Quakers and Social Reform in England
1780 – 1870

Ann Maree Jones, BA (Hons) Murdoch

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University
August 2010
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.
Abstract

This thesis considers Quaker social reform activism in England from 1780 – 1870 and explores the underlying motivations of those involved. An industrialising British society had given rise to major economic and social changes, resulting in rising poverty and crime. This in turn led to an interest by the middle and upper classes, of which Quakers were members, in reforming the morals of society and ensuring the transmission of middle-class values to create a civil society. The extent to which Quakers were involved with this moral reformation is explored, along with examining how integral their religious doctrine was to their involvement. Quaker humanitarianism is also considered in order to show that Quaker reform activism was informed not only by their theology, but also by their overriding concern with the welfare of all human beings. A growing interest in the well-being of others began to emerge in the early nineteenth century and Quakers were at the forefront of this growing humanitarianism. Quakers also held a strong belief in the primacy of the individual, with everyone being considered of equal worth. This notion of equality informed Quaker actions and led to the incorporation of very early human rights principles into their activism. The areas of reform investigated in this thesis for Quaker motivations are education, capital punishment and prison reform, poor relief, the abolition of slavery, and the treatment of Indigenous peoples in British colonies.

The historiography of nineteenth-century social reform movements has mostly neglected the Quaker contribution in this area and this thesis adds Quakers back onto the historical stage as subjects in their own right. The primary sources accessed for this thesis include reports and minutes from Quaker committees and organisations, along with interdenominational organisations that had a high percentage of Quaker
membership. One Quaker journal in particular has also been utilised as another means of exploring Quaker thoughts and actions, as well as personal Quaker diaries and letters. These sources indicate that Quakers were integral and influential participants in reform activism, and not merely peripheral players as argued by some historians.

This thesis argues that Quakers were not a homogenous group, but a group with divergent beliefs and practices that played out in different ways. This thesis also argues that the notions of moral reform and humanitarianism/human rights in the nineteenth century were not rigid concepts, but were interchangeable depending on time, place, and context. Quakers took up the rhetoric of the middle-classes in relation to moral reform, but their actions also indicate that the human rights of others were often an overriding concern. This thesis positions Quakers as early human rights activists who fought for the rights of all individuals, underpinned by their religious understandings of the equality of all human beings.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who has supported me, and provided encouragement throughout the process of writing my thesis. Sincere thanks are owed to the staff of the Friends’ Library in London for their kindness, and their willingness to aid me in my research, both with sharing their knowledge and helping to find obscure sources. Special thanks especially to Julia Hudson who attended to all my long-distance queries promptly and informatively. The staff at the British Library in London were also very generous with their time and knowledge, and I am extremely grateful to both these institutions for their guidance.

I owe a very big debt of gratitude to my fellow students who have contributed to my growth as a researcher, and as a person. You have filled my years at Murdoch University with love, laughter and joy, and I thank you all for your friendship and support. Special thanks to Pat Humphries for her never-ending patience and encouragement. I would also like to thank Professor Mike Durey for his knowledge and advice, and especially his speedy reading of my thesis.

My very special thanks, however, go to my main supervisor and mentor, Dr Helen Brash. The guidance provided to me by Helen was always insightful and constructive, and her input into the finer points of researching and writing a thesis was outstanding. More importantly, the friendship we have developed over my years at Murdoch University will always be a most special part of this journey.

Finally, I would like to thank all my friends for their support during my years of study. In particular, special thanks go to Vicki Crutchett and Pam Edmondson for their unqualified support and friendship. Heartfelt thanks also go to all of my family,
especially my parents who took great pride in my achievements, and my brother Brett for being there with me every step of the way. And lastly, to my husband George, words cannot convey my love and appreciation for your support and encouragement. I could not have done this without you.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APS</td>
<td>Aborigines’ Protection Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIA</td>
<td>Bedford Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFASS</td>
<td>British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFBS</td>
<td>British and Foreign Bible Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFSS</td>
<td>British and Foreign School Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFDSA</td>
<td>Friends’ First-day School Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC</td>
<td>House of Commons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LYM</td>
<td>London Yearly Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFSM</td>
<td>Meeting for Sufferings Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDS</td>
<td>Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline and for the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPCK</td>
<td>Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Contents

1. Introduction  
   Page 1

2. Literature Review  
   41

3. Quaker Beginnings  
   75

4. Education  
   98

5. Capital Punishment  
   143

6. Poor Relief  
   185

7. Abolition of Slavery  
   223

8. Indigenous Rights  
   259

9. Conclusion  
   304

   *Appendix A*  
   313

   *Bibliography*  
   317
1. Introduction

...because slavery is in direct opposition to the spirit of the British Constitution, to the spirit and letter of the Christian religion, to every principle of humanity and justice; because, as long as it is suffered to exist, it must remain the fruitful source of the most atrocious crimes, the most cruel sufferings.¹

I take an active part in several public institutions, but more especially in those for the education of the poorest of the people, because, I consider that in all countries, the poor form the great mass, and that not only their happiness, but the happiness and security of the state, depends, in a great degree, upon the prevalence of moral and virtuous habits among them.²

