B5033 ([Rotterdam?] Edinburgh, 1678), 'A Catalogue'.

‘what is common to all men, can be nothing but Nature, or the Pelagian grace of God, that is mans Free Will’. Brown went on to reject the possibility of the Light’s divinity, as this would entail a division in the Godhead.⁴ Despite the otherwise unremarkable nature of this publication, it is telling that Brown’s objections to Quakerism rested on the perceived status of the Light within as both human and divine – though apparently not at once. Brown went on to question what Barclay meant by describing the *Vehiculum Dei* as ‘Spiritual’ (whether opposed to ‘Carnal’, ‘Natural’, or ‘Sinful’) and accused him of incoherence in either case: the first would simply equate it to the soul, and the second and third were not states within human reach in this life.⁵

Barclay responded by defending the scriptural basis for the term *Vehiculum Dei*, as examined in the previous chapter. He noted that the flesh and blood of Christ were conceived spiritually in John 6, thus distinguishing the *Vehiculum Dei* from the soul, and refuting the accusation that the existence of spiritual flesh was an unscriptural claim or entailed a denial of the Incarnation. This also signalled the inadequacy of all three of Brown’s suggested interpretations. Furthermore, Barclay attacked the use of the word ‘Sacrament, which is not to be found in Scriptur [sic]’.⁶ In doing so, he reiterated the parallel between Eucharistic disputes and those concerning the Quaker Light within, and unflinchingly spoke over Brown’s metaphysical confusion to stress the uncontroversial nature of Quaker principles. In addition, just as Barclay claimed to teach the true meaning of communion with Christ, he highlighted what he saw as a false understanding of sacrament in the Reformed Christian tradition.

This altercation, cut short by Brown’s death in 1679, highlights lingering ambiguity at the heart of Quaker theology, including a continued metaphysical confusion over whether the Light was really human or divine. This ambiguity was not settled by Barclay, as was demonstrated with particular clarity in the dispute between John Norris and Richard Vickris in the early 1690s.

⁴ Ibid. 229-30.

⁵ Ibid. 230-1.

⁶ Barclay, *Robert Barclay’s apology... vindicated*, 87-8, 162.

The Dispute between John Norris and Richard Vickris (1690-3)

Having rejected the Calvinist principles of his childhood, John Norris was trained for the ministry at Oxford and elected to a fellowship at All Souls in the early 1680s. He left the university in 1689 to become rector of Newton St Loe, before moving to Bemerton (incidentally, also the parish of George Herbert) in 1692. Norris was the foremost defender of the philosophy of Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715) in England, whom he described as ‘incomparable’, and he produced the first major response to John Locke’s *Essay concerning human understanding*, which he criticised largely due to the manner of its rejection of the existence of innate ideas.⁷ For these reasons he is sometimes considered a ‘Cambridge Platonist’, despite being an Oxonian.⁸ Central to his philosophical system was his belief in the existence of a divine Light in all people, and this led him to engage directly with the Quakers.

In *Reflections upon the conduct of the human life*, published in 1690, Norris explained his own understanding of the Light within, or the ‘Divine λογος’.⁹ He argued that happiness required access to necessary truth. This could only be attained by consultation with the ‘Divine Ideas’ – which is ‘the same’ as the ‘Divine λογος’.¹⁰ Norris described this ‘necessary truth’ as the ‘very Substance of Divinity’ and stressed its ‘omniformity’.¹¹ Moreover, he understood the λογος to be ‘intimately united with, and presential to the Mind’, as our only means of attaining any knowledge (including divine revelation).¹² In this sense, it was divine and yet essential to human nature: ‘This is Reason, this is Conscience, this is Truth, this is that Light Within’.¹³ True understanding through the Ideal World equated to the intimate participation of human beings in the divine life. However, Norris also stressed the limits of this

⁷ John Norris, *Christian blessedness*, N1246 (London, 1690). Locke argued against both innate principles and innate ideas on the basis that not all people are aware of them. Norris retorted that the existence of the ideas was not dependent upon our awareness of them. For example, children were not born with such an awareness but could come to appreciate it. It is worth noting that William Mander has questioned the depth of Norris’s real commitment to Malebranche. He suggests that Norris overplayed the connection because of his thrill at locating a kindred philosophical spirit, despite the much greater influence of Platonist and Augustinian principles. Nonetheless, it is clear that Norris was at least drawing on Malebranche in his account of the Divine λογος and Ideal World. Richard Acworth, *John Norris of Bemerton* (New York, 1979), 254-5; William Mander, *The Philosophy of John Norris* (Oxford, 2008), 11; Locke, *Essay*, 17, 42-3.

⁸ Mander, *The Philosophy of John Norris*, 7.

⁹ John Norris, *Reflections upon the conduct of human life*, N1267 (London, 1690), esp. 24-40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 2-3, 27-33.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 33-4, 72.

¹² *Ibid.* 62-3, 69.

¹³ *Ibid.* 70.

illumination. Humans could be made ‘Pardonable’ in this life by the mediation of Christ – but the Light itself was not a perfecting force upon the individual, and we still see ‘through a Glass, Darkly’.¹⁴ Therefore, even in the first edition of *Reflections* he took care to note that ‘if any shall yet call it Quakerism, or Enthusiasm, I shall only make this reply at present, that tis such Quakerism as makes a good part of St. Iohn's Gospel, and of St. Austin's Works’.¹⁵

As noted above, the Quakers had never been the only group arguing for a Light within, and the fact that Norris specifically feared being associated with Quakerism shows how successfully the movement had dominated public and elite discourse on the nature of this Light.¹⁶ And indeed, just as he feared, his argument was appropriated by Quakers. This drove him systematically to outline the differences between Quakerism and his own view, in a postscript to the 1691 edition of *Reflections*.¹⁷ He mused that ‘if the Quakers understood their own Notion, and knew how to explain it, and into what Principles to resolve it, it would not very much differ from mine’.¹⁸ However, he insisted that the Quakers’ articulation of their belief made it fundamentally separate from his own. His account of the Divine *λογος* was of the ‘very Essence and Substance of the Deity, which I suppose Virtually to contain all things in it’, and yet was a ‘Natural’ mode of understanding which informed humans of all true knowledge. In contrast, the Quakers affirmed the Light within to be a mere ‘Communication or Manifestation’, which only illuminated the believer in ‘Extraordinary’ occurrences and only with reference to ‘moral or Spiritual’ truth. He also criticised the group for suggesting that divine illumination was a ‘special Privilege’ extended to convinced Quakers alone (rather than to all individuals), for portraying illumination as isolated dictates (rather than an all-encompassing outlook united to the ‘Essential Truth of God’), and for not supporting their views with ‘any rational or intellectual Account’. Norris ended his postscript by suggesting that he had, in contrast, ‘offer’d a Natural, Distinct and Philosophical way of explaining [the Light and its operations], namely by the

¹⁴ Ibid. 118-20, 104-5.

¹⁵ Ibid. 70.

¹⁶ See above, 114.

¹⁷ John Norris, *Reflections upon the conduct of human life*, N1268 (London, 1691 ed.), 183-187.

¹⁸ Ibid. 183.

Omniformity of the Ideal World, or the Divine *λογος*, who has in himself the Essences and Ideas of all things, and in whom the same are perceiv'd by us and all Creatures'.¹⁹

Norris drank deeply from the well of Malebranchian philosophy – indeed, he was largely responsible for the ‘remarkable upsurge’ of interest in Malebranche in the 1690s – and his understanding of the Light within must be understood in this context.²⁰ Malebranche had attempted to correct Cartesian ideas, which he thought underplayed the foundational role of God in philosophy and relied too heavily on both logic and subjective perception, by using Augustine’s doctrine of Divine Ideas.²¹ He argued that humans could only attain true knowledge by accessing the Ideas themselves, in the mind of God. Therefore, our perception must operate through God, and even though objects exist outside God they are reliant on their archetypal form in God’s mind for their existence.²² Likewise, Norris argued that ‘Truth cannot exist when the Ideas are not’, and that the Ideas cannot be separate from God, given God’s nature as necessary, eternal, omniscient, and definitive of Being itself. Thus, ‘our... World of Ideas... is really in God’.²³ This explains his identification of the Ideal World with the divine nature and his concern that the Divine *λογος* should inform all knowledge, not just spiritual truth. Simply, no knowledge of any kind was possible without divine illumination.

In *A just reprehension*, the Quaker Richard Vickris responded to Norris’s charges and appealed to Barclay’s *Apology* as the normative account of Quaker theology.²⁴ Vickris was a friend of Joseph Langton, Norris’s patron and neighbour at Newton St Loe, so the two men may have been personally acquainted.²⁵ He was also well-educated and well-versed in Malebranchian philosophy, having encountered Malebranche’s writings after being sent to France by his father, apparently in an attempt to rid him of the ideals of his

¹⁹ Ibid. 184-87.

²⁰ Stuart Brown, ‘The Critical Reception of Malebranche, from his own time to the End of the Eighteenth Century’, in Steven Nadler (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche* (Cambridge, 2000), 262-87, at 268.

²¹ Thomas M. Lennon, ‘Malebranche and Method’, in Nadler (ed.), *Malebranche*, 8-30, at 9-10, 15-17; Ted M. Schmaltz, ‘Malebranche on Ideas and the Vision in God’, in Nadler (ed.), *Malebranche*, 59-86, at 59-60.

²² Ibid. 59, 67.

²³ John Norris, *An essay towards the theory of the ideal or intelligible world*, ESTC T76546 (London, 1701), pt 1, 133, 136-8.

²⁴ Richard Vickris, *A just reprehension to John Norris*, V339 (London, 1691), 5.

²⁵ Ibid. 4; Acworth, *John Norris of Bemerton*, 275.

Quaker mother.²⁶ Nonetheless, he was staunchly committed to Quakerism, to the extent that he was formally sentenced to death in 1684 for violating the Act against Seditious Sectaries (35 Eliz. I c. 1), although the judgement was overturned following the lobbying efforts of Friends and direct intervention of the Duke of York.²⁷

Vickris's main argument against Norris, quoting Barclay's account of the *Vehiculum Dei*, was that the Quakers' Light within was neither an 'Accident' of God nor a mere 'Communication or Manifestation', but a 'Real Spiritual Substance'. He claimed that Quakers viewed this Substance as an 'inherent Principle of Divine Excellency' and 'Divine'.²⁸ Vickris unashamedly accepted his belief in the extraordinary nature of illumination by the Light within, because it 'is a distinct thing from man's Soul, Reason or natural Conscience'. Therefore, he conceived the real 'material Difference' between the opposing accounts to be that, whilst Norris thought that the Light was 'no higher Principle than man's Reason and Conscience', the Quakers thought it was something entirely apart from, and superior to, the 'rational principle'.²⁹ Vickris also challenged Norris's suggestion that the Quakers' Light within provided only individual dictates, noting that it was a 'Universal' gift to all people. He argued that this was similar to the accusation that it was only a 'Manifestation', and that both charges could be refuted by a close reading of Barclay: actually, the Quaker Light within was the only means of epistemological certainty, as a 'Real Spiritual Substance'.³⁰ Both parties now accused the other of undermining the crucial divinity of the Light.

In Norris's reply to Vickris, in *Two treatises concerning the divine light*, he argued that procession from divinity did not make a substance divine. Therefore, the Quakers divorced the Light within from the divine nature – even if they did not admit it – because of a crucial distinction between communication and

²⁶ Voltaire also noted parallels between Quakerism and the ideas of Malebranche in the early eighteenth century. He observed the Quakers' supposition that 'if thou livest in God, thou actest, thou thinkest in God. After this thou needest only but open thine eyes to that light which enlightens all mankind, and it is then thou wilt perceive the truth'. He suggested to his Quaker guide that 'this... is Malebranche's doctrine to a tittle'. The guide responded, 'I am acquainted with thy Malebranche... he had something of the friend in him, but was not enough so.' Voltaire, *Letters*, 15.

²⁷ Vickris was the only Quaker to receive a death sentence in England – which, notably, came three years after the last religiously-motivated execution of a Catholic on English soil. Maryann S. Feola, 'Vickris, Richard (d. 1700)', *ODNB*. <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/28270>>, accessed 13 Jan 2015; Craig W. Horle, 'Death of a Felon: Richard Vickris and the Elizabethan Conventicle Act', in *Quaker History*, 76, 2 (1987), 95-107; MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 679.

²⁸ Vickris, *A just reprehension*, 8. Vickris's appeal to Barclay instead of Malebranche is telling here.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 9.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 8.

essence.³¹ This argument was supported by a more extensive criticism of the *Vehiculum Dei* which, Norris thought, conclusively disproved the divinity of the Quakers' Light within. Norris quoted Barclay's description of the *Vehiculum Dei* and Keith's distinction between 'the Godhead itself' and 'a certain middle Nature' in support of his accusation.³² Thus, the *Vehiculum Dei* could not possibly be the true divine substance, even if it was a spiritual substance: indeed, the Quakers 'do not make their Light within to be God, (for [Barclay] says they understand not by it the proper Essence and Nature of God) and consequently must make it to be a Creature, there being no Medium between God and the Creature'. Moreover, the Quakers' Light must be material because its qualities – its divisibility, its ability to act as nourishing food to saints, its status as Christ's flesh and blood – could not 'with any tolerable Congruity agree to a Spiritual Substance, strictly so call'd'.³³ Norris went on to clarify that he saw the divine Light as both above and inherent to human nature. In contrast, the Quakers believed that people could exist without it.³⁴ Norris now hardened his initial criticism of the Quakers' Light as a 'Communication' and concluded that the Quakers reduced the Light within to a 'Material Creature', because they could not accept its full divinity and referred to it as a 'Body'.³⁵ Finally, Norris decreed that he would not reply again: his opponent was welcome to claim the last word, for that was 'all he is like to get' by continuing the dispute.³⁶

It is clear from Norris's writings that his rejection of the middle substance was based on his sharp distinction between spiritual and material, Ideal and natural, God and creation.³⁷ This distinction, entwined with his fervour for Malebranchian thought, is not only demonstrated by his dispute with Vickris. In the 1680s, he had written to Henry More directly to challenge the coherence of his understanding of spirit as extended and inter-penetrable, proposing a more straightforwardly Cartesian framework than either More or Barclay.³⁸ Of course, there is some irony in the fact that the Quakers' attempt to correct their earlier

³¹ Norris, *Two treatises*, pt 1, 32-7.

³² Keith, *The way to the city of God, described*, 132-3.

³³ Norris, *Two treatises*, pt 2, 7-11.

³⁴ This related to the Quaker distinction between the Light and conscience: see above, 99-100.

³⁵ Norris, *Two treatises*, pt 2, 6-8, 13, 17-8.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 33.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 8, 17-8.

³⁸ Fred Powicke, *A Dissertation on John Norris of Bemerton* (London, 1894), 114-33.

ambivalence towards material reality now led them to assert an esoteric metaphysics which Norris rejected outright.

Nonetheless, an unperturbed Vickris responded to Norris, confirming the crux of the issue: ‘upon his conclusion of a Body [Norris] makes his consequence to be, that it is a Material and Corporeal Creature’.³⁹ Vickris viewed this as a flawed dichotomy between divinity and bodily existence, and simply asserted the Quakers’ belief in the middle nature and non-material bodies more forcefully than before. He accused Norris of ‘beg[ing] the Question, upon at best a mistaken notion’ that ‘there is no middle Substance betwixt the Godhead and us’. Aligning himself more closely to the metaphysical concerns of the Ragley Hall group, he then noted that the affirmation of this middle substance was ‘the Quakers principle’, and argued that Christ’s middling status did not preclude his divinity.⁴⁰ Vickris then moved from defensive to offensive, arguing that Norris divorced the Light within from God’s grace, so undermining the notion that humans are depraved and in need of divine assistance.⁴¹

The tenability of Vickris’s defence of the middle substance alongside his affirmation of the Light’s full divinity is questionable – and of course, this poses an important challenge to later seventeenth-century Quaker Christology. Nonetheless, this should not distract us from the implications of his ultimate diagnosis: the dispute was ‘not... in Principle, but in the Explication thereof’, driven by a metaphysical disagreement.⁴² This position was further supported by George Whitehead in *The divine light of Christ*. Whitehead summarised Norris’s criticism as the false belief that Quakers ‘confine the Light, as to the Act of Illumination, to...their own Party. And that they make the Light within to be... a Material Creature’. In short, Norris had misunderstood: Quakers affirmed the universality of the Light within, and yet did not view it as a creature.⁴³

³⁹ Richard Vickris, *Truth and innocency defended*, V341 (London, 1692/3), sig. A4r.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 19-20.

⁴¹ Ibid. 24.

⁴² Ibid. 21

⁴³ George Whitehead, *The divine light of Christ*, W1924 (London, 1692), 3.

The Norris-Vickris Dispute and John Locke's *Essay*

It should be clear that there were parallels between Quakerism and Norris's understanding of the Light within, despite the pugnacious tone of this dispute. Certainly, the existence of the Light was not under question – only the most appropriate manner in which to explain it – and this hints at surprising links between the Quakers and broadly 'rationalist' tendencies in British philosophical circles, especially in the wake of the challenge posed by John Locke's *Essay*. Any simplistic notion of separate schools of 'rationalists' and 'empiricists' is complicated by (amongst other things) the fact that appeal to reason as an authority underpinned almost all intellectual positions in the seventeenth century – ironically, with the notable exception of Quakerism.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the more specific defence of universals (through an exemplarist understanding of human knowledge) was one of Norris's key concerns, and this section will consider the role and reception of the Quaker ideas in this intellectual context.

In the first instance, then, even a brief consideration of Quaker writings illustrates that their doctrine of the Light within, never mind the rejection of its status as a 'Material Creature', was fundamentally a rejection of the authority of human faculties. An insistence upon the mystery and freedom of God was a central feature of their religious sensibility. Thus, George Bishop characterised reason as that 'which is Entred since the Fall, that raiseth him up against that which is the Power of God', and Isaac Penington described New Testament worship 'in Spirit and Truth, which is a principle above man's reason, and cannot rightly be limited by a lower principle', praying that his father might 'not set up thy own... imaginations and invented reasoning, instead of the sayings of Christ'.⁴⁵ Even Barclay lamented that 'Christianity is become an art' by the obsession with human science.⁴⁶ Admittedly, he also stressed that 'because the Spirit of God is the Fountain of all Truth and sound reason... it cannot contradict neither the testimony of Scripture, nor right reason'. Yet he still diagnosed the presence of an 'Antichrist in every man' who attempted to seek

⁴⁴ Christopher Hill, "'Reason" and "Reasonableness" in Seventeenth-Century England', in *The British Journal of Sociology*, 20, 3 (1969), 235-52; Martin Griffin, 'Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-century Church of England', PhD thesis, Yale University, 1963; John Spurr, "'Rational Religion" in Restoration England', in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 49, 4 (1988), 563-85; Edmund Newey, 'The form of Reason: Participation in the Word of Richard Hooker, Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth and Jeremy Taylor', in *Modern Theology*, 18 (2004), 1-26; Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, 14; John Locke, *The reasonableness of Christianity*, L2751 (London, 1695).

⁴⁵ Bishop, *The stumbling-stone*, 17; Isaac Penington, *A weighty question, proposed to the King*, P1220 (London, 1663), 3; Penington, *Works*, vol. 1, 421.

⁴⁶ Barclay, *An apology*, 9.

spiritual things by a ‘natural and rational principle’, rather than the authority of divine revelation.⁴⁷ The intention of this chapter is not to conflate what were clearly different approaches to faith.

Yet it is not insignificant that Vickris was attempting to align himself with a man whose central philosophical projects included the first defence against Locke’s nominalist and empiricist rejection of universals.⁴⁸ With this in mind, the writings of Edmund Elys (c.1633-1708) provide a useful illumination of the Quakers’ place in the philosophical culture of the later seventeenth century. Elys was ordained by the deprived Bishop of Oxford in 1659, and became rector of East Allington in Devon. He eventually became a non-juror in the Glorious Revolution – and notably, despite his Anglicanism, he also wrote several defences of Quakerism. Amongst these works was a pamphlet written against Norris’s *Reflections*, interrogating the view that knowledge may be pursued for interest rather than the perfection of the understanding, and arguing that this was a false dichotomy since all real interest related to the ‘Sovereign Good’. For ‘Nothing can properly be call’d Wisdom but the Practical Understanding of True Goodness’ and ‘Tis one and the same thing, to be Good, or to partake of the Divine Nature, and to be Wise and Knowing’.⁴⁹ Thus, Elys accused Norris of dealing ‘most Incuriously’ with the Quakers and suggested that all Christians should ‘have our Hearts duly Affected with the Sense of... Proverbs 4.18, 19: “The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day”’.⁵⁰ It is worth noting that, whilst the publication itself is undated, it was tentatively assigned to 1690 by Wing. This would mean that Elys explicitly defended the Quakers before Norris had even published his postscript. This is supported by the fact that Elys makes no explicit reference to the postscript, which suggests both Elys’s pro-active defence of the Quaker position, and a perceived association between Norris and the Quakers, the significance of which went far beyond Newton St Loe.

Elys was urging caution over the intellectualisation of faith. He argued that it was ‘Purity of Heart’ that would ‘Principally conduce to the Attainment of True Knowledge’ and rejected a claim made by Norris that the will could be irregular without affecting the understanding, for ‘there is no irregularity in the

⁴⁷ Ibid. 36, 99.

⁴⁸ Norris, *Christian blessedness*; Pauline Pheminster, ‘Introduction’, in Locke, *Essay*, xi-xxix.

⁴⁹ Edmund Elys, *Reflections*, E690 (London, c.1690), 2-3.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 3-4.

Understanding, but what Proceeds from the Irregularity of the Will.’⁵¹ His argument can be summarised by his use of a poem attributed to Sophocles, reproduced at the start of this chapter. Such use of an elite, classical source to criticise the intellectualisation of a moral issue provides a concise reminder that the line between speculative and practical theology has never been straightforward.

This was not the only time that Elys defended Quakerism. Indeed, he even wrote a tract ‘to Demonstrate that the... QUAKERS Deserve more Favour from the Church of England Than any other sort of Dissenters’, in which he simply compiled an analogy of extracts from the Book of Common Prayer illustrating the Anglican ‘Duty’ to conform ‘the whole Course of their Lives’ to righteousness.⁵² In some respects, this was not particularly surprising: as John Spurr notes, concern for moral purity was a central feature of seventeenth-century Protestantism and was embraced enthusiastically by the Restoration Church of England in sermons and printed works.⁵³ However, Elys’s defence of Quakerism went beyond simple admiration for their moral standards. In 1697, he went on to defend the scriptural basis of the Light within against critics of William Penn, writing that ‘it is Evident that [Christ] is a Light within every Man’s Conscience: For GOD IS LIGHT, LIGHT INFINITE: So that there can be no Spiritual, or Intellectual ILLUMINATION but what comes directly, and immediately from GOD’. Elys defined the ‘Light within the Conscience’ as that by which we ‘clearly’ perceive God’s commands and our own obedience or disobedience.⁵⁴

Should his defence of Quakerism be interpreted as a misunderstanding of their message, veiled sympathy for its implications, or evidence of the increasing theological respectability of the movement?⁵⁵ Certainly, Elys seemed unfazed by the criticisms made of Quaker theology. What he actually defended in *A second letter* was a generalised understanding of divine illumination which avoided the radicalism of the Quaker ‘measure of Christ’ and, of course, belief in divine illumination was not uncommon in the seventeenth

⁵¹ Ibid. 1-2.

⁵² Edmund Elys, *To all persons that have any sense of... vertue*, E696A (London, s.d), 1-4.

⁵³ Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, 234-330.

⁵⁴ Edmund Elys, *A second letter*, E694 (London, 1697), 1-2.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of whether Elys may have been a Nicodemite Quaker, see Acworth, *John Norris of Bemerton*, 283. Acworth sensibly concludes that there is no strong evidence in support of the notion – and in any case, the fact Elys was a non-juror suggests that he was not predisposed to Nicodemitism. Nonetheless, he did describe William Penn as his ‘Honour’d Friend’ (suggesting some degree of personal connection with Quaker leaders), in *A second letter*, 2.

century. Nonetheless, Elys was also willing to support Quakers on more contentious doctrinal points: despite having a particular interest in the defence of the Trinity, he also directly tackled charges of Socinianism against Quakers, noting Penn's clear endorsement of God's providence.⁵⁶ Elys's sympathy for Quakerism was more profound than a generalised appreciation of Christian fellowship. Moreover, this sympathy increased dramatically at the start of the 1690s, despite the fact that Elys had been publishing theological works for some time. One might assume that this was simply because he felt able to publicise his support in the wake of the Toleration Act. Yet his earlier work also included criticism of the movement.⁵⁷ Moreover, as a non-juror, the most important consequence of 1689 for Elys was not toleration – and he was clearly willing to risk his reputation and livelihood if his conscience demanded it. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Elys simply changed his opinion of the Friends.

With this in mind, it is of greater significance that, in the same year that Elys defended Quakerism against Norris, both he and Norris also wrote against Locke's recently published *Essay*. Elys especially criticised Locke's rejection of innate ideas, musing that:

The main Point... is, Whether it be most to the Glory of the Father of Spirits, and to the Excellency of the Humane Immortal Spirit, his Offspring, That an Idea of God... should be Concreated with, or Ingenerated into it, when made in his Image... Or such Idea only Rise up... in the Exercise of Its-Self upon External Objects.⁵⁸

Elys proceeded to argue that the 'Idea of God', in which is 'implied the Idea of All Things', was imprinted 'in All Creatures'. Moreover, 'the First Act of the Rational Soul is the Perception... of Being Absolute or Universal', so that 'whensoever we REFLECT... upon our own Souls, we cannot but have some Notion or Perception of Him'. In contrast, the 'Corruption of Humane Nature' is the disinclination of the Will away from God.⁵⁹ Therefore, Elys thought that 'Every Creature, Every part of the Universe Proves the Existence

⁵⁶ Elys, *A second letter*, 2; Philip Dixon, 'Elys, Edmund (1633x5–1708)', *ODNB*. <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/8783>>, accessed 10 Feb 2016.

⁵⁷ In 1660, he addressed Quakers who 'endeavour... to Seduce any of my Congregation from hearing the Publique Discourses I make unto them'. Elys declared that 'a man may Worship God in Spirit, and in Truth in the use of that form of Prayer for Morning and Evening, which we call the Common-Prayer' – a claim which enticed a response from Isaac Penington in the same year. Edmund Elys, *Letters to Mr. Hughes of Plymouth*, E680 (London, 1660), 18–20, 7; Isaac Penington, *The consideration of a position concerning the Book of common-prayer*, P1161 (London, 1660).

⁵⁸ Edmund Elys, *A refutation of some of the false conceits*, E692A (London, 1697), sig. A2r–A2v.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 10–11.

of the CREATOR' to the properly inclined mind.⁶⁰ Here, his defence of innatism bore striking similarity to Norris's use of Augustine's doctrine of divine illumination – but also to the Quakers in their emphasis on the right orientation of the will and the suggestion of a presence of God within the individual, cast in terms of divine grace towards humanity. Furthermore, Elys wrote to Locke personally in answer to his demand for proof of the Soul's immateriality (although there is no record of any reply), arguing that since 'A Rational Soul is Capable of Apprehending, or of having a Notion, or Conception of a GOD... Therefore It is a Substance Immaterial, or Incorporeal', because 'nothing Can Apprehend Beyond Matter that has no Being Beyond Matter'.⁶¹

It is likely, then, that Elys's perception of Quakerism was significantly shaped by his desire to refute Locke's challenge, and the need to locate allies. Likewise, Norris's dispute with the Quakers should be understood in line with his agenda against Locke. Echoing the title of Locke's *Essay*, he even characterised his dispute with Vickris as a consideration of the 'Mode and Way of Human Understanding' which he saw as the worthiest investigation of a 'Rational Creature'.⁶² He did not want the doctrine of the Light within to be tarred by an association with enthusiasm, or (what he saw as) a false metaphysical framework. Yet even he did not deny some convergence between his religious concerns and those of the Quakers. Moreover, he clearly had some respect for the movement, describing them as 'by far the most considerable of any that divide from us' and singling out Barclay as 'so great a man that I confess to you freely, I had rather engage against a hundred Bellarmines, Hardings or Stapyltons, than with one Barclay'.⁶³

Thus the Vickris-Norris dispute demonstrated both the pro-active engagement of non-Quakers with the Quaker movement, and the limits of this affinity. Yet why was Norris so much less willing than Elys to accept the Quakers as allies? His disagreement was clearly driven by his metaphysical convictions. However, if that were the only issue at stake, we would expect both sides to accept the irreconcilable nature of the dispute. Instead, the Quakers found his position infuriating. As Whitehead queried, 'why may not Christ's Spiritual Body, which came down from Heaven, as well be a Light, as Life, Aliment or Food to

⁶⁰ Ibid. 24.

⁶¹ 'Edmund Elys to John Locke, 16 December 1698', in E.S. De Beer, *The Correspondence of John Locke. Electronic Edition*, 6 vols, vol. 6 (Charlottesville, 2004 ed.), 528.

⁶² Norris, *Two treatises*, pt 2, 32.

⁶³ Ibid. 32.

the Soul?’ He refused to retreat from his insistence that the Light was the ‘very Essence and Substance of the Deity’, and posited that the real difference between Robert Barclay and John Norris was that ‘the one supposeth ’tis as in the Spiritual Body of Christ; and the other... knows not but there may be such a thing’.⁶⁴ In fact, Whitehead’s own relationship with Barclay’s metaphysical framework was uncomfortable. He agreed with Vickris’s assessment that Norris failed to recognise the compatibility of body and spirit, so echoing Barclay. However, his affirmation of the Light’s absolute divinity also implied a reluctance to embrace the ‘middle substance’. Moreover, even as he was defending the *Vehiculum Dei* against Norris, Whitehead continued to draw the problematic distinction between ‘Christ’ and the ‘vessel’ of his body in dispute with Francis Bugg.⁶⁵ This was perhaps because he defined ‘Christ’ differently from his opponent, as the eternal Son of God, rather than the hypostatically united Christ Incarnate. Yet it also demonstrated his continuing scepticism regarding the place of the body in perfected reality. Likewise, his assignment of the death of Christ exclusively to the human body, rather than the whole person, suggested a rejection of the *communicatio idiomatum* and the terms of Chalcedonian Christianity. Therefore, Whitehead employed Barclay’s framework sporadically (if enthusiastically) even in the 1690s. This reflects an understanding of philosophical and metaphysical models as new metaphors to describe the divine mystery with greater nuance, rather than strict guidelines which must not be violated. The result was that the Quakers asserted a middle substance, even designating it ‘the Quakers Principle’, but were still frustrated where Norris was not able to put this assertion to one side and simply accept their common ground.

This necessitates a significant caveat to our diagnosis of the Norris-Vickris dispute as a metaphysical disagreement. Underlying this disagreement, two fundamentally different approaches to theology were also operating – that of Elys and the Quakers, and that of Norris. Whilst the former viewed philosophical models as subservient to a more fundamental moral concern (and therefore tended to employ them more flexibly), the latter was more propositional (and arguably more philosophically rigorous) in its method. Therefore, it

⁶⁴ Whitehead, *The divine light*, 9-10, 18. Whitehead demonstrated a similar preference for (and perhaps, given his earlier works, retreat into) metaphorical expression in 1682, stating that Quakers’ descriptions of the birth of Christ in the believer was ‘not Christ Jesus’ in a strict sense, but merely ‘a mysterious and elegant way of speaking’ of sanctification. George Whitehead, *Judgement fixed upon the accuser of our brethren*, W1937 (London, 1682), 330.

⁶⁵ George Whitehead, *A charitable essay*, W1903 (s.l., 1693), 2; Francis Bugg, *New Rome unmask’d*, B5378 (London, 1692), sig. A3v; Francis Bugg, *New Rome arraigned*, B5376 (London, 1693); George Whitehead, *The counterfeit convert*, W1922 (London, 1694), 12-13.

is unsurprising that Elys should be more willing than Norris to accept the validity of Quaker beliefs. Of course, as earlier chapters have shown, Whitehead himself was no stranger to philosophical engagement. Yet he was also mindful of the limits of philosophy as a path to God, and disapproved of what he saw as Norris's fundamentally constricted theological method.⁶⁶ Such simultaneous use of several Christological models was not unusual within Quakerism. As noted above, Fox (who only died in 1691) endorsed Barclay's publications enthusiastically, and yet even continued to express doubt over the humanity of Christ himself; the earliest Quakers' metaphorical understanding of reality had not entirely disappeared.⁶⁷

This section has argued that Elys, Norris and Vickris formed an unlikely – if not entirely consensual – intellectual constellation in the context of the empiricist ascendancy. Norris's active attempt to distance himself from Quakerism (and Vickris's attempt to collate their views) clearly demonstrates that parallels were being drawn between Quakerism and his own understanding of the Light, by Quakers and non-Quakers alike. Elys's subsequent defence of these parallels indicates that Friends were not always outliers in the theological world, but could elicit genuine theological support from outside the movement. Nonetheless, as a corollary of their high respect for the freedom and mystery of God, the Quakers championed a metaphorical approach to theology, relying on various models to explain their beliefs. Some of these models were philosophically opposed, and this limited the extent to which they could secure total theological respectability.

The Quakers' Broad Intellectual Alliances

The analysis above suggests that the Quakers' intellectual engagement continued to reflect the melding of various theological concerns. Norris's opposition to their understanding of the Light within did not indicate their simple failure to capitalise on natural alliances, but rather reflected the inherently complex nature of intellectual engagement. Their desire for theological respectability was always conducted as a balance

⁶⁶ This is a neglected sense in which the Quakers can be understood as arising out of an 'evangelical' tradition: suspicion of the use of philosophy in theology was one of Luther's major concerns; philosophy could only take the believer so far, after which point it became harmful. Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought* (London, 1970), 76-92.

⁶⁷ See above, 162.

between their own distinctive insights, and those of the wider religious milieu, and the final section of this chapter will explore more fully the extent and variety of the Quakers' intellectual engagement at the end of the seventeenth century.

With this in mind, it is telling that, whilst the most famous criticism levelled at early Quakers was that they made themselves God, by the eighteenth century they were being accused of denying divine providence altogether.⁶⁸ This not only demonstrated the cultural contingency of theological charges, but implied that Quakers had adopted a freethinking rationalism far beyond anything suggested by Norris. The charge of Socinianism had been pervasive for some time. Socinianism 'drove a wedge between religion and nature' by suggesting that religion was not innate to humans and emphasising religious conviction as a free choice, made through use of the 'critical reasoning faculty' to interpret revelation.⁶⁹ The Socinian emphasis on free choice in response to revelation and its ambivalence to Trinitarianism bore some similarity to Quakerism and may have encouraged the inaccurate charge that Quakers denied providence. However, the criticism was amplified during the deist challenge of the 1690s, marked by the publication of works such as John Toland's *Christianity not mysterious*.⁷⁰

As the dispute between Vickris and Norris demonstrated, Quakers in the 1690s still made the distinction between the divine Light and reason a pillar of their theological defence. That said, 'over time, some Quakers increasingly identified the Light Within with the Light of Enlightenment reason'.⁷¹ Perhaps this reflected the greater influence of those Quaker leaders who valued philosophical engagement highly. William Penn is the obvious example here; his relative openness to rational religion had always been somewhat atypical within Quakerism, and even in 1668, he stressed the coherence of Quaker principles

⁶⁸ c.f. Burton, *Diary*, vol. 1, 27; George Keith, *The deism of William Penn*, K156 (London, 1699), sig. A1r-A4v. It is telling that Keith only chose to raise charges of 'deism' at this point, as the publication he challenged was actually a 1699 edition of a lost 1673 work, preserved in an earlier form in Penn and Whitehead, *The Christian-Quaker*, pt 1, 136-155.

⁶⁹ Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge, 2010), 2-3.

⁷⁰ John Toland, *Christianity not mysterious*, T1762 (London, 1696); Justin Champion, *Republican Learning: John Toland and the Crisis of Christian Culture, 1696-1722* (Manchester, 2003); Justin Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and its Enemies, 1660-1730* (Cambridge, 1992), 17, 99.

⁷¹ Jeffrey Dudiak and Laura Rediehs, 'Quakers, Philosophy and Truth', in Angell and Dandelion, *Early Quakers*, 507-17, at 514.

with ‘the Authority of Scripture Testimonies and right Reason’.⁷² Yet by 1694, Penn was prepared to go much further in his praise of reason, stating that ‘God hath made men Reasonable, and his Judgement shall be most Righteous and Reasonable. The Lord hath given unto us his Light and Grace, if we do not improve it... we shall go down into Perdition.’⁷³ This suggested that even individual Quakers had become more optimistic about human potential as *human* potential, rather than transcended self, as the seventeenth century went on. Moreover, even if the Quakers’ generally higher view of reason was driven primarily by the changed demographic of the Quaker leadership, it was also reflected indirectly by the changing tone of less philosophical Quaker writings; for example, the loss of the incantatory style and increasing categorisation of religious experience might be understood as rationalising measures, and in this way, the whole movement was affected by the increasing engagement of its leaders.⁷⁴

Moreover, whilst it would have been poor strategy for the Quakers to have aligned themselves closely with the deists when their foundational religious intuitions diverged so drastically, there was some degree of personal association. This was especially strong amongst Quakers in the United Provinces, as Benjamin Furlly hosted various religious and political dissidents, including Toland himself, in Rotterdam.⁷⁵ Furthermore, as Justin Champion notes, deism was also driven by a social agenda aside from its theology. Champion challenges the notion that ‘the achievement of late seventeenth-century English thought was the epistemological separation of reason and revelation’, or even the subsequent replacement of revelation with reason, instead diagnosing an English debate about social order, fuelled by anti-clericalism, as much more central to the ‘crisis of the European mind’.⁷⁶ This serves as a reminder that influence could be informed by factors beyond the realm of theology, and Quakerism was certainly motivated in part by a non-theological concern for moral consistency.⁷⁷ The accusation of a deist connection was not entirely without substance.

⁷² Penn, *The sandy foundation*, sig. A1r; William Penn, *No cross, no crown*, P1328 (London, 1682), 413.

⁷³ William Penn, ‘Two Made One’, in William Penn et al., *The harmony of divine and heavenly doctrines*, P1301A (London, 1696), 163.

⁷⁴ See above, 69-87.

⁷⁵ Sarah Hutton, ‘Introduction’, in Sarah Hutton (ed.), *Benjamin Furlly 1646-1714: A Quaker Merchant and his Milieu* (Florence, 2007), 2-4.

⁷⁶ Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft*, 10-12, 99-100, 224, 3.

⁷⁷ See above, 49.

Yet if social factors drove non-conformity, they equally drove the contemporary prejudice which cast Quakerism as theologically dangerous and subversive. This prejudice has persisted into modern scholarship – that same scholarship which Champion challenges. Thus, Pocock locates the roots of English deism in radical Protestantism, on the basis that ‘in the spiritualist tradition... spirit could be identified with reason, and the resurrection of spirit in body could mean the perfect union of God with his creation, of spirit with matter through reason and love’.⁷⁸ More recently, McDowell has drawn on Pocock directly to portray Samuel Fisher as a precursor to the Enlightenment, writing that Fisher ‘heralds the deist controversy’ with his ‘subversion of biblical authority, arguments for universal toleration, and location of religious truth in a “Common Light” which “stand[s] by itself in reason before any”’.⁷⁹ Yet the Quakers’ epistemology and morality were aggressively anti-secular, and their intuitive defence of their social agenda was to stress revelation as paramount, rather than reason as a democratising force. In this sense, Pocock’s observation of ‘roots of the Enlightenment’ in ‘Radical Puritanism’ does little justice to the nuance of Quaker Christology: as Edmund Elys mused, in an undated letter to John Norris, ‘Can those Men be SOCINIANS, who acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the True Light in every Man, which he could not be, if he were not Infinite?’⁸⁰ Thus, the assumed affinity with both Socinianism and deism largely reflects an unwitting reception of contemporary bias: insult has been received as fact. This is exemplified by the case of the deist and physician Thomas Morgan, considered in a short study by Jan van den Berg: Morgan has been characterised as ‘Presbyterian preacher, then Arian, then Socinian, then Quaker, then Deist’, apparently on the basis of no evidence other than his probable medical treatment of some Quakers in Bristol.⁸¹

The accusation of a deist connection was not entirely without substance, then, but we should not overstate the case, or consider it in isolation. Rather, both the deist association and the Quakers’ affinity with Elys and Norris formed separate aspects of a much more variegated picture of Quaker engagement. Indeed, Furlly’s intellectual interests were notable for breadth rather than inherent radicalism, as demonstrated by the ‘many works of mainstream theology’ in his extensive library, and he was himself a man of ‘deep

⁷⁸ John Pocock, ‘Post-Puritan England and the Problem of the Enlightenment’, in Perez Zagorin (ed.), *Culture and Politics: from Puritanism to Enlightenment* (Berkeley, 1980), 91-111, at 97.

⁷⁹ McDowell, *English Radical Imagination*, 181-2.

⁸⁰ Edmund Elys, *A letter from... to John Norris*, E676 (London, s.d), 2.

⁸¹ Jan van den Berg, ‘Was the Deist Thomas Morgan (d.1743) a Medical Practitioner among the Quakers in Bristol? Some Observations about the History of a Quaker Label’, in *Quaker History*, 100, 2 (2011), 36-41.

personal piety'.⁸² His deist connection was due to the gathering of a diverse group of intellectuals known as the 'Lantern' at his home. Aside from John Toland, Furly also hosted the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Francis Mercury van Helmont and (most notably) John Locke himself.⁸³ Indeed, Locke enjoyed a particularly warm friendship with Furly and regularly visited and conversed with the Quaker, even outside the confines of the Lantern; in one letter, Locke even told Furly that 'I am truly your friend, and love you'.⁸⁴ Of course, one friendship should not be viewed as representative of the whole Quaker movement. Yet no man is an island: aside from inviting a wide variety of intellectuals into his home, Furly also hosted many Quakers with extensive links throughout the Quaker movement. In particular, William Caton was a long-standing family friend of Margaret Fell, and travelled regularly from Swarthmore in Quaker ministry.⁸⁵ Certainly, the itineracy of the early Quakers and the strong network between meetings would have ensured that the Lantern's glow shone beyond Rotterdam.

Taken together, then, the intellectual profiles of Vickris, Norris, Elys and Furly demonstrate that the Quakers were not tied to a single intellectual camp, but consistently engaged in a broad exchange across party lines. Nothing is more suggestive of the Quakers' desire for theological respectability – and indeed, of the nature of this desire as a balance of their distinctive interests and those of the wider theological landscape, rather than a straightforward appeal to powerful guardians of orthodoxy – than this sort of wide intellectual exploration.

However, as is clear in Whitehead's case, their efforts risked being undermined by the use of impressionistic, loose models when their interlocutors expected clean lines. With this in mind, their increasing sympathy for reason may have simply reflected a growing realisation that an exhaustive interrogation of one's primary assumptions, including the precise definition of one's terms, was the emerging *lingua franca* of early modern thought.⁸⁶ That is to say that an appeal to rationality was required to converse meaningfully with anybody at all. Indeed, by the end of the seventeenth century, a new

⁸² Hutton, 'Introduction', in Hutton (ed.), *Benjamin Furly*, 6.

⁸³ Hull, *Benjamin Furly*, 77-136; Luisa Simonutti, 'English Guests at "De Lantaarn"'. Sidney, Penn, Locke, Toland and Shaftesbury', in Hutton (ed.), *Benjamin Furly*, 31-66.

⁸⁴ Hull, *Benjamin Furly*, 82-100, 84.

⁸⁵ Caton, *A journal*, 3-4, 11.

⁸⁶ Clark, 'The Quakers and the Church of England', 345.

rhetorical culture was emerging in England and beyond – one which met with increasing incredulity at the metaphorical communication of the early Quakers.⁸⁷ As Christine Mason Sutherland notes, the seventeenth century experienced a ‘radical kind of language reform’ in the quest to ‘remove verbal ambiguity’.⁸⁸ This trend, which included a deep suspicion of metaphor, was expressed throughout the seventeenth century – and significantly, its main proponents were those in the ascendant empiricist tradition in the wake of Francis Bacon.⁸⁹ Most famously, Hobbes considered poor method in the use of language and the failure to ‘begin not... Ratiocination from Definitions; that is, from settled significations of their words’, and ‘the use of Metaphors, Tropes and other Rhetoricall figures’ as the first and sixth of his seven ‘Causes of Absurd conclusions’.⁹⁰

Suspicion of metaphor continued to harden towards the end of the century, perhaps encouraged by the rising popularity of empiricism and the more stable religious climate. Thus, in his *Essay*, Locke conceived of words as ‘Signs of internal Conceptions’ (which ‘stand as marks for Ideas’ within the mind, and which are understood through ‘sensation’ of external objects and ‘reflection’ on one’s own mind), whose purpose was to communicate these thoughts from one mind to another ‘with as much ease and quickness as is possible’, thus conveying knowledge.⁹¹ Anything which interrupted or manipulated this process was an abuse of language. Therefore, people should ‘declare [their] Meaning’ explicitly, even giving formal definitions of particularly ambiguous terms, and ‘use the same Word constantly in the same sense’.⁹² Locke viewed the faculty of clear discernment between different Ideas as crucial: where this faculty is ‘not rightly made use of’, then ‘our Notions are confused, and our Reason and Judgement disturbed or misled’. Thus, he expressed a somewhat iconoclastic caution over the worth of ‘Metaphor and Allusion’, whose use was more conducive to strong ‘Wit’ and beautiful language (which could distract us from rational assessment),

⁸⁷ Stefan Forrester, ‘Theories of Metaphor in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century British Philosophy’, in *Literature Compass*, 7 (2010), 610-25.

⁸⁸ Christine Mason Sutherland, ‘Reforms of Style: Augustine and the Seventeenth Century’, in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 21, 1 (1991), 26-37, at 27.

⁸⁹ Forrester, ‘Theories of Metaphor’, 611.

⁹⁰ Notably, Hobbes connected appropriate use of language to correct metaphysical understanding: the second of his reasons was ‘the giving of names to bodies, to accidents; or of accidents, to bodies; As they do that say, Faith is infused, or inspired; when nothing can be powred or breathed into anything, but body; and that, extension is body; that phantasms are spirits.’ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan... civill*, H2246 (London, 1651), 20.

⁹¹ Locke, *Essay*, 254, 321.

⁹² *Ibid.* 321-331.

and was therefore ‘quite contrary’ to good judgement.⁹³ Locke viewed wit as a highly persuasive, but ultimately deceptive, rhetorical device, which allowed ‘putting [Ideas] together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant Pictures, and agreeable Visions in the Fancy’.⁹⁴

Admittedly, the primary target for Hobbes and Locke was not strictly speaking the flamboyant, metaphorical performance of the Quakers as much as the unnecessary ornamentation of rhetoric. Yet it is telling that Locke’s criticism of metaphor was mirrored in his description of religious ‘enthusiasm’ as that which ‘laying by Reason would set up Revelation without it’, so relying on ‘the ungrounded Fancies of a Man’s own Brain’ as ‘a Foundation both of Opinion and Conduct’. He did not deny the possibility of revelation, even defining reason as ‘natural Revelation’, but he criticised any presumption of divine illumination on the basis of ‘groundless Opinion’.⁹⁵ Thus, in both his encouragement of unadorned speech and his frustration with enthusiasm, he was directly concerned with fostering a greater degree of religious accountability – and perhaps he had the Quakers specifically in mind (especially given his personal acquaintance with many Quakers) as he urged anybody who did not want to ‘give himself up to all the Extravagancies of Delusion and Error’ to ‘bring this Guide of his Light within to the Tryal’.⁹⁶ The early Quakers’ ‘incantatory style’ would clearly find less favour than plain speech and the systematic theology in this intellectual climate.⁹⁷ As Cope observes, ‘the age of plainness had come, and Quaker style henceforth was to be distinguished only by a few pathetic anachronisms of diction’. Cope himself posits that

It is little wonder that in an epoch naturally so inimical to the original ideals the stylistic manifestations of the early theology were tempered, but they could not have disappeared completely had the theology itself survived. That it did not and could not is a fact so intimately twisted into the accidents of milieu that it is fruitless to ask which was cause, which effect. The only certainty is that the theology and style of the First Publishers died together.⁹⁸

⁹³ Ibid. 92. Somewhat ironically, both Hobbes and Locke made extensive use of metaphor in their work. Forrester, ‘Theories of Metaphor’, 611, 615-18, 620-1.

⁹⁴ Locke, *Essay*, 92.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 451-4.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 454.

⁹⁷ See above, 54-5.

⁹⁸ Cope, ‘Seventeenth Century Quaker Style’, 754, 751.

This thesis seeks to push beyond Cope's reluctance to diagnose causality, by suggesting that Christological change independently shaped the movement. Nonetheless, his observation that some influences upon Quaker style were not direct is crucial. As long as the Quakers resisted the expectations of their intellectual peers (as they inevitably did when they resisted the theological criticism of Norris) they would find potential support undermined – and as Locke's influence grew in the years to come, this tension could only become more acute.⁹⁹

Conclusion

The theology of Quakerism in 1700, then, looked quite different from that of 1647, and this chapter reiterates the importance of the metaphysical issue in guiding this development. Might the Quakers be classified broadly as deist, enthusiast, rationalist or empiricist? As the Norris-Vickris dispute demonstrated, the answer depended upon whether the Light within was understood as man's own rational faculty or an external experience given by God through divine grace. Yet perhaps it was also the flexibility of the Quakers' metaphysical convictions which allowed their liaison with a wide range of potential allies. For indeed, whilst the Quakers were not perfectly aligned with any of the major intellectual schools of the later seventeenth century, they were in conversation with them all. This messy picture of Quaker intellectual history also sheds light on unexpected areas of agreement between otherwise opposing groups, both in support of and against the Quakers. Moreover, as well as the short-term influence of thinkers such as Anne Conway on their beliefs, and the direct engagement of thinkers such as Edmund Elys and John Norris, this broad engagement also exerted long-term pressures on the development of Quakerism, even affecting their very mode of expression.

Certainly, the breadth of the Quakers' involvement demonstrates their fervent desire for respectable intellectual moorings. Nonetheless, the tension between producing an authentic expression of their own distinctive views, and cohering those views with the doctrinal expectations of their opponents, was

⁹⁹ The increasing success of British empiricism is discussed in Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford, 2001), 477-501, 515-527; Phemister, 'Introduction', in Locke, *Essay*, xxxix-xli.

abundantly clear throughout – and this chapter has demonstrated both the positive attempt to engage widely, and the continuing challenge of producing a coherent Christology, compounded by their suspicion of literalism and heightened in the wake of Barclay’s theological legacy.

Of course, such engagement with the wider intellectual milieu also challenged the Quakers’ ingrained suspicion of human faculties and worldliness, and it is not unreasonable to expect that this would have produced a tension between the Quaker elite and the wider community – a cross-current that has not been explored in much detail to this point. At its highest level, the movement appears to have been tending naturally towards a *via media* between the views of the national Church and of Fox, represented by Barclay’s *Vehiculum Dei*. Might this have pushed Friends – at least theologically, if not in terms of their confessional loyalty – back towards the relative safety of the Church of England? Perhaps this lay behind Charles Leslie’s accusation, noted in chapter one, that the movement had ‘Christianised’.¹⁰⁰ To investigate this possible tension in further detail, chapter seven will consider the navigation of ‘Christian’ and ‘Quaker’ identities as they were negotiated within Quaker circles at the close of the seventeenth century. The investigation will be conducted through an examination of perhaps the most intellectually fraught episode in Quaker history: the Keithian controversy.

¹⁰⁰ See above, 95.

VII. THE KEITHIAN CONTROVERSY

...the Question betwixt us and GK is not who is the best Christian, but who is the best Quaker.¹

In March 1702, George Keith was ordained as a priest in the Church of England. This ostensibly unexceptional event marked the culmination of over a decade of venomous disputation amongst Quakers on both side of the Atlantic. In 1685, George Fox criticised the lethargy of Pennsylvanian ministers who gathered in Philadelphia rather than travelling to isolated communities in need of support. Keith moved to America in the same year, having been made the surveyor-general of East Jersey by Robert Barclay, and also expressed concern at the lack of order and understanding of Christian doctrine amongst colonial Quakers in the later 1680s.² When open dispute finally erupted in 1691, it escalated into a crisis and Keith was condemned by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for his ‘Evil Practices and Wicked Separation’ in July 1692.³ He returned to England in 1693, but English Quakers also failed to establish unity with him. In May 1695, London Yearly Meeting recorded that he had had ‘gone from y^e unity of y^e blessed sp^t & thereby separated himself from y^e fellowship of the Ch: of X^t’.⁴ Keith established an alternative Quaker community at Turner’s Hall in London, before deciding to leave Quakerism altogether in 1700 – an event described

¹ George Keith, *The heresie and hatred*, K174 (Philadelphia, 1693), 3.

² Pomfret, *Province of West New Jersey*, 244; Jon Butler, ‘Gospel order improved: the Keithian schism and the exercise of Quaker ministerial authority’, in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 31 (1974), 431–52, at 443, 434–5.

³ Frost, *The Keithian Controversy*, 151. It is worth noting that ‘Philadelphia Yearly Meeting’ was held in Burlington (West Jersey) every two years, until 1764, when it settled in Philadelphia. Pomfret, *Province of West New Jersey*, 223.

⁴ Explicit language of ‘excommunication’ was later used both by Keith and his opponents. Excommunication normally indicates exclusion from the sacraments. In a Quaker context, where no outward sacraments were observed, exclusion from a spiritual Christian fellowship – the ‘Communion’ of true believers – was the natural equivalent. Furthermore, the minutes suggested that Keith had ‘separated himself’. In an ideological sense, then, the Meeting simply confirmed what was already an inward, spiritual reality. Nonetheless, there were practical implications too – he was no longer allowed to preach in Quaker Meetings, or ‘to be owned or Received as one of Us’ – and this inescapably implied the authority of the Quaker institution over the individual. Indeed, Keith himself did not stop identifying as a Quaker immediately: he set up an alternative gathering of ‘Christian Quakers’, did not begin working for the SPCK until the later 1690s, and did not take his first Anglican communion until 1700. Therefore, this was a clear example of the group identity asserting itself, as explored in chapter one. Minutes of London Yearly Meeting MSS, vol. 2, 1695, FHL, 93; Anon, *The Quakers complaint against George Keith*, Q19 (London, 1700), sig. A1r, 3; Benjamin Bealing and George Keith, *The pretended yearly meeting of the Quakers*, K193 (London, 1695), sig. A1r.

sardonically by one observer as ‘One Wonder more, Added to the Seven Wonders of the World’.⁵ Keith’s ordination, first as a deacon and then as a priest, followed shortly afterwards.⁶

The Keithian controversy is an important test case for the state of Quaker Christology (and Quakerism in general) at the close of the seventeenth century, as the necessity of faith in the historical Jesus lay at the centre of the dispute. However, determining exactly what it reveals is complicated – not least because the dispute was fraught with paradox. On the one hand, open discord began with a theological challenge made against Keith, at a time when Keith himself had no desire to challenge Quaker theology (and indeed, defended it passionately against outside criticism). On the other hand, Keith’s eventual excommunication was not presented as a doctrinal matter at all – and yet, by this point he was pursuing a ferocious, public crusade against perceived Quaker heresies. For the wider Quaker community, then, the theological question appears to have become significantly less important over time; for Keith, quite the opposite.

With this in mind, how should we understand the role of theology in the dispute? The existence of significant Christological fault lines within Quakerism was suggested by a letter penned in 1692 by Christian Lodowick, a former Quaker. Lodowick had debated the Quakers’ understanding of the ‘True Christ’ with Keith at Newport Meeting in Rhode Island in June 1691, and now diagnosed two Christological camps in the movement. ‘Foxonian’ Quakers (the vast majority of Friends) believed that the Light was ‘a measure of the Essence of God, which they call Christ... and they conceive that this Christ is also the Father... and the Holy Ghost’. By this divine essence, slain or resurrected in the soul, individuals were damned or saved, ‘hence they deny wholly, that ever Christ as Man shall come down from Heaven to Raise and Judge the Dead’, and ‘they... never speak of the Merit of the sufferings, Death and Resurrection of Jesus at Jerusalem’.⁷ These Quakers made stark distinction between ‘Christ in the Spirit’ and ‘Christ in the Flesh’. Nonetheless, he identified George Keith as part of a small group of ‘Semi-Foxonians’ – ‘so few, that I believe, if they were all gathered together, they might meet in one room, and make no considerable appearance’ – who found this doctrine ‘too gross’ because it rendered the spirit divisible, crucifiable, and

⁵ Anon, *One wonder more, added to the seven*, O336B (London?, 1700), 1.

⁶ J. S. Chamberlain, ‘Keith, George (1638?–1716)’, *ODNB*. <<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/15264>> accessed 19 Nov 2014.

⁷ Christian Lodowick, *A Letter from*., L2813 (Boston?, 1692), 2-3.

killable, whilst in fact it is immortal and 'indiscernible'.⁸ Lodowick included Robert Barclay (who had died two years previously) in this group, and suggested that they conceived of the Light within as an emanation of God – not enabling immediate revelation, but mediating between God and man as a 'Divine Essential Principle'. This notion was inspired by 'the Writings of some Rabbies among the Eastern Jews, Translated into Latin, by a Learned Noble Man in Germany (whose Children I Tutored some years ago)'.⁹ Here, Lodowick referred to the Kabbalah, and the 'Learned Man' was probably Christian Knorr von Rosenroth.¹⁰ In this way, he stressed both the esotericism of Keith, and the base heterodoxy of the vast majority of Friends.

In her classic biography of George Keith, Ethyn Kirby Williams essentially paraphrased Lodowick's letter in her assessment of the Keithian controversy, arguing that Keith's Quakerism had always been of a more rationalistic, pedantic brand than that of English Quakers, and that it was his own departure from 'the ways of George Fox' – not Philadelphian heresies – which caused the fracture. This sentiment was reiterated in John Pomfret's history of West Jersey, which described Keith 'from the beginning' as a 'questioning disciple', and dubiously identified Keith's use of Scriptures in preaching as a sign of departure 'in spirit at least from the priesthood of all believers'. However, other scholars have downplayed the doctrinal element of the dispute. Thus, Braithwaite emphasised Keith's concern to improve discipline and order amongst colonial Quakers, and Isaac Sharpless admitted some role for doctrinal disagreement but ultimately identified Keith's attempt to impose a creed on the Society as the main sticking point for Friends. More recently, Jon Butler has questioned why Keith's theological dissatisfaction would take so long to emerge if it was the main driving factor, arguing that he was 'no more intellectual or theologically inclined than any number of Quakers'. Nonetheless, rather than echoing Braithwaite's emphasis on general concerns regarding discipline, Butler suggests that the more specific issue of 'ministerial authority' was the 'central issue' of the debate. Keen to see American Quakerism succeed, Keith ignored the established Meeting structure, and asserted his individual position against the 'corporate' authority of the Philadelphian ministers, of whom he was critical. Therefore, 'although the early troubles were concerned with doctrinal

⁸ Ibid. 1, 2, 5.

⁹ Ibid. 5-6.

¹⁰ See above, 179-80; Coudert, *Impact of the Kabbalah*, 100-36.

issues and Keith's treatment of Stockdale, the schism began when Keith ridiculed and rejected the ministers' authority', so that the ministers 'condemned Keith, then crushed his movement'.¹¹

Butler's account is an important reminder of significant power dynamics at play; certainly, it was not a straightforward clash between Quaker leaders and 'Friends on the benches'. However, the ministerial question does not explain the dispute on its own. First, it is crucial to remember that Keith alienated Friends at all levels and across different continents, offending ordinary Quakers, local ministers, Monthly Meetings, and two separate Yearly Meetings in his refusal to concede. Secondly, Butler's observation that Keith's earlier views 'easily remained within the boundaries of orthodox Quaker opinion' does not preclude the possibility that a later change in his theology caused the breach – and indeed, as this thesis has made clear, his appeal to a 'strong Christological emphasis' in Quaker writings throughout the seventeenth century (which again, he argues, makes a theological motivation unlikely) is a simplification.¹² Therefore, this chapter suggests that he prematurely disregards the theological dimension of the dispute.

This chapter will assess Lodowick's characterisation of Quakerism in the 1690s through an examination of the Keithian controversy. It will demonstrate that greater theological analysis of the controversy challenges Lodowick's assessment, as well as providing important correctives to Butler's narrative, thus shedding fresh light on the culture of Quakerism at the end of the seventeenth century. In particular, the chapter will note that an increasingly settled *Quaker* orthodoxy had emerged by the end of the century, which was managed differently in the colonial and English situations, and by Keith and his opponents.

¹¹ Williams, *George Keith*, 8-9, 64; Pomfret, *Province of West New Jersey*, 242-58, 243, 245; Braithwaite, *Second Period*, 482-95; Isaac Sharpless, 'Early Days – The Keith Controversy', in Rufus Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (New York, 1966), 437-458, at 448-50; Butler, 'Gospel order improved', 439-42, 432, 452. Other discussions of the Keithian controversy can be found in Edward J. Cody, 'The Price of Perfection: the Irony of George Keith', in *Pennsylvania History*, 39, 1 (1972), 1-19; J. William Frost, *The Keithian Controversy in Early Pennsylvania* (Norwood, 1980); Stephen Trowell, 'George Keith: Post-Restoration Quaker Theology and the Experience of Defeat', in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 76, 1 (1994), 119-138; Murphy, *Liberty, Conscience & Toleration*, 205-15.

¹² Butler, 'Gospel order improved', 435.

The Keithian Controversy

It is helpful first to consider the theological contours of the Keithian controversy. Whilst the dispute itself was conducted predominantly in person, the main sources available today are the published accounts issued by both sides. However, as the Quakers' sole official printer in Philadelphia (William Bradford) supported Keith, there was an inevitable imbalance in the printed record. Bradford published twelve pamphlets for Keith in 1692, and whilst he advertised his willingness to publish material from both sides, the Quakers refused to provide him with trade and he cancelled his contract with them. His press was briefly confiscated, but replaced in 1693.¹³ The upshot was that George Keith (along with his most loyal supporter, the Burlington Quaker Thomas Budd) distributed his own material almost immediately, and most early accounts supported him.¹⁴ His opponents mainly published later: their most extensive account was given in Samuel Jennings's *The state of the case*, published in London in 1694.¹⁵ Nonetheless, minutes and correspondence of the various official Meetings give a more immediate insight into the position of Keith's opponents. This discussion will use a variety of sources, and where necessary, provide corroborating evidence from both sides, to reconstruct the major theological concerns guiding the dispute.

As mentioned above, tensions between Keith and the other Philadelphian ministers first manifested openly in June 1691, after the public dispute between the Quakers and Lodowick himself. Following this dispute, the Quaker William Stockdale – an 'Antient Preacher' – apparently accused George Keith of having preached 'Two Christs', on the basis that he taught 'Faith in Christ within, and Faith in Christ without'.¹⁶ Clearly, this was a Christological challenge, and the Keithian party responded in kind: in their later account of the Stockdale affair, Keith and Budd bemoaned the pervasive reluctance to attribute a body to the risen and eternal Christ amongst Stockdale's supporters, and complained that 'Christ without is to him but a false Christ'.¹⁷ In this sense, both sides were suspected of dividing Christ – Stockdale because he ultimately

¹³ David L. Johns, 'Convincement and Disillusionment: Printer William Bradford and the Keithian Controversy in Colonial Philadelphia', *JFHS*, 57, 1 (1994-6), 21-32, at 26-8; Kirby, *George Keith*, 70-4, 91-3; Keith, *The heresie*, 23.

¹⁴ For example, Thomas Budd, *A true copy of three judgements... against George Keith*, B5361 (s.l., 1692); George Keith and Thomas Budd, *The plea of the innocent*, K189 (s.l., 1692); George Keith, *Some reasons and causes of the late separation*, K215 (Philadelphia, 1692); Thomas Budd, *A brief answer to two papers procured from Friends in Maryland*, B5355 (Philadelphia, 1692).

¹⁵ Samuel Jennings, *The state of the case briefly*, J670 (London, 1694).

¹⁶ Budd and Keith, *The plea*, 2-3; Jennings, *The state*, 6.

¹⁷ Budd and Keith, *The plea*, 3, 4-5, 23; c.f. Jennings, *The state*, 2-7; Keith, *Some reasons*, 14-15, 20-2.

viewed 'Christ' as a Spirit rather than a hypostatic union, and Keith because he distinguished too greatly between Christ's outward form and the Light within. Given what they perceived as the straightforward 'Blasphemy' of Stockdale's accusation, the Keithian party noted with 'astonishment' how long it took Philadelphia Monthly Meeting to determine the matter. Yet whilst the Meeting criticised Keith for breaching 'Gospel Order' in his dealings with Stockdale, it ultimately supported his case and rejected Stockdale's accusation in September 1691.

This judgement did not settle the dispute. Keith complained that Stockdale repeated his charge in later trials, that he was used as a witness against him despite their personal feud, and that his theological misunderstanding enjoyed wider support in the community.¹⁸ In Keith's favour, continued Christological tensions are suggested by opposition to the publication of the Quakers' defence against Christian Lodowick. This opposition was strong enough that William Bradford, the Quakers' official printer in Philadelphia, was censured for printing it. Such reticence might have been generated partly by the perceived attempt to establish a Quaker creed.¹⁹ Nonetheless, it is likely also to have reflected the pamphlet's strong emphasis on the historical Jesus, for its later endorsement by the Keithian party was made in the context of a Christological discussion.²⁰ Firmly in support of Keith, Bradford eventually published the piece at the height of the controversy in 1692, and, whilst it may have been edited to take account of later events, its bold affirmation of the outward form was notable.²¹ Thus, it stridently declared that 'Jesus of Nazareth is the true Christ of God, and the only true Saviour', asserting the complete humanity of Christ, his body in Heaven, and the future resurrection of our own bodies at the Day of Judgement, and directly challenging those who suggest that 'to believe and confess to Christ's Inward Coming and Appearance, were to deny his Outward or to hold forth Two Christs'.²²

Given Stockdale's accusation and Lodowick's letter, we might assume that the controversy was a straightforward Christological disagreement. However, several factors complicate this assessment. First and most obviously, the other Philadelphian leaders supported Keith against Stockdale. Secondly, when

¹⁸ Keith, *Some reasons*, 8, 1-7.

¹⁹ Kirby, *George Keith*, 56-7, 65.

²⁰ Keith, *Some reasons*, 11.

²¹ Kirby, *George Keith*, 65.

²² *Ibid.* 4-5.

Stockdale was accused of restating his charge during the subsequent investigation into Keith's beliefs concerning the sufficiency of the Light, he consistently denied it.²³ This suggests his awareness that the charge was inappropriate (and perhaps, as Keith said, even blasphemous). Thirdly, Keith's opponents went to considerable lengths to prevent this issue becoming part of their case against Keith. Thus, Samuel Jennings mused that it was unlikely that Stockdale had reiterated the accusation at all, as his initial concern was merely that Keith's 'speaking so much, and so frequently of Christ without, and a Christ within, might give ground to some to suspect, he preached Two Christs, and that the preaching of a Christ without, and a Christ within, was to preach Two Christs'. Jennings downplayed Stockdale's objection, and the quality of the evidence against him, to accuse Keith of using the incident to 'strengthen his charge against us'.²⁴ Regardless, the Meeting judged there to be sufficient evidence to believe it happened – and subsequently reiterated its judgement against Stockdale.²⁵

All this demonstrates the colonial Quakers' concern to downplay Stockdale's initial accusation, and prevent it from characterising their own position moving forward. Nonetheless, a soteriological disagreement concerning the nature of 'true' faith – and, more specifically, the minimum standard of what one must *necessarily* believe to be saved – soon emerged, which suggested the continued relevance of the Christological issue. Thus, in January 1692, the Quaker minister Thomas Fitzwater accused Keith of 'denying the sufficiency of the Light'.²⁶ Keith rejected this second charge against him, and a month later he organised (what he claimed to be) a Monthly Meeting in the local school, where his name was unanimously cleared.²⁷ However, the legitimacy of this Meeting was challenged: he was accused of deliberately purging his opponents from the gathering, and his actions even at this early stage indicated rapidly deteriorating relations between the two parties. Subsequently, in May, the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting supported Fitzwater and condemned Keith.²⁸

²³ Jennings, *The state*, 6; Budd, *A true copy*, 2.

²⁴ Jennings, *The state*, 6-7.

²⁵ Budd, *A true copy*, 2.

²⁶ Keith, *Some reasons*, 8; Jennings, *The state*, 2-4.

²⁷ Budd, *A true copy*, 1; Jennings, *The state*, 2.

²⁸ Budd and Keith, *The plea*, 6.

It is perhaps unsurprising that Keith's theological defence was deemed inadequate, as he protested his innocence whilst unashamedly maintaining that the Light was not sufficient 'without something else'. He identified this 'something else' as the Incarnate Christ, and went on to state that 'if this be Guiltiness, That the Light within doth not save us, or is not sufficient without the Man Christ Jesus, and his Death, Resurrection, Ascension & Meditation for us in Heaven, I own myself guilty.'²⁹ Therefore, as Keith later explained, he was

...so far from asserting the sufficiency of the Light within as to exclude the Man Christ, and the benefit of his outward Coming, Obedience, Death and Sufferings from having a part in our Salvation (together with the Light within) that I do expressly join them together, plainly affirming, That they are both sufficient and useful and necessary in their own kind and way, consummating, and being consummated in one another.³⁰

That Keith was so keen to 'join them together' reflected his attempt to refute accusations that he divided Christ. Likewise, he enthusiastically stressed the inseparability of the 'Light within' and the 'Man Christ' as 'the Beams of the Sun are inseparable from the Sun' so envisaging a relationship so intimate that it was impossible to conceive of them apart. However, this metaphor also implied both distinction and hierarchy between Christ and the Light within (as the sun is logically and causally prior to, and ontologically different from, its beams). Therefore, Keith asserted the non-equivalence of the two, in the same way that

...Faith and Repentance are inseparable, yet Faith is not Repentance: Remission of Sin and Sanctification are inseparable, yet Sanctification is not Remission of Sin... and Christs glorified Soul and Body are inseparable, yet his Body is not his Soul: The Godhead and Manhood of Christ are inseparable, yet the Godhead of Christ is not his manhood; The Measure and Fullness are inseparable, yet the Measure is not the Fullness.³¹

Particularly through his treatment of Christ's 'Godhead and Manhood' in this passage, Keith demonstrated his concern for the Chalcedonian principle of *distinctio sed non separatio*, as articulated by Calvin, reflecting his concern for Chalcedonian Christology understood through the lens of his Scottish Calvinist

²⁹ George Keith, et al., *An appeal from the twenty eight judges*, K141 (London, 1692), 3; Budd and Keith, *The plea*, 7.

³⁰ Keith, *The heresie*, 6 (Note the unusual pagination; sig. A4v.).

³¹ Ibid. 9.

upbringing.³² More specifically, this passage indicated that Keith viewed his position not as a denial of the sufficiency of the Light, but merely as a fuller articulation of the relationship between Christ and the Light within, and the implications of this relationship for salvation. He accused his opponents of failing to recognise the distinction between the two – hence their sensitivity to his language of ‘Christ within’ and ‘Christ without’, and the accusation that he preached two Christs – and therefore, of failing to provide a substantial soteriological account of the Incarnation. They made the Incarnate Christ ‘only a Titular, but no real Saviour’, and Budd explicitly accused Fitzwater of claiming that he ‘did not own any Man Christ Jesus was Mediator in Heaven without him, but the Grace of God within him’.³³ A wounded Keith perceived the same assumptions underlying both Stockdale’s rejected charges and Fitzwater’s endorsed charges, and so identified underlying Christological confusion as the source of the more controversial soteriological dispute.

Thus, Keith cast his position as a discovery of widespread heresy amongst Philadelphian Quakers. His opponents’ prejudice against him, and subsequent efforts ‘to hide their own Ignorance, Error & Unbelief in those Fundamental Principles of Christian Doctrine... are the Foundation Cause of the present Difference and Separation’. They ‘[had] not Faith in the Man Christ without them’, and had proved themselves not to be Christians. The Keithian party now refused to worship with them.³⁴

For their own part, despite having supported Fitzwater against Keith, the Philadelphians resented Keith’s belligerent emphasis on the doctrinal issue. Later commentators would dismiss the theological challenge as a ‘specious pretence’ created to garner support and vengefully discredit the Quaker movement.³⁵ They had condemned William Stockdale (so ostensibly clarifying their commitment to belief in the outward Christ) and supported Thomas Fitzwater (so reiterating their uncompromising commitment to the sanctifying power of the Light within), and in their correspondence to London Yearly Meeting in April 1692, Philadelphian Meeting of Ministers lamented:

³² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (London, 2010), 635-6.

³³ Keith, *An appeal*, 5; Budd, *A brief answer*, 4.

³⁴ Budd, *A brief answer*, 3; Keith, *False judgments reprehended*, K164 (Philadelphia, 1692), 2; Budd, *A true copy*, 6.

³⁵ Thomas Ellwood, *An epistle to Friends. Briefly commemorating the gracious dealings*, E620 (London, 1693), 7, 13; Anon, *A solemn protestation against George Keith’s advertisement... against... Quakers*, S4453A (London, 1697).

We have told him that our Faith in Christ is according to Scripture, both as to his Conception, Birth, Life, Sufferings, Miracles, Death, Resurrection, Ascension and Intercession, and that all he did and Suffered was to Compleat our Redemption, and we expect Salvation by no other name, but by the Name of Jesus, to which every Knee shall bow, and Tongue Confess.

Furthermore, they offered to put their name to any ‘Confession of faith put out by Ancient approved Friends’, but all this ‘hath given [Keith] no Satisfaction’ as he demanded that ‘it must be something springing (as he said) from Life in our Selves’ (notably indicating Keith’s appeal, either cynically or in earnest, to the ultimate authority of the Light within).³⁶ So too, in a letter sent from the Burlington Women’s Meeting to the London Box Meeting, Friends stressed that they were ‘y^e same wth all the faithful followers of y^e Lord’, and had ‘followed y^e Guidance of [the Light] whose Blessed appearance both inwardly & outwardly is... highly Esteemed by us’. They lamented ‘reports... y^t some here deny y^e outward coming of our Blessed Saviour according to y^e record of y^e Scriptures of Truth: And Believe noe Resurrection but is in this Life’, denouncing these reports as ‘altogether false & absurd, Rising from a Spirit of Prejudice’, and requesting that ‘if any such reports should come there, we desire you will give no Credit to it’.³⁷ This Women’s Meeting met alongside Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and its correspondence gives an important insight into the mood of the community at the exact point they broke unity with George Keith.

Such passages demonstrate the Philadelphian Quakers’ clear recognition of the need to prove their faith in the historical Jesus to more powerful Quakers in London. In some sense, then, this must have been understood as the minimum confessional standard required of a sound Friend in the 1690s. Of course, Keith did not deem their efforts to be satisfactory. The minutes from the Philadelphian Meeting of Ministers in May 1692 record the Ministers’ affirmation of the ‘Birth, Death, Suffering & Resurrection of Christ’, but also Keith’s accusation that they ‘do not preach’ those things, and their response that ‘we preach what God doth put into our hearts’.³⁸ Furthermore, they went on to state that it was ‘Safer and Modester to own as we had always done what was already publique’ than to make a new statement.³⁹ Their reticence was possibly

³⁶ Frost, *The Keithian Controversy*, 142-3.

³⁷ Epistle of the Burlington Women at Yearly Meeting to the Box Meeting, Box Meeting MSS, 7 of 7th Month, 1692, FHL, 44.

³⁸ ‘Extracts from Minutes of the Meeting of Ministers’, in Frost, *The Keithian Controversy*, 139.

³⁹ Frost, *The Keithian Controversy*, 142-3.

more profound than a simple lack of confidence: almost a year after Fitzwater had brought his initial charge, Keith bitterly complained that the Quaker preacher John Wilsford claimed to have ‘the TRUE Faith of Christ, as he dyed, and rose again, and ascended.... yet that Faith did not purifie him’. Keith objected to his insinuation that even such a ‘TRUE Faith’ in the historical Jesus – that is, not merely a ‘dead literal and notional Faith’ – was ineffectual for salvation, and argued that Wilsford was therefore guilty of ‘denying and opposing Faith in the Man Christ without us’.⁴⁰ In contrast, Keith stressed that it was ‘so unquestionable a Truth among Christians, That Christ without is as necessary to be believed in for our Salvation, as that God in Heaven is to be believed in, as well as Christ within us, as necessary to our Salvation’.⁴¹

As Keith continued to diagnose doctrinal confusion, and his opponents continued to protest their innocence, the Meeting of Public Friends in June 1692 lamented Keith’s degeneration from the ‘lowly meek and peaceable Spirit of Christ Jesus’ and his ‘abusive Language and disorderly Behaviour’, much more than the doctrinal issue: ‘The Lord knows the trouble which we have had with this... Member’, so ‘we cannot receive him in his publick Ministry, and would have him cease to offer his Gift, as such, among us, or elsewhere among Friends, till he be reconciled to his offended Brethren’.⁴² A month later, on 7 July 1692, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting recorded Keith’s ‘Evil Practices and Wicked Separation’ and agreed to send London notice of the ‘Much Evil George Keith hath done therein, and of his persisting in his Evill’.⁴³

As far as the Philadelphian stages of the Keithian controversy were concerned, then, neither side actively denied faith in the historical Jesus or the sufficiency of the Light – yet Keith did not accept his opponents’ faith in the historical Jesus to be a ‘saving’ faith, and they did not accept his complete affirmation of the sufficiency of the Light. Furthermore, whilst Keith was unable to ignore what he viewed as a major heresy, the colonial Quakers now attempted to downplay the doctrinal dispute. Reflecting on this process as a whole, it is clear that their natural preference was to stress the sufficiency of the Light over faith in the

⁴⁰ Keith, *False judgements*, 4-5.

⁴¹ Ibid. 3. This reflected the Quakers’ common distinction between saving faith and historical faith, used to denounce the merely ‘notional’ Christianity of their opponents – so when Jennings later stressed that the Quakers did not only believe in Christ ‘historically’, ‘but also that we have a living Faith in him, who is the author of all true Faith’, this spoke both to Keith (who denied their ‘true faith’) and to those outside the movement (whom they accused of having only a historical faith). Jennings, *The state*, 6.

⁴² Budd, *A true copy*, 3-5.

⁴³ Frost, *The Keithian Controversy*, 151.

Incarnate Christ. However, critically, their concern to prove their faith in the historical Jesus (and concomitantly, to emphasise the inflammatory behaviour of Keith) was still more important than any desire to engage Keith in dispute regarding that sufficiency.

This was the subtle and strange situation reported to English Quakers as Keith returned to London in 1693. On his arrival, leading Quakers in England – especially William Penn – were open to supporting Keith, and they recognised the likelihood that doctrinal education was inadequate in Philadelphia.⁴⁴ Unlike Keith, however, they approached the doctrinal controversy as an educational challenge rather than a sign of widespread corruption in the community: as mentioned at the start of this chapter, low standards in the colonies had been a concern for some time, and in April 1693 the Second Day Morning Meeting arranged the swift distribution of approved Quaker books to the New World in response to Keith's criticism.⁴⁵

This did not satisfy Keith, and the matter was still unresolved by the time London Yearly Meeting gathered in 1694. Discussion centred around three main issues: the doctrinal dispute itself, Keith's printing, and the threat he posed to church unity.⁴⁶ As to the first, Keith stressed that 'I know no Man upon the fface of y^e Earth, that professeth a Belief of the Sufficiency of the Light within to salvation more than I... viz. the Light within being God, the Word, and y^e Sp^t in every Man, is sufficient to Reveal to every Man, all y^t is needful to his Eternal Salvation'.⁴⁷ Again, unlike colonial Quakers, the Meeting essentially accepted Keith's testimony on this matter. Yet actual sympathy for Keith varied based on Friends' assessment of his behaviour. A representative for London suggested that

I do think it necessary we should be of one mind that [Keith's] books are of an ill service ... but the Doctrines that occasioned those books were publicly disputed and Desire we may be of one mind and of one understanding, for I want satisfaction how or which way otherwise the Reproach on Truth by those Doctrines should be Removed.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Kirby, *George Keith*, 96-7.

⁴⁵ Minutes of the Morning Meeting of Ministers and Elders TSS, vol. 2, 17 April 1693, FHL, 24.

⁴⁶ Minutes of London Yearly Meeting MSS, vol. 2, 1694, FHL, 34.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 31.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 44-5.

Here, in line with the proceedings of the Second Day Morning Meeting, London recognised the need to address theological standards in Pennsylvania. However, other representatives stressed Keith's poor behaviour much more centrally. Thus, Henry Gouldney (the London Quaker in whose house George Fox had died three years previously) lamented, 'His doctrines are in general owned by all sound Friends', and yet he insists on 'what he calls fundamentals, in any of whom, if we disagree in, he cannot hold fellowship; though, upon the whole, was not his spirit wrong, that would easily be accommodated'.⁴⁹ So too, even despite acknowledging the potential heterodoxy of Philadelphian Quakers, the Quaker Henry Bayley appealed to a Pauline precedent that idolatry was not an excuse for separation (so implying a recognition of both the idolatry of Philadelphian Quakers, and Keith's schismatic behaviour), and the representative of Durham lamented that Keith 'discovering the Weakness of Some, the whole thereby struck at'.⁵⁰

Thus, Keith's management of the situation dominated proceedings: a representative for Derbyshire described how Keith's printing was 'out of the Counsell of God and hath opened the mouths of our Adversaries', and one Lancashire Friend recorded that 'Besides Printing I must needs say all along... there appears a sp^t of Separacion'.⁵¹ As one representative for Hertfordshire summarised,

y^t G.K. had a Cause I am satisfied, but his printing I dislike, and think a Check should have been put to it, But now its spread and he having been a serviceable Member, and the Eyes of the professors are on this Meeting, and it arising in G.K.'s heart to desire unity with ffrids, and ffinding him not to disagree with ffrids in Doctrine, I should be glad he might be gathered.⁵²

Given that 'the professors' were watching to see how the Quakers would react, they had a significant incentive to bring Keith back into unity. Perhaps this explains why the 'clear and Generous sense' of the 1694 London Yearly Meeting was ambivalent on the theological issue, yet strident in its assessment of Keith's behaviour: it admitted simply that 'some few persons have given Offence, either through Erroneous Doctrines, unsound Expressions, or Weakness, Forwardness, Want of Wisdom and Right Understanding',

⁴⁹ John Rodes, *A Quaker Post-bag*, ed. Sophy Felicité de Rodes (London, 1910), 56-59, cited in Brathwaite, *Second Period*, 484.

⁵⁰ Minutes of London Yearly Meeting, MSS, vol. 2, 1694, FHL, 43-4, 36. Bayley quoted from 1 Corinthians 4.19: 'I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power' (KJV).

⁵¹ Minutes of London Yearly Meeting, MSS, vol. 2, 1694, FHL, 37, 34.

⁵² *Ibid.* 45.

whilst noting both the assurance from Philadelphian Quakers that they did all in fact believe ‘the principle [sic] Doctrines of Christianity’ and the ‘scruples’ some had over Keith’s own views.⁵³ Moving forward, the Meeting advised Keith to ‘live in Peace and Charity among Friends and Brethren’, and determined that he must publish a public statement withdrawing the slanderous accusations made against Quakers.

However, as in Philadelphia, this appeasement was soon undermined by Keith’s obstinate unwillingness to accept it. Most offensive to English Quakers remained his apparent determination to advertise his concerns as widely as possible, particularly through the use of print (by which he violated the principles established at the founding of the Second Day Morning Meeting, that Friends would agree on their published output beforehand).⁵⁴ Therefore, whilst Keith produced the required public apology, he took the opportunity to reiterate his complaints with renewed zeal.⁵⁵ Relations continued to deteriorate, and in February 1695 Penn directly criticised Keith for going ‘from meeting to meeting to carp, catch, accuse, and raise disturbances and troubles’, whilst falsely accusing the Quakers of denying what (Penn claimed) they had always affirmed: the outward and atoning sacrifice of Christ Jesus.⁵⁶ Defending his behaviour at the following Yearly Meeting, Keith apparently claimed that the 1694 directive had not been the ‘Yearly Meeting sense... but of a party or ffaction of y^m And there were many here y^t were Dissatisfied wth y^t paper’.⁵⁷ Of course, we can never know what was deliberately excluded from the minutes of the Meeting, but extant records displayed an impressive catalogue of witnesses, all focusing on Keith’s uncharitable printing and behaviour – not the doctrinal issue.⁵⁸ In any case, by 1695, London Yearly Meeting saw no other solution than to excommunicate Keith: he had ‘gone from the blessed Unity of the peaceable spirit our Lord Jesus C^t and hath thereby separated himself from the holy ffellowship [sic] of the Church of Christ’.⁵⁹

⁵³ Ibid. 54, 57.

⁵⁴ See also the letter from the Philadelphian Meeting of Ministers, in which they complained that Bradford would ‘Print any thing for him without the knowledge and Consent of friends’, cited in Frost, *The Keithian Controversy*, 146.

⁵⁵ George Keith, *The causeless ground of surmises*, K149 (London, 1694).

⁵⁶ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, 486.

⁵⁷ Minutes of London Yearly Meeting MSS, vol. 2, 1695, FHL, 89.

⁵⁸ Minutes of London Yearly Meeting MSS, vol. 2, 1694, FHL, 32-45.

⁵⁹ Minutes of London Yearly Meeting MSS, vol. 2, 1695, FHL, 93.

The Intellectual Development of George Keith

What should we conclude from this complex series of events? Undoubtedly, Keith's 'rudely and unjudiciously schismaticall' personality exacerbated tensions throughout the dispute.⁶⁰ Correspondence soon become personally directed and unpleasant: Keith called his opponents 'Lyars', 'Hereticks', 'Infidels' and 'Ignorant Heathens', and in return his opponents branded him 'the Brat of Babylon', the 'Pope' and even the 'Devil'.⁶¹ His supporters claimed that they were provoked by the Philadelphian leaders' unjust handling of the situation: that they had deliberated on Keith's case without notifying him or offering a fair trial; that they sent papers to London claiming a breach before approaching him directly; that they distributed his private assessments of their beliefs to turn public opinion against him.⁶² Yet even in the initial stages of the dispute, Keith's apparent orchestration of an alternative Monthly Meeting was an obvious gesture of disunity with the other ministers. Indeed, the fact that the controversy was not mentioned in the minutes of London Yearly Meeting as it was ongoing in Philadelphia, but became the primary business of the 1694 and 1695 Meetings, is good evidence that Keith's attitude ultimately forced the issue: it was a pressing matter for London Quakers only when he was with them. In this sense, it is certainly true that 'there would be no schism without George Keith'.⁶³

Some of these personal dynamics can be explained in political terms. In the first instance, by focusing on Keith's printing, English Quakers admitted that their actions were (at least partially) motivated by a strategic concern for the movement's reputation, and the safety of its adherents in the fragile situation following the Toleration Act.⁶⁴ We must also remember that Pennsylvania was of particular concern given Penn's damaged reputation and the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution.⁶⁵ Moreover, older political rivalries were also undoubtedly dragged into the altercation. Thus, William Bradford had previously been challenged by the Yearly Meeting for publishing without permission at great financial cost to himself – and

⁶⁰ Hutton and Nicolson (eds.), *Conway Letters*, 307. The minutes of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting also lamented Keith's 'Several great abuses', 'unchristian Reflections', and 'abusive and reviling expressions against Friends'. Frost, *The Keithian Controversy*, 138.

⁶¹ Thomas Budd, *An expostulation with Thomas Lloyd*, B5357 (Philadelphia, 1692), 6.

⁶² Budd, *An expostulation*, 3; Keith, *An appeal*, 1; Budd, *A brief answer*, 3; Keith, *False judgements*, 2.

⁶³ Frost, *The Keithian Controversy*, iii.

⁶⁴ See also the anonymous Quaker response to Keith in which it was noted that 'Heresie having been made an High Crime in Law... and highly Punishable, G.K.'s Publicly Staging and Branding us Hereticks, appears both as High Defamation, and tending to Destroy us in our Reputations and Liberties'. Anon, *A solemn protestation*, 3.

⁶⁵ Murphy, *Liberty, Conscience & Toleration*, 158-230.

subsequently printed extensively for Keith. Similarly, the Quaker Daniel Leeds had been embroiled in several disputes in the 1680s regarding his publication of almanacs which included astrological material and used pagan names for days and months, and had a ‘serious altercation’ with Samuel Jennings in 1683 – and subsequently pamphleteered for Keith.⁶⁶ Both, like Keith, later turned to Anglicanism, but their support for Keith and later departure from Quakerism seems to have been driven significantly by dissatisfaction with Philadelphian Quakerism. In this sense, Butler accurately diagnoses the epicentre of the *colonial* dispute as the clash of powerful individual Quakers. Of course, it goes without saying that Keith himself enjoyed great influence amongst Quakers before this point, and was even acknowledged by his opponents to have been a ‘Mighty Man’.⁶⁷ Daniel Leeds was the surveyor of West Jersey Province; Thomas Budd was an influential merchant in Burlington; Samuel Jennings was the former deputy-governor of West Jersey.⁶⁸

Nonetheless, this does not mean that such power dynamics were the central issue. Indeed, given the publishing culture of early Quakerism, it is unsurprising that those publishing were prominent members of the community. Furthermore, Keith himself staunchly avoided making procedural issues the centre of his case, and it is notable that Thomas Budd had been an ardent supporter of Samuel Jennings in earlier disputes. Of greater significance is the fact that most Quakers supported their institutional leaders against Keith.⁶⁹ Moreover, he made enemies across social and geographical boundaries, so that (against Butler) it is also inadequate to explain the dispute solely in terms of Philadelphian power plays. Keith left England in good standing with the Society, and returned to England with a relatively open opportunity to reintegrate – and yet, that opportunity ended in his own bitter excommunication.

Rather, the evidence presented above demonstrates that theology played a continued role in the dispute: as Stephen Trowell notes, the 1695 London Yearly Meeting ‘claimed to disown Keith... because of his unbearable temper... however, [it is] clear that Keith’s temper had been displayed in a dispute over doctrine’.⁷⁰ First, Keith’s detractors accepted doctrinal disagreement at some level by supporting Fitzwater

⁶⁶ Pomfret, *Province of West New Jersey*, 232-35, 225.

⁶⁷ Budd, *A true copy*, 3.

⁶⁸ Pomfret, *Province of West New Jersey*, 123, 222, 219.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 89, 251-55.

⁷⁰ Trowell, ‘George Keith’, 121.

against him: this was a theological statement. And moving forward, debates regarding the Light's sufficiency continued long after the initial dispute, as Keith's clash with John Wilsford makes clear. His move to Philadelphia in the first place was at least partially motivated by a perceived need to raise educational standards there, on the basis of his reputation as a sharp theological mind, and he was clear about his dissatisfaction with the ministers' theological position throughout. As one of the most respected and celebrated defenders of the movement, Keith was perfectly capable of living in harmony with Quakers when he agreed with them – and apparently not, when he did not.

Why, then, should Keith suddenly disagree so staunchly with a community that he had eagerly defended for so long? The answer lies in Keith's own theological development, and particularly his own changed understanding of the positive place of outward forms. This thesis has already traced metaphysical shifts affecting the whole Quaker movement, as well as Keith's central role in this process. Nonetheless, a more detailed examination of Keith's personal intellectual development goes a long way to explaining the timing of the Keithian controversy – and indeed, the insufficiency of the simple assessment (supported by Kirby and Pomfret) that Keith was always a 'questioning disciple'. Crucially, his own metaphysical framework shifted in the immediate overture to the disagreement, to the point where the pace of change in his mind overtook that of his community.

That a metaphysical question regarding the role of the body underpinned not only the dispute regarding the sufficiency of the Light and the historical Jesus, but was in the forefront of Keith's mind more generally, is reflected in Keith's other theological projects in the 1690s. Thus, at the height of the controversy in 1693, Keith also published an argument against belief in the mere resurrection of the soul, which distinguished between the inward resurrection of the individual with the Light within and the final bodily resurrection, and suggested that Saints' souls would wait with God until reunited with the resurrected body at the Day of the Lord: the glorified spiritual body was therefore afforded a central place in Keith's eschatological vision.⁷¹ Clearly this bundle of metaphysical and Christological issues was very much related in Keith's mind. Likewise, Ellwood's 1696 response to Keithian criticism was organised into four separate sections:

⁷¹ George Keith, *The Christian Quaker*, K153 (London, 1693), 10, 8.

faith in the outward Christ, justification and sanctification as related to the ‘Blood of Christ outwardly shed’, the resurrection of the body, and Christ’s outward coming.⁷² As this thesis has argued throughout, then, the greatest challenges facing Quaker theology orbited around a common metaphysical problem.

Keith had been pioneering a more positive view of the body amongst Quakers for some time. As chapter five noted, in the 1660s he had forwarded relatively standard views regarding the purely metaphorical nature of outward forms.⁷³ Yet in the 1670s, the metaphysical question took centre-stage in his own quest for theological respectability. In 1671, he exhorted Friends to ‘remember the Cross of the Lord Jesus, which is his Power in you in every measure of its appearance in your inward parts’, reflecting a greater balance between ‘inward’ and ‘outward’, and his involvement with the Ragley Hall circle suggested that he was becoming gradually more affirming of the outward form.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, writing alongside Barclay in 1676, he still affirmed that knowledge of the ‘outward history of Christ’ was ‘integrall, but not essentiall of Christian religion’, as ‘the belief of such things is only necessary to them, to whom they are propounded’: even though one is not a ‘compleat’ Christian without ‘the expresse knowledge of the outward birth, sufferings: &c: of Christ’, one can still be a ‘a Christian, and a partaker in part of Christianity, and in that state be accepted of God’. Salvation, if not ‘perfection & accomplishment’ was possible without knowledge of the outward Christ.⁷⁵

By the close of the 1670s, Keith more confidently explained that the ‘inward’ Christ was the emanation of the Spiritual body of Christ. Whilst humans could experience the ‘essence’ of Christ, the ‘fullness’ was conceived only to be the ‘outward’ Christ himself – that is, the earthly, physical man Christ and, by extension, knowledge of him received through scripture.⁷⁶ ‘Fullness’ in this case was therefore ontologically different from a mere fulfilled essence: ordinary people could never reach the same spiritual status as Christ.⁷⁷ It is worth noting that Keith stressed that ‘the Manhood or Soul of Christ, neither knoweth, nor can know, anything, without the need and necessary help of God; as neither indeed can we,

⁷² Ellwood, *An answer*, 24.

⁷³ See above, 170-2.

⁷⁴ George Keith, *A general epistle to Friends*, K171 (s.l., 1671), 3.

⁷⁵ Barclay and Keith, *Quakerism confirmed*, 2, 34.

⁷⁶ Keith, *The true Christ*, 6, 11, 17, 20-21.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 53-56.

or any creature.⁷⁸ Thus, Keith was careful not to undermine the humanity of the Incarnate Christ, though he professed an expansive vision of the spiritual and glorified Christ.

Concomitantly, he adjusted his epistemological understanding to conceive of the inward experience as a metaphor which led the believer *back* to the truth of the unique Incarnation, rather than as the pinnacle of truth in itself. Concerning the inward crucifixion of Christ, then, Keith argued that

if thou saist, this is but in the Metaphor, I Answer, admitting it in a sense so to be, yet a real suffering is implied under that Metaphor... and so.... Although the slaying and Crucifying of Christ, may be said to be a Metaphor, or Figurative Speech, yet some real suffering analogous in some true respect unto what he did suffer in the outward, is thereby understood....⁷⁹

For a Quaker, Keith had become unusually uncomfortable with locating true knowledge entirely in the inward reality. It was only ‘in some true respect’ analogous. Therefore, his description of ‘immediate’ revelation now resembled a mediated knowledge of Christ, received by grace, through the metaphor. For true, immediate revelation, one must look beyond the metaphor, and paradoxically back towards the outward reality. Likewise, in his 1684 tract *Divine immediate revelation*, Keith stressed that, although some truths were ‘revealed both to [Gentiles] and us without Scripture’, ‘all other Doctrines and Heads of the Christian Religion... are made known unto us by the Scripture means’.⁸⁰ Effectively, he now sought to privilege the historical Christ.

Whilst Keith wrote these passages as one of the most ardent defenders of Quakerism, they demonstrate the early stages of a trajectory which would ultimately take him beyond the boundaries of Quakerism altogether – for indeed, his treatment of inward knowledge only became more awkward as time went on. By the time of the Keithian controversy, in a pamphlet he wrote collectively with his supporters, the ‘Man Christ Jesus... in us’ was described as ‘figurative’: just as the sun was said to be in the house when in fact only

⁷⁸ Ibid. 30.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 11.

⁸⁰ Keith later appealed to these words to argue that he had never believed in the complete sufficiency of immediate revelation through the Light within, stating that ‘I did not (when I was under the Profession of a Quaker) hold Immediate Revelation, in the common Notion of the Quakers, as if their Immediate Revelation or Light within them, taught them all things necessary to Salvation without the means of the holy Scriptures’. George Keith, *Divine immediate revelation*, K157A (London, 1684), 44; Keith, *The standard*, 86-8.

the sunlight was present, so Christ was present in the believer.⁸¹ Early Quakers had used the same metaphor – and yet, the truth beneath this metaphor was thought to be of crucial importance – not merely ‘figurative’ at all.⁸² This was the crucial junction at which Keith now moved away from the most central religious concern of Quakerism.

With this in mind, it is hardly surprising that the two parties disagreed over the importance of the historical Jesus for salvation. Given Keith’s view of ‘Christ within’ as figurative, the sufficiency of the Light became increasingly difficult to sustain. Simply, as Keith moved away from the central principles of Quakerism, he was unable to take the Society with him. He now complained that a limitation of the ‘Light within’ was implied by any suggestion that Christ would not reveal the truth of his outward existence himself inwardly.⁸³ This was an attempt to reconcile the absolute necessity of certain propositional truths and the vital importance of inward revelation. As we have seen, this had been stirring in Keith’s mind for some time. However, as his metaphysical framework changed, it now became an unsustainable task – and this put him in conflict with the community he had defended for so long.

This underlying tension came into full view after the Keithian controversy itself, in Keith’s disagreements with William Penn during the later 1690s. In fact, in his 1699 *A discourse of the general rule of faith*, Penn agreed with Keith that any suggestion that the Light could not reveal knowledge of the Incarnation implied its limitation. Penn also accepted that such revelation might be given to individuals with no access to outward means. However, he argued that such historical knowledge could not be universally necessary, as it was not normally revealed: ‘where this History has not reached any People, or they dye ignorant of it, they are not responsible for not believing any such Passages.’⁸⁴ The Light must be sufficient, as it was the only manifestation of the true Christ which could be accessed by ‘Men in all Ages’ – the true mark of a ‘Rule of Faith’.⁸⁵ Penn argued that this Spirit had revealed to him the truth of the historical Jesus, so that

⁸¹ Keith, *An appeal*, 6.

⁸² It is notable that Penn described the inward *cross* of Christ as ‘figurative’ in Penn, *No cross, no crown* (1682 ed.), 38. This was undoubtedly a guard against those who accused Quakers of denying the historical crucifixion. Nonetheless, the theological implications of this caveat were not so extreme as the acceptance that the Light itself was figurative.

⁸³ George Keith, *A further discovery of the spirit of falsehood*, K170 (London, 1694), 16-7.

⁸⁴ William Penn, *A discourse of the general rule of faith*, P1277 (London, 1699), 35.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 3.

he must believe it as ‘a Rule’ – but this was not ‘the Rule’, as not everybody was in the same situation.⁸⁶ An individual could still know the spiritual truth underlying the outward confession without propositional knowledge of the historical Jesus.

Keith himself had argued this position in 1675 (and even assisted Barclay in defending the possibility of true faith without knowledge of scriptural truths to Adrian Paets in 1676).⁸⁷ Now, however, he accused Penn of deism: ‘that’s not the Question what the Spirit could do ... but the proper state of the question is wither the Spirit ... hath given, generally any such Revelation of these things.’⁸⁸ Again, revealing his adjusted metaphysical assumptions, Keith argued that the inward love of virtue was a ‘Law’ in a ‘Metaphorical’ sense, ‘as it is an inward power’.⁸⁹ Moreover, he explicitly accepted his previous misunderstanding, and now identified scriptural truths as the ‘Rule of Faith’, and the Spirit merely as a ‘principle objective Medium of Credibility’.⁹⁰

Nothing represents the distance Keith had travelled more than his critique of Barclay’s *Apology*, published in 1702. In this publication, Keith explained that his critique was necessary because the *Apology* had become the ‘standard’ of Quaker theology, and because he claimed that its similarity to his own former works allowed him to address both mistaken Quaker doctrine and his own change of opinions at the same time.⁹¹ Keith stressed the importance of outward means of gaining the true knowledge of Christ from the start. Therefore, he began by criticising Barclay for supporting ‘that Notion of other Quakers, to place the height of all Happiness in the true Knowledge of God, without the Knowledge of Jesus Christ, as the word Incarnate, or as he came in the Flesh, and was Crucified and dyed for our Sins’.⁹² In this way, Keith echoed the terms of his breach with Quakerism. Furthermore, he accused the Quakers of superimposing a metaphysical commitment against ‘the Flesh’ onto Christian doctrine. In a lengthy discussion of 2

⁸⁶ Ibid. 23.

⁸⁷ Barclay, *Theses theologicae*, 4; Barclay, *The possibility & necessity*, 3-4.

⁸⁸ Keith, *The deism of William Penn*, 112-3.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 42.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 4.

⁹¹ Keith, *The standard*, sig. A3r-A4r.

⁹² Ibid. 1-2.

Corinthians 5.16, cited by Barclay in discussion of his fifth and sixth propositions, Keith complained that the Quakers had co-opted Paul's words to support their own mistaken understanding:

It is therefore a gross and strained sense, that the Quakers, and this Author of whom he had it put upon St Paul's Words, *After the Flesh*, not referring to Christ's Flesh in the Text, or to Christ as he came in the Flesh, but to that carnal and fleshly knowledge, that both St Paul and the Jews had of Christ...⁹³

Therefore, whilst Paul's words were intended to stress the importance of a spiritual and living faith, Keith argued that the Quakers misused them to downplay the significance of the Incarnation. This led them to undervalue the importance of the outward Christ and rely solely on the Light within, rather than seeking guidance and support in the outward means of Scripture and the Church. In this way, Keith implied that the spiritualist Christology was intimately related to a spiritualist ecclesiology, and ultimately therefore a lack of true accountability in faith. Keith continued to stress that 'our Regeneration and Sanctification is a great reality' – but qualified this affirmation by stressing that 'it is not any real Christ born in Men, for this would certainly make as many new Christs, as there have been... regenerated Men in the World'.⁹⁴ The position he criticised here resembled nascent Quakerism much more than the movement as it entered the eighteenth century. Yet he hoped to ensnare the Quakers on both counts; he went on to cite George Whitehead's works as proof that, in contrast with their 'former Writing', not even the Quakers' own authors believed in the literal birth of Christ within them anymore.⁹⁵

More strikingly, Keith now denounced the Quakers' notion of immediate revelation. It was based on a falsehood and mistook the 'true State of the Controversie'. All Protestant Churches agreed that knowledge of the Father must be through the Son, but only the Quakers thought that 'internal illumination' occurred without outward means, as God's ordinary and sufficient means of revelation. In contrast, the Church of England (along with all 'Protestant Churches') taught that this knowledge was gained 'with and by means of the external Word and Doctrine: God having joined those two together that whoever are taught the saving knowledge of God, in God's ordinary and general way, it is both by the external Word and Doctrine, and

⁹³ Keith, *The standard*, 272; Barclay, *An apology*, 121. In the King James Version, 2 Corinthians 5.16 reads, 'Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more'.

⁹⁴ Keith, *The standard*, 294.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 294-5.

internal illumination of the Son'.⁹⁶ Again, Keith implied a spiritualised ecclesiology which separated Friends from necessary forms of religious authority and accountability. His decision not to mention the sacraments here perhaps betrayed a relic of his former Quakerism. Nonetheless, he did reinterpret the writing of God's law on human hearts – that critical proof text for Quaker theology, from Jeremiah 31.33 – arguing that God specifically chose to do this through our 'frequent reading and hearing' of the Bible, so that 'the Law writ in the hearts of the Faithful... is the Copy or Transcript of the same Law, writ in our Bibles'.⁹⁷ In this manner, Keith concluded that the Quakers had not properly addressed any of the criticisms levelled at them over the past fifty years, for they still would not accept that the 'Sacrifice for our Sins unto God by his Death for the Sins of Men; ever was and is an Essential Part of Christian Religion'.⁹⁸

Moreover, aside from attacking Barclay's argument on its own terms, Keith identified a stark distance between the position of that *Apology* and the understanding of ordinary Quakers. Whilst the *Apology* may have been lauded as the 'Standard' of Quaker theology, Keith was 'sure, not one of many Hundreds of the Quakers do well understand, and... very few of their Teachers do' the technical terms which Barclay used to argue his position.⁹⁹ In this, he echoed the critique of Christian Lodowick noted at the start of this chapter, as well as Charles Leslie's comments in *The present state of Quakerism*, noted at the end of chapter one.¹⁰⁰

An Emerging 'Quaker Orthodoxy'

It is clear that Keith's theological priorities were moving away from those of his community in the early 1690s. This goes a long way towards explaining the timing of the dispute. Yet why should it be that his opponents only admitted a theological disagreement in certain contexts? For example, why should the Pennsylvanian Quakers deny William Stockdale and support Thomas Fitzwater, when Keith had convincingly demonstrated the same theological principles underlying both charges? They clearly rejected elements of Keith's theology, and yet would not consistently own this rejection. Surely the answer lies in

⁹⁶ Ibid. 16.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 60.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 24-5.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 18.

¹⁰⁰ See above, 95.

the operation of two theological spheres, or perhaps even two interacting frameworks of orthodoxy, within Quakerism by the early 1690s: that which comprised the Chalcedonian formula of Christ's nature and Reformed understanding of his saving works – that is, the Christian heritage which had shaped the broader religious assumptions of the society in which the Quakers primarily operated, and which was often referred to in shorthand simply as 'Christian' – and that arising from the Quakers' own distinctive commitment to immediate revelation, total sanctification, and the sufficiency of the Light. Keith's opponents valued both their Christianity and their Quakerism, and asserted both in different and interactive ways, depending on the situation: they were keen to affirm the importance of the historical Jesus, and would speak against any explicit denial of Him, but their specific Quaker identity also left them unwilling to risk undermining the sufficiency of the Light. After all, that doctrine lay at the centre of Quaker theology – their perfectionism, rejection of the organised priesthood, and moral code – and their whole theological compass would require recalibration if Keith undermined it.

The interaction of different theological priorities became explicit in the public Meeting held in Philadelphia in December 1692. Keith complained that Jennings had suggested 'we are not to prove [Keith's heresy] from Scripture, but from Books Friends [sic]; for the Question betwixt us and GK is not who is the best Christian, but who is the best Quaker', and noted Delavall's response that his 'Heresie and Error was in a Fundamental Doctrine of the Quakers' in denying the Light's sufficiency.¹⁰¹ He used this apparent exchange to argue that they dishonestly denied the doctrinal discord, and were fundamentally unconcerned by their inconsistency with Christianity. Yet we should be wary of Keith's claim. For if this was the case, it is strange that an anonymous outsider writing in support of Keith should also characterise the Philadelphian Quakers' assessment of Keith as a judgement that his principles were 'carnal (that is as contrary to the spirit of Christianity)'.¹⁰² Rather, Jennings focused on Keith's Quakerism here because the subject of the dispute – the Light's sufficiency – was a Quaker principle, not affirmed by all Christians. This did not signal his ambivalence towards Christianity, but simply reflected the fact that he was questioning Keith's Quakerism at the time. Elsewhere he was keen to stress that the Quakers were true

¹⁰¹ Keith, *The heresie*, 3-4.

¹⁰² Anon, *A letter to George Keith, concerning his late religious differences with William Pen and his party*, L1704A (London, 1696), 3.

Christians, and explicitly noted the ‘Fallacy’ in Keith’s accusation that Thomas Lloyd (the Quaker lieutenant-governor of Pennsylvania, and a prominent opponent of Keith) ‘made the Faith of Christ Crucified a very Indifferently [sic] thing’ simply because he affirmed the complete sufficiency of the Light, when in fact Jennings had ‘then... and many other times heard him Affirm; That he did believe it to be Our Duty, who had the Advantag of having the holy Scriptures, and hearing the Faith Preached, to receive and believe it’.¹⁰³ Other writings from the time also increasingly aimed at Christian orthodoxy; Melvin Endy notes the progressively more orthodox language in successive editions of Penn’s *The key*, and writing in 1696, Benjamin Coole reiterated that ‘the Quakers believe the Substance of the Nicene Creed, as truly as any of their Adversaries’, before even quoting the Creed itself in full.¹⁰⁴

Therefore, a complex interaction between different theological priorities was operating throughout the dispute. Thomas Ellwood’s later defences of Quakerism against Keith are similarly telling. In 1696, Ellwood noted Keith’s claim that ‘the Doctrine of the Faith of Christ, as he dyed, being necessary to our Christianity and Salvation... was the principle Doctrine in Controversie’, but nonetheless argued that their own belief in the historical Jesus was not being challenged: rather, the crux of the issue was ‘Whether that Faith is absolutely and indispensably necessary to all Mankind’.¹⁰⁵ That matter, of course, was only theologically relevant for Quakers, and Ellwood defended his allies on this basis. As part of his vindication of Philadelphian Quakers, Ellwood ambitiously argued that Fitzwater’s charge had not related to the sufficiency of the ‘Light within’ in a narrow sense, but the sufficiency of the ‘Light’ in general – and, therefore, already included the necessity of the outward Christ for salvation.¹⁰⁶ Elsewhere, he was more explicit in this regard, stating that Keith’s accusations were ‘false’, and that ‘the Testimony of Truth hath always been acknowledged... as occasion has offered to the Outward manifestation and Appearance of Christ’.¹⁰⁷

Ellwood’s claims were tenuous. Keith had explicitly clarified that by ‘something else’ he referred to ‘the Man Christ Jesus, and what he did and suffered for us on Earth, and what he now doth for us in Heaven, &

¹⁰³ Jennings, *The state*, 12.

¹⁰⁴ Endy, ‘William Penn’s contribution’, at 246; Coole, *The Quakers cleared*, 59.

¹⁰⁵ Ellwood, *An answer to George Keith’s narrative*, 195.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 183–86.

¹⁰⁷ Ellwood, *An epistle to Friends*, 9.

the fullness that dwelleth in him', so that he perceived the judgement against him as effectively excluding the Incarnation from the process of salvation. In return, Lloyd apparently accepted these terms of the debate.¹⁰⁸ In Keith and Budd's account, they identified this as the point at which their opponents 'declared openly their being no Christians', noting the inconsistency of their support for Thomas Fitzwater's charges and condemnation of William Stockdale.¹⁰⁹ It is unlikely that Keith – a pedant – should respond to a charge different from the one made without good reason. Ellwood's suggestion also fails to explain why the Monthly Meeting supported Fitzwater against Keith: he would clearly have agreed that the 'Light' was sufficient if taken to include Christ Incarnate, and this could have resolved all. Ellwood's narrative seems even more absurd given London Yearly Meeting's acceptance that there were shortcomings in the Philadelphian religious education. Of course, if Keith had fabricated Quakers' arguments, presenting them as a heretical group only to weaken the movement, this should have been easily demonstrable by opposing witnesses. Instead, even Keith's opponents gave diverging assessments of the theological breach. Keith compared Thomas Lloyd's claim that 'there is no difference in Doctrine betwixt them and George Keith' with John Delavall's accusation that he was guilty of both 'Heresie and Hatred', and identified this discrepancy as proof of their theological confusion: whilst they claimed that their objection was 'Partly for matter of Doctrine, and partly for hard Words', they could not even articulate the matter of doctrine at stake.¹¹⁰

Ellwood's defence was an attempt to doctor the past, but we should not disregard it entirely. For, as an attempt to reverse some of the damage done by the controversy, it can be understood as Ellwood's manifesto for how he thought the Quakers should be positioning themselves in the present situation. To this end, Ellwood suggested a vision which married the sufficiency of the Light with the acceptance of the atoning effects of Christ's death. Despite framing his publication as a defence of Philadelphian Quakers, then, he was primarily proposing his own understanding of the Light's sufficiency, to cohere the positions of Keith and his opponents, whilst celebrating the historical Jesus. Moreover, he focused almost exclusively on the writings of Penn and Whitehead to support his position. From his reading of Quaker texts, Ellwood

¹⁰⁸ Budd and Keith, *The plea*, 6.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 7, 23.

¹¹⁰ Keith, *The heresie*, 3; Budd, *A true copy*, 13-14.

stressed that Quakers did not deny that ‘the Doctrine of Christ’s Incarnation, Birth, Life, Sufferings, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, &c. should be still preached (which is the unjust and malicious Inference, G. Keith would draw from W. Penn’s Words)’. However, ‘it was not the End of the Quakers being raised up as a People, that they should only inform the Christian World, that Christ, the promised Messiah, was come, and had suffered, in the Body at Jerusalem’ – the implication being that instead, the Quakers were ‘raised up’ to preach the sufficiency of the Light and the need for inward sanctification.¹¹¹ Ellwood’s narrative was not a historical commentary, but a constructive Quaker theology for the present time.

All this indicates that an increasingly powerful Quaker identity was asserting itself throughout the Keithian controversy, alongside a genuine respect for the Christian doctrine of the wider religious milieu. In this sense, the controversy marked the point at which Quakerism had moved as far towards Christian ‘orthodoxy’ as it could, without completely sacrificing its distinctive vision of the Light within.

This interaction between different sets of theological priorities also makes sense of the distinctions between the English and colonial situations. In the first instance, the relationship between London and Philadelphia was not balanced, but was part of a wider process of *establishing* a Quaker community in Pennsylvania, which drew on resources from the movement’s religious epicentre in London. Quaker leaders in London arranged for the distribution of educational literature; colonial Quakers received it. The controversy was therefore in part caused by the low educational standards in the new colony. Yet more than this, strident affirmations of Quaker theology were simply less dangerous in Pennsylvania’s majority-Quaker population than they were in England. Of course, Philadelphian Quakers were not without their critics, especially those coming from the harsher environment of New England. However, the colony was a relatively safe haven compared to the fragile situation in England following the turbulence of the Glorious Revolution and the Quakers’ precarious inclusion in the Toleration Act of 1689. Therefore, it is unsurprising that, in an environment where theological respectability was harder to secure, Quakers were more sympathetic towards Keith’s motivations, and exhibited a stronger desire to clarify the basic theological orthodoxy underlying the Quakers’ position.

¹¹¹ Ellwood, *An answer*, 71.

With all this in mind, what did ‘sound’ Quakerism look like at the close of the seventeenth century? Here, George Whitehead’s *The Christian doctrin [sic] and society of... Quakers* is illuminating, as the Second Day Morning Meeting sent more copies of this pamphlet to the New World in 1693 than any other publication.¹¹² Whitehead stressed that ‘Christ himself, and the least measure of his Light and Life, as in us or in Mankind, are not divided nor separable, no more than the Sun from its light’.¹¹³ Here, Whitehead echoed Keith’s earlier use of the same metaphor. Both stated the limits of the separation (‘no more’), implying that the metaphor was meant to reassure Quakers, who were liable to minimise the derivation of the Light, rather than appease their opponents who sought a greater distinction. Thus, the image was intended to convey the necessary caveat to belief in a Light within – that is, its derivation – without alienating Friends by stressing the derivation too strongly, as this would undermine their belief in Christ’s immanence. Similarly, Whitehead wrote a few pages later that ‘the sufficiency of his Light within [is not] by us set up in opposition to him the Man Christ or his fullness considered as in himself.’¹¹⁴ However, the publication did not compromise on the soteriological sufficiency of the Light. Rather, it questioned whether ‘all be excluded any true Knowledg or Faith of Christ within them, unless they have the Knowledg of Christ as without them’ and concluded not, ‘for that would imply insufficiency in Christ and his Light, as within them’. Therefore, ‘we charitably believe the contrary’ (that is, that knowledge of the historical Jesus is not necessary), ‘because of God’s free Love in Christ to all Mankind’.¹¹⁵ Here, Whitehead positively asserted the Quaker belief in the universal possibility of salvation and the necessity only of experiential knowledge of Christ, whilst stressing that this did not preclude their affirmation of the historical truths of Christianity. In this way, he addressed the concerns of Quakers and non-Quakers alike.

The Keithian controversy was not only a story of confrontation and compromise, then, but also of the self-realisation of a stable and established Quaker movement. This is demonstrated by the fact it continued to attract theologically articulate *converts* from Anglicanism, who then went on to tackle Keith directly on his criticism. The foremost example here was Richard Claridge, and his writings epitomise this interaction

¹¹² Minutes of the Morning Meeting of Ministers and Elders TSS, vol. 2, 17 April 1693, FHL, 24.

¹¹³ Whitehead, *The Christian doctrine* [sic], 4.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* 7.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 9.

between Quaker and Christian identities at the close of the century. Claridge was an Anglican clergyman before he defected to the Baptists in 1691, and then to the Quakers in 1696. The Keithian controversy did not dissuade him from joining the movement; indeed, Claridge even engaged George Keith directly, publishing both a sustained argument against Keith, and a collection of passages from Keith's own works demonstrating his 'declared Concurrence' with the Quaker principles he now claimed to reject (including the Light's sufficiency).¹¹⁶ Most importantly, he stressed the wisdom and omnipotence of God, which may render outward knowledge of scriptural truth necessary for some, but not for others. Knowledge of the scriptures could not be the so-called 'Rule of Faith' in non-Christian lands, for example, because they did not have access to that knowledge. However, the Light within was universal, and sufficient for all.¹¹⁷

Claridge's writings were unusually reminiscent of early Quaker language, almost to the point of anachronism: he celebrated the presence of 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to Day and for Ever: Who is Come to Teach his People himself', urged his readers to 'look Inward, to the Spiritual Appearance of Christ in the Heart', and rejoiced in Christ who was 'Within... and there I found the Beloved of my Soul, the Chiefest of Ten Thousand'.¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, the 'Chiefest' was unambiguously Christ, as a person distinct from Claridge himself. Furthermore, he spoke frequently of the 'Light of Christ' as an illuminating revelation – not the non-derivative presence of Christ – and his heightened spiritual language was punctuated with doctrinal undertones, in contrast to the first Quakers' intentional focus on the bare language of Scripture.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, in line with George Whitehead, his perfectionist language was more balanced in its treatment of justification and sanctification than the earliest Quaker writings. Thus, in 1710, he proclaimed that 'We come to witness the cleansing Virtue of the Blood of Jesus Christ, to cleanse us not only from some, but from all Sin', and that, 'as Holiness is the Badge, so it is the necessary and essential Qualification of a True Christian'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Richard Claridge, *Lux evangelica attestata*, ESCT T144849 (London, 1701); Claridge, *The divinity, universality and sufficiency*, 1-2; George Keith, *The standard*, 248.

¹¹⁷ Claridge, *Lux evangelica attestata*, 22.

¹¹⁸ Richard Claridge, *Mercy covering the judgement-seat*, ESTC R12232 (London, 1700), 19-20, 38.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* 38-9.

¹²⁰ Joseph Besse (ed.), *The life and posthumous works of Richard Claridge*, ESTC T116083 (London, 1726), 282-3.

Looking forward to the eighteenth century, we can see that this trend continued in Friends' memories of Claridge. Following his death in 1723, the testimony of Peel Monthly Meeting stated that:

His Testimony was sound & Edifying, pressing all to Purity & Holiness of Life, that giving up in faithfulness to the Light of Christ inwardly manifested they might come to Witness the free & full Remission of all their Transgressions, through sanctification of the Spirit unto Obedience, & sprinkling of y^e Blood of Jesus Christ, the one Mediator & Advocate with the Father & y^e Propitiation for the Sins of the World.¹²¹

The description of Claridge's preaching as 'sound' alluded to his Christian respectability as a former minister, and the testimony drew heavily on language of propitiatory atonement, sanctification, and the remission of sin to conceptualise the work of Christ in the individual. It went on to praise his 'Case & Concern for the Church, that it might be kept clean from the Spots & Pollutions of the World', and in the preface of his *Life and posthumous works*, Joseph Besse expressed his hope that the publication would 'show you the Emptiness of Formal Profession, and the Necessity of an Inward and Spiritual Work of Regeneration; to the Purifying, thro' the Blood of Christ, your Consciences from dead Works to serve the Living God'.¹²² Claridge's life, writings and legacy witness the increased use of doctrinal language in the expression of the Quaker vision – perhaps most profoundly affecting that vision in its focus on moral blamelessness – even where the distinctive elements of that vision were affirmed with confidence.

Conclusion

The Keithian controversy cannot be explained solely in terms of Keith's personality, or as a power play between ministers in Pennsylvania: theology did play a role. However, this role should not be conceived in terms of a set of unchanging principles imposed from above on an unwilling crowd. Rather, the dispute was an arena for the negotiation between different theological spheres – Reformed Christian and emergent Quaker – which were navigated differently by the various parties in the dispute.

¹²¹ The Testimony of the Peel Monthly Meeting concerning... Richard Claridge, Portfolio 29, 15th of 3rd Month 1723, FHL, item 18.

¹²² Ibid. item 18; Besse (ed.), *The life*, sig. A6r.

Bearing this in mind, we are now equipped to assess the claim of former Quaker, Christian Lodowick, that there was a fundamental discrepancy between the Christological understandings of a tiny elite and the wider Quaker movement. Along with Leslie and Keith, Lodowick essentially suggested that most Quakers had not shifted their theological perspective since the 1650s. This chapter has contested his claim. For, whilst we must accept that preserving the sufficiency of the Light was more important to Philadelphian Quakers than a technical debate regarding the necessity of faith in the historical Jesus, we must also recognise that they were more deeply concerned to prove their Christian faith than they were willing to pursue Keith in a theological debate. The Philadelphians' desire to demonstrate their Christian orthodoxy to London Quakers suggests certain minimum, if unofficial, requirements of Christian confession in the global Quaker community.

This assessment is supported by the events of the controversy, and by various aspects of Quaker culture in the 1690s. First, the dispute with colonial ministers did not emerge until Keith's own position began to shift again, suggesting that he had essentially been in unity with the wider community until that point. Secondly, on his return to England, Friends were hopeful that they could retain their religious concord, if only he would rein in his destructive behaviour – and only excommunicated him when he did not. Thirdly, in a broad range of Quaker writings of this time, we see both the explicit willingness to affirm Christian principles, and the use of uncontroversially 'Christian' tropes (for example, the language of propitiatory atonement) to describe distinctive Quaker principles.

Of course, it is extremely unlikely that ordinary Quakers were aware of the technical, doctrinal challenges being addressed in the elite writings of their leaders. Perhaps they did not understand Keith's theology fully – and even where they did, they may well have found it less exhilarating than the experience claimed by the first Quakers. Nonetheless, the writings of the so-called 'Semi-Foxonians' were distributed extensively throughout the Philadelphian Quaker community. The broader changes in the Quaker movement, noted especially in chapter one, are additional evidence that the attitudes of ordinary Quakers increasingly aligned with these 'Semi-Foxonian' concerns by the dawn of the eighteenth century.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has considered the development of early Quakerism from its origins to the end of the seventeenth century. It has not sought to divorce Quakerism from its socio-political context, or to deny the importance of socio-political concerns as a driving force behind the transformation of the movement. Nonetheless, it has suggested that these concerns are sometimes exaggerated in existing historiography, and so has endeavoured to uncover the ways in which theological analysis can elucidate aspects of early Quaker development which are otherwise difficult to explain. Indeed, many of the changes affecting early Quakerism hampered a purely social respectability rather than encouraging it, and others seem to have reflected theological shifts rather than a desire for socio-political respectability.

For these reasons, this investigation has considered the Quakers' corresponding desire for 'theological respectability', conceived as the search for an intellectually coherent articulation of distinctive Quaker values. This included attempts to demonstrate the Christian apostolicity, primitivism and orthodoxy of Quakerism, but was not limited to them. Rather, it amounted to a creative theological process, encouraged by the fluid nature of religious identities at the time, which not only took account of powerful, existing religious norms, but also enabled the consolidation of a new set of religious and theological ideas – that is, emergent Quakerism. Therefore, this investigation has placed the Quakers' positive intellectual engagement at its heart, demonstrating the impact of that engagement upon the development of the movement. In this sense, it has addressed the pervasive neglect of theological factors in the historiography of early Quaker development, and illuminated the contribution of the Quakers to the wider Christian milieu of seventeenth-century Britain.

The study began with a recognition of several critical shifts in the Quakers' expression and analysis of their religious experience over the course of the seventeenth century. Whilst divine immanence was affirmed throughout, exactly how this immanence was conceived – its limits, origins and effect on the lives of the faithful – changed subtly over time. Furthermore, this period witnessed the emergence of a strong group identity, and the mellowing of the prophetic vocation. These changes were not obvious indicators of a

desire for social respectability. Rather, fundamentally, they were theological developments: they occurred despite continuity in the Quakers' religious and spiritual concerns over time, and did not obviously align with developments in the socio-political or legal status of dissent. Indeed, many of the changes did not fully take hold until many years after the Nayler incident and the Restoration, and if anything, coincided more naturally with periods of toleration rather than periods of persecution.

To account for these changes, the remainder of the thesis examined the Quakers' positive theological engagement in greater detail. Taking Christology as the central case-study, a metaphysical shift has been traced which tended away from a radically spiritualised religious understanding and towards a more sympathetic view of the outward form. This shift was demonstrably driven by the Quakers' intellectual engagement with non-Quakers. Of course, Quaker beliefs were informed by outsiders from the start – both as their message emerged from a wider theological culture of Reformed Christianity, and as they responded to the criticism of opponents who railed against the Quakers' suspicion of the flesh and consequent reticence regarding the Incarnation and the humanity of Christ. Nonetheless, whilst their earliest relationship with others was confrontational and strained, and their positive engagement partial at best, this engagement became more dialogical, creative and constructive over time. This reflected both the natural momentum of a new movement discovering and consolidating its own identity, and a self-reinforcing process by which greater opportunities for engagement were generated as the movement gained intellectual and social credibility. The Light within was increasingly seen as derivative; Quaker perfectionism came to be understood in transactional and moralistic terms, rather than as divine participation, as the atoning sacrifice of Christ was affirmed more strongly; Christ's identity as a 'Man' was viewed more positively. Increasingly, the Quakers sought creative solutions to enable a coherent explication of their Christianity which remained faithful to Quaker values. The most influential collaboration was that established with the intellectual circle surrounding Anne Conway at Ragley Hall, whose direct impact upon Robert Barclay's *Vehiculum Dei* has been underestimated due to a greater focus on George Keith. Yet this was merely the most striking example of a wider theological trend, and of a Quaker movement more intellectually engaged and theologically pro-active than has been recognised in most existing scholarship. Neither did this interaction simply affect elite and ministerial Quakerism; as the final chapter demonstrated, Quakers at

every level were involved in a dynamic navigation of their ‘Christian’ and ‘Quaker’ identities in some sense, and the impact of the metaphysical shift on the Quakers’ published writings was echoed in the activities and correspondence of local Quakers during the Keithian controversy.

Aside from elucidating the broader theological culture of Quakerism, how does this investigation aid our specific understanding of early Quaker development? First and foremost, it more precisely accounts for the changes affecting the personal experience of seventeenth-century Quakers. Indeed, we might alternatively frame the altered view of the Light within itself as a changed view of divine immanence, as Quakers moved away from belief in the essentially complete Christ within them, whilst retaining the fundamental Quaker principle of a personal presence of the Divine within all people. Both the increasing sense of the Light within as derivative and the greater legalistic moralism of later Quaker perfectionism contributed to the shifting sense of Christ’s presence and work in the individual, noted in chapter one. So too, conceiving of the Light within less as a direct authority of Christ within would undoubtedly have affected how Quakers understood their personal claims to discernment (against those of the whole group) and mellowed the prophetic vocation which lay at the heart of 1650s Quakerism.

Secondly, such an approach to Quaker intellectual history helps to explain the pace of change in the Quaker movement. As noted earlier in the thesis, many of the changes affecting the movement only took hold in the 1670s.¹ This was long after the Nayler incident and the increased persecution of the Restoration-era, yet coincided with a major intellectual development within Quakerism – the collaboration centred around Ragley Hall. Such a correlation is further evidence that the theological shift was important. Moreover, the fact that these changes did not happen overnight also helps to elucidate the challenges of theological engagement. For the requisite emphasis on the historical Jesus clearly drew the focus of attention away from the immanent Christ within – not least because it reduced claims of an essentially complete immanent Christ to belief in a derivative Light within. In this sense, the critics of ‘philosophising’ Quakerism are correct to diagnose a difference between early and later Quakers, which challenged the total authority and sufficiency of the Light, as reflected blatantly in the Keithian controversy.² This was not a perversion of

¹ See above, 13, 89.

² See above, 40, 208-38.

early Quakerism, as much as the latest development in a metaphysical and Christological conversation which had its origins as early as the mid-1650s. That is to say, it was a slow and constant process, not significantly interrupted by individual political events in the turbulent seventeenth century, and not the sole responsibility of small number of isolated individuals. On this point, the continued emphasis on inwardness and the sufficiency of the Light, even in the 1690s, demonstrates the continued potency of the initial insights. Once again, then, this was not just a straightforward drift towards the doctrinal positions of the established church; after all, that would have been an almost indistinguishable process (in shape, pace, and motivation) from a quest for purely social respectability. Rather, the particular – though often overlapping – priorities of Quaker and Christian identities interacted and informed one another throughout this process, in the formation and crystallisation of the Quakers' distinctive religious outlook.

Thirdly, understanding the intellectual history of Quakerism in terms of a broad desire for theological respectability, which manifested as an interaction between different sets of theological priorities, enables a more nuanced picture of intellectual engagement than lazy assumptions about nonconformist culture. Finding tenable allies was a significant challenge to the Quakers' attempts at theological collaboration. Their early engagement with Dutch Collegiants is particularly telling here – for, whilst initially promising, this collaboration was ultimately made unsustainable by divergent understandings of divine inspiration. Quakers were open to alliances outside the established Church of England, then, but these avenues did not provide a significantly greater welcome. This inevitably drew their focus back to England (and, as their activities in the New World expanded, to America) making theological respectability itself a more pressing concern. This should remind us that, whilst engagement with radical and fringe groups was an important aspect of the Quakers' theological culture, their primary engagement was elsewhere. Along similar lines, despite good evidence for a direct link between Quakers and Spinoza, nothing was made of the connection as he grew in fame and influence. We might expect this association to be highlighted, at least by hostile commentators, if it had continued beyond the early 1660s. However, there is no evidence of this level of personal or intellectual collaboration. As chapter seven has noted, some degree of association between Quakers and the radical Enlightenment was present, but in particular the Quakers' relationship to free-thinking rationalism has been over-stated; this connection was part of the Quakers' broad intellectual

engagement, but did not define it. Viewing the development of Quakerism through the lens of their broad intellectual engagement allows us to move beyond simple frameworks of socio-political appeasement, or an assumed affinity with other ‘radical’ networks, to a more dynamic view of the Quakers as contributors in the wider milieu of the seventeenth century.

Fourthly, placing the Quakers’ positive construction of a ‘true Church’ identity in the foreground, rather than relying on a sociological model of collusion and change, allows a more convincing navigation of the shift from pioneering evangelism to sectarian introversion, most succinctly explicated by Barbour.³ As the Quakers’ quest for theological respectability gained momentum, yet failed to enact a global conversion, the characterisation of the true Church as a minority movement would have seemed entirely appropriate – and the increasing claims to the status of a true ‘remnant’, traced by Michael Graves, would have facilitated the rare coincidence of respectability and introversion.⁴ Placing emphasis upon the Quakers’ understanding of themselves as true Christianity thus offers a greater explanatory power than a purely sociological model, which is forced to argue for the growing respectability of the movement whilst insisting on its increased sectarianism.

On this note, we must of course recognise that the Quakers’ Christological development intersected with other aspects of their theology. This thesis has analysed a single theme in detail, rather than considering the whole scope more superficially, and this obviously leaves plenty more to be said. The introduction noted the importance of the Quakers’ views of Scripture, and whilst Quakers had always quoted heavily from Scripture, it is telling that they increasingly referred to the historical events of the New Testament as part of their vision of salvation (both in the increased emphasis on justification, and as a defence against the later criticisms posed by the disgruntled George Keith). Similarly, the Quakers’ belief in the immanent presence of the risen Christ supported a sense of direct apostolic and prophetic authority, which mellowed into an identity based on the notion of the ‘faithful remnant’, as their understanding of this immediate presence was adjusted over time into a derivative understanding of the Light within. However, even more relevant to a discussion of changing Quaker theology is a consideration of their shifting apocalyptic

³ See above, 16.

⁴ See above, 28.

understanding, which has perhaps attracted more scholarly attention than any other aspect of their thought. A brief reflection on this shift therefore seems an appropriate point on which to end. Such an investigation is particularly useful because it allows a reassessment of the historical narrative of ‘experience of defeat’, which relies heavily on a perceived loss of apocalyptic zeal.

Both the Quakers’ understanding of themselves as the true Church, and their increasing respect for physical reality, were of direct relevance to their apocalyptic approach. As Ted Underwood notes,

As the Quaker emphasis [in soteriology and sacramental theology] was upon the inward, spiritual experience in the present in contrast with the outward, physical events of the past, so... in eschatological questions, their emphasis fell upon the present, inward, spiritual experience in contrast with outward, physical events expected in the future.⁵

Underwood explicitly connects the early Quakers’ apocalyptic concern with their emphasis upon ‘Christ who in a spiritual manner could be at work within men now’ and notes criticisms that they downplayed the significance of the Incarnate Jesus and his outward second coming.⁶ This imbued the Quakers’ whole worldview with a sense of immediacy and, flowing from this, prophetic urgency. Thus, Martha Simmonds explained that ‘As far as you are obedient to the Spirit that preaches to your souls in prison, so far you make room for his reign, so far you become Members of the body’. The Saints had already responded to Christ’s presence and were living in the Kingdom – ‘his Reign is glorious’ – but most people were living in darkness, and ‘the time hasteth exceedingly, when time shall be no more, for the Gate shall be shut, and no place left for Repentance’.⁷ The Quakers were first respondents, having recognised a spiritual confrontation which was otherwise hidden by the continuation of the age of apostasy. Furthermore, if this knowledge was to be unveiled on a wider scale, they must be the agents of change, urging those around them to turn inward and experience true worship in the ἀποκάλυψις within.

How did this vision change over time? Existing narratives stress the Quakers’ experience of Restoration defeat as a loss of apocalyptic fervour, though they differ regarding what exactly was ‘defeated’. Thus,

⁵ Ted Underwood, ‘Early Quaker Eschatology’, in Peter Toon (ed.), *Puritans, the Millennium, and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600-1660* (Cambridge, 2002), 91-103, at 96.

⁶ Ibid. 103.

⁷ Martha Simmonds, *O England thy Time is come*, S3793 (London, 1656-65), 3, 6.

Barry Reay describes the earliest Quakers as ‘spiritual millenarians’ who distinguished Christ coming in the flesh and in the spirit. He diagnoses the Quakers’ ecstatic behaviour, notorious shaking, and political critique as the outward manifestation of this inward experience, which (he argues) was lost after 1660.⁸ In contrast, Stephen Trowell suggests that the defeat led to an understanding of the Parousia *increasingly* as an inward event. Trowell appeals to the Keithian controversy, to argue that the greater emphasis on outward forms in Keith’s theology was a reaction against the inwardness of emerging Quaker quietism – which itself was a consequence of their worldly defeat.⁹ Perhaps most inconsistently of all, Christopher Hill diagnosed a ‘withdrawal from political action’ following the Restoration, as (he claimed) Quakers ‘ceased to believe in the imminence of Christ’s kingdom’ – despite also recognising that ‘after 1661 many clung belatedly to bellicosity’ and explicitly noting continued millenarian expectation in various post-Restoration Quaker sources.¹⁰

Of course, all nonconformists were forced to distance themselves from seditious activities, particularly in the aftermath of Venner’s Revolt. On 21 January 1661, the Quakers presented the King with a ‘Declaration against plots and fightings’, which expanded on Margaret Fell’s earlier statement against violence and explicitly rejected outward revolution as a means of hastening the end time.¹¹ The Peace Testimony has been interpreted as a major symptom of political withdrawal and defeat. Yet in fact, it reiterated their existing metaphysical commitment to ‘inwardness’. For even in 1657, any political implications of the Quakers’ testimony flowed from the transformation enacted in the hearts of believers:

The Kingdome of Christ, is setting up, and it is not of this world, neither shall be exalted... by worldly pollicy... [but] within every particular of his subjects, for none can know him reigne without them unto their salvation, till they know him, to reigne first within, for that which opposeth the Kingdome of Christ... is within every man, and must be subdued within... before there be dominion over his enemies without.¹²

⁸ Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, 34-5, 106-7.

⁹ Trowell, ‘George Keith’, 119-137, at 125.

¹⁰ Hill, *The Experience of Defeat*, 129-69, 130, 136, 164; Hill, *WTUD*, 231-58.

¹¹ See Johnson, *Revelation Restored*, 84-7; Braithwaite, *Second Period*, 9-14; Margaret Fell, *A declaration and an information from us*, F628 (London, 1660), 1-8.

¹² Burrough, *A measure*, 34-5.

Thus, Christ's reign would come 'not by an outward visible shining body, quelling and over-awing the enemies of his Kingdom, but by his inward and invisible Power in the hearts of his People'.¹³ The Peace Testimony was not a symptom of defeat, then, but a public relations strategy which faithfully reflected and amplified their pre-Restoration worldview.

Neither was their apocalyptic vision extinguished at the Restoration, as demonstrated by the work of Warren Johnston and the discussion of divine immanence in chapter one.¹⁴ Indeed, William Smyth's vision of a powerful brightness that would save smaller bright circles from the darkness actively integrated the Quakers' experience of persecution into a narrative of vindication, and anticipated a wider revelation of the truth which he already understood.¹⁵ Retained apocalyptic motifs in Quaker writings can be explained in part by the heterogeneity of the movement; certainly, we should expect to find a variety of interpretations of these themes. However, Johnston's work more fundamentally challenges the assumption that the Restoration led to a complete transformation of the intellectual climate.

On this point, an additional challenge to models of fractious and dramatic change (as opposed to models which perceive gradual shifts) is provided by the Christological and metaphysical analysis presented in this thesis – for similarly, Quakers after the Restoration continued to express reticence regarding the outward second coming, in continuity with their earlier metaphysical position. So, in 1669, Whitehead mused that 'the Revelation of Jesus Christ the Son of God, is within, to the true believers in his Light', and suggested that those who 'are expecting that Christ's second Coming, or Appearance to Salvation will be a Personal Coming, and his Reign a Personal Reign' would be disappointed, unlike the true believers who connected that coming with the revelation of the Light within.¹⁶ This passage was later quoted directly to indict the Quakers' theology, and Friends were forced to respond to regular criticisms that they denied both the possibility of eternal rewards (that is, an eternal life following death, rather than the mere quality of

¹³ Crook, *A defence*, 29.

¹⁴ See above, 89-90.

¹⁵ Smyth, in Swarthmore Collection MSS, vol. 358, 1661, FHL, item 50.

¹⁶ George Whitehead, *Christ ascended*, W1904 (London, 1669), 23.

eternality in the current, mortal life) and Christ's outward return (as opposed to the revelation of the Light within).¹⁷

Ultimately, this continued reticence must be understood in terms of the challenges facing any refutation of such charges, which were intimately related to the Quakers' metaphysical concerns. Even at the end of the seventeenth century, by which time the Quakers were keen to assert that they did believe in some form of bodily resurrection, Ellwood complained that George Keith had 'no reason to cavil with... G. Whitehead, for opposing the Baptists notion of a Body of Flesh, Blood and Bones, now in Heaven, since he himself declares, it is no more a Body of Flesh, Blood and Bones', and that Whitehead 'did not believe Christ was evanishid [sic], but that he believed his existence in a Spiritual glorified Body, and that he should so come again, and be seen of all, though not in a Body of Flesh, Blood and Bones, or after a carnal manner'.¹⁸ Ellwood stressed that Whitehead was not denying the post-Resurrection existence of Christ's body altogether, but only (against the Muggletonians) that the resurrected body was carnal and untransformed. Moreover, he reiterated that Quakers did not deny the historical Jesus, and claimed that the very purpose of the Quaker movement was to preach the 'inward and spiritual Appearance (and that too as the promised Messiah) by the inshining [sic] of his Divine Light in the Hearts of Men and Women, the belief and knowledge of which was well nigh lost in the World'.¹⁹

Whilst the Quakers continued to emphasise inwardness throughout this period, later Friends separated the metaphysical and moral dimensions of this language much more strongly than their forebears had done. Thus, in 1700, Richard Claridge would still urge his readers to 'turn in, turn in'. However, like Ellwood, Claridge explained that by directing people to the Light Within, 'we do not thereby make void the Outward Appearance of Christ in the Prepared Body... for the Redemption and Salvation of lost Mankind'. Rather, by consideration of the Inward Appearance, we are led to a 'higher Esteem for the Outward Appearance of Christ'.²⁰ The implications of 'turning in' were different from those in the earliest view: Claridge's suggestion that it would lead to a higher appreciation of the outward Christ equated immediate revelation

¹⁷ Hicks, *A continuation*, 76; George Keith, *Gross error and hypocrisie detected*, K172 (London, 1695), 3-8; Caffyn, *The deceived*, 42-43, 50; Clapham, *A full discovery*, 10-16, 31-37.

¹⁸ Ellwood, *An answer*, 48, 50.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 53, 70.

²⁰ Claridge, *Mercy covering*, sig. A3v-A4v.

with a subjective shift towards truer faith – not the denial of the outward Christ altogether. Simply, believers would experience ‘that Peace with God, that Quietness and Assurance in your own Bosoms, which is the Work and Effect of Righteousness’ as they were ‘made Partakers of the Holy Life of Jesus’.²¹

The Quakers’ apocalyptic discourse developed along a very similar trajectory, as the emphasis shifted from the universally-relevant aspects of the internal judgement, to the subjective and personal elements of the Day of Visitation. In 1665, William Bayly warned his readers that ‘The great and terrible day of the Lord God, wherein he will arise to Judgement, breaks forth upon you suddenly’. Bayly’s description of this event evoked images of a bodily, outward return of Christ in the last days, linking the judgement of the individual in their soul with God’s judgement of ‘all Nations’, and conceptualising that judgement in geographical terms as the Lord would ‘toss and whirl the Mountains and hills’ and ‘dry up rivers and deeps’.²² The redemption of the individual itself was of cosmic significance. Bayly predicted that Christ would ‘dissolve all flesh (that hath corrupted its way)’, and his caveat suggested his awareness that flesh could not entirely be rejected – yet ultimately, he still dramatically opposed outward and spiritual forms.²³ Bayly was a typical Quaker of the early 1660s. Just over a decade later, Robert Barclay instead stressed the psychological aspects of the redemptive vision, describing how God ‘hath given to every man... a certain day or time of visitation, during which day or time it is possible for them to be saved, and to partake of the fruit of Christ’s death’.²⁴ His description emphasised the salvation of the individual, universally available, and did not connect this event with the salvation of other individuals, or the world as a whole. Judgement became a personal affair, and the notion of ‘Visitation’ primarily expressed the Quaker emphasis upon sanctification, rather than the transformation of the whole world: the fate of the cosmos was not contained within the human soul, but only the individual’s experience of salvation.

In this way, the Quakers gradually emphasised the moral dimension of inward transformation, rather than a classically ‘apocalyptic’ vision, as suspicion of the flesh became less central to the Quakers’ vision of the Kingdom. In other words, the Kingdom became characterised less by the immediate revelation of Christ,

²¹ Ibid. sig. A4r-A4v.

²² William Bayly, *The dreadful and terrible day of the Lord God*, B1523 (London?, 1665), 1-2.

²³ Ibid. 2.

²⁴ Barclay, *An apology*, 89-90, 93.

and more by a lack of moral defilement; the microcosm was quietly divorced from the macrocosm. This shifting emphasis was also demonstrated by the success of Penn's famous *No cross, no crown*, first published in 1669. In 1682, Penn issued a new 'corrected and much enlarged' edition, which emphasised the increasingly moralistic face of seventeenth-century Quakerism.²⁵ With this moralism in mind, Kathryn Damiano has compared the 'apocalyptic' vision of early Quakerism with the 'realised eschatology' of eighteenth-century Friends. In doing so, she hopes to resist the charge that later developments fostered a fossilised and spiritually dead moralisation of the Quakers' earlier spiritual vibrancy. Rather, she argues, outward observance should be viewed as an 'incarnation of God's activity in the world'; the early Quakers used outward forms as 'a visible expression and reminder of their inner regeneration, to themselves and to the wider world', in a sacramental sense.²⁶

Of course, non-theological factors also encouraged such a trend. Most obviously, the practical graft of Kingdom-building became more directly relevant to Quakers once they secured real power in the colonies. Indeed, the story of American Quakerism significantly complicates the narrative of defeat over this period – still more, the narrative of a political withdrawal – as American Friends actually benefitted from the Restoration, and soon held governmental power in large swathes of colonial America. Furthermore, they enjoyed an increasing numerical influence in the international Quaker community over time; Barbour notes that by 1700 there were around 40,000 Quakers in America, and only 50,000 in England.²⁷ These Friends would naturally have been more concerned with the practical matter of nation-building, which necessitated unprecedented engagement with the present order. However, the various theological trends diagnosed in this thesis were also clearly in operation driving these changes. The increased moralism (that is, the move away from the Quakers' previous emphasis on a participative or unitive religious obedience) can be linked directly to a changed understanding of righteous perfection and the derivative nature of the Light; the

²⁵ Penn, *No cross, no crown*, (1682 ed.), sig. A1r. A 'fifth edition' of this work was published in 1694, and a 'sixth edition' in 1700; Wing records no third or fourth editions, but does list three separate versions printed in 1682 as the 'second' edition.

²⁶ Kathryn Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven: Eighteenth-Century Quakerism as Realised Eschatology', PhD thesis, Union of Experimenting Colleges and Universities, 1988, 250; Andrew Harvey, 'Summary of Kathryn Damiano, *On Earth as it is in Heaven*', *Woodbrooke Online Theses*, 2012. < https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Kathryn_A_Damiano.pdf > accessed 29 June 2017, 1.

²⁷ Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England*, 247.

decreased emphasis on a metaphysical ‘inwardness’, in favour of a more strongly moral distinction, reflects the increasing positivity shown towards the physical body over time; the pace of change points to a slow and constant intellectual process, rather than a stark political defeat.

Across the many dimensions of what it meant to be a seventeenth-century Quaker, then, a theological analysis of the movement allows for a more nuanced, holistic and consistent account of change. This investigation began by noting Barry Reay’s daunting challenge that ‘it is easier to chart the transformation of Quakerism... than it is to account for it.’²⁸ It has approached this challenge through a consideration of the Quakers’ positive intellectual engagement with outsiders, so attempting to reintegrate the history of dissent and the intellectual history more broadly, and to address the neglect of theological factors in the study of early Quakerism. It has presented a picture of a seventeenth-century intellectual culture more collaborative and creative than previously recognised. Yet more than this it has sought to give nonconformists intellectual agency in their own story. Perhaps, then, it is fitting for the final word to rest with the Quakers themselves. For in the same way that it is impossible to understand the emergence, social witness, or deepest spiritual experience of the Friends without accounting for their religious concerns, it is impossible to understand the transformation of the movement without a sustained analysis of their intellectual life. As the Quaker Josiah Martin mused, considering Voltaire’s description of the persecution of Friends for refusal to pay tithes as ‘not upon a religious Account’, the philosopher had failed to understand that ‘all these things are points of Religion with the Quakers’.²⁹

²⁸ Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, 121.

²⁹ Martin, *A letter*, v.

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