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Industrial Revolution had given rise to massive political, economic and social changes within British society. As a consequence, a growing interest in defending the rights of others began to emerge, along with an awareness of the poor and destitute affected by the new technological age. This recognition manifested itself in campaigns such as the abolition of slavery, prison reform, and the abolition of capital punishment, and in the formation of many societies concerned with the provision of charity and poor relief. One group at the forefront of this concern was the Religious Society of Friends, more commonly referred to as Quakers, or Friends.³ An interest in assisting people affected by the substantial changes to society saw Quakers become involved in many and varied organisations that were formed to deal with all areas of people’s lives, not purely the spiritual. It was an interest in Quaker reform activism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that led


³ This thesis will generally use the term Quakers when referring to the Religious Society of Friends, but will sometimes use ‘Friend’ or ‘Friends’.
me to question what drove Quaker activism, and what their motives were for becoming involved in so many different reform movements and organisations. This was especially because the Enlightenment period is often perceived as integral to the development of human rights, and humanitarian movements. The quotations from two nineteenth-century Quaker social activists at the beginning of this chapter provide an insight into two very distinct motives at play during this time. The first quotation is from a well-known Quaker slavery abolitionist, Elizabeth Heyrick (1769–1831). It provides evidence of her concern with slavery, the cruelty and injustice the slave trade invoked on fellow human beings, and her interest in the rights of individuals. The other quotation is from William Allen (1770-1843), a Quaker involved in many areas of social reform including the abolition of slavery, poor relief, prison reform and the abolition of capital punishment. William Allen’s quotation provides evidence of his concern with the morals of the lower classes and the need to reform society to better reflect the ideals of the upper and middle classes. Throughout this thesis both these motives will be in evidence in many areas of reform, and the thesis will attempt to answer why Quakers were so involved in these various movements, and their underlying motivation.

The time period this thesis covers is 1780 to 1870 and its focus will be on English Quaker activists. The 1780s have been chosen as a starting point because 1783 is the year when the movement to abolish the British slave trade first made its public appearance, with the presentation of a Quaker petition to Parliament to end the slave trade.4 The abolition movement was the first time a campaign was mounted to fight for the freedom of a group of people outside England,5 and it was a reform movement in

---

which Quakers played a major role. It was also around this period that Quakers began to become involved with other reformers outside their own society. As shall be seen throughout this thesis, Quakers worked on many interdenominational committees concerned with moral and humanitarian reform.\(^6\) Private involvement in charitable organisations, and in the push for reform, was conducted mostly by private institutions until the 1860s. At this time, the State began to intervene much more in social policy areas such as health, education, and law and order, and Legislative Acts were introduced giving the State control over its citizens in these areas. For this reason, the focus of the thesis will deal mainly with reform movements and social activism prior to 1870.

This thesis will utilise British Quaker primary sources to investigate Quaker discourses related to moral reform and humanitarianism/human rights. It will examine Quaker literature concerning their involvement in mostly London reform societies, especially Quaker Committees set up specifically to deal with issues that were of concern to their members. It will also examine literature from the many interdenominational organisations with which Quakers were involved. Two Quaker journals, *The Friend* (1843 – current) and *The British Friend* (1843-1913), are also used as primary sources as a means of gauging Quaker thoughts and actions concerning the various reform issues they dealt with throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sources from *The Friend* are more prominent because this journal was London based, and had more of an evangelical focus. As will become evident throughout this thesis, it was Quakers with an evangelical outlook that were most visible in reform activism, and the articles in *The Friend* reflect this. It should be noted though that much of the material from these two journals was anonymous, but the author is acknowledged if known. The fact that there were two Quaker journals, one evangelical and one conservative in

\(^6\) Examples of some of these interdenominational committees are listed in Appendix A.
outlook, is evidence of the diversity of the Quaker viewpoint at different times, a diversity which will also become evident throughout the following chapters. The use of personal diaries and letters of Quaker reformers also gives insight into their actions and how they positioned themselves throughout this period. What will become evident throughout the thesis in relation to many of the Quaker sources utilised is that despite the concept of the Inner Light, a radical theological position taken up by Quakers, we will see that Quakers generally framed their writings to appeal to a non-Quaker audience. This meant that many Quaker discourses did not refer specifically to the Inner Light, which may have disconcerted their intended audience, but instead used the language of rights and obligations, and injustice, to pursue their reform activism.

Owing to the predilection of Quakers for record-keeping, there are ample sources available with which to investigate Quaker activism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England. These sources provide not only evidence of Quaker intellectual motives behind their activism, but also what Quakers were actually doing and achieving in practical terms. The sources will also be examined to consider the types of explanations provided by those writing about their involvement in social activism.

This thesis will question whether, in the period 1780-1870, Quakers were following an agenda of moral reform, where internal regulation was seen as the key to a more civil and ordered society, or whether their activism was driven more by their concern for the rights of individuals, and humanitarian principles, which involved a push for institutional change. An understanding of an individual’s rights is evident in Quaker doctrine from their beginnings in the mid seventeenth century, when notions of equality framed their religious dogma. What is of interest is how much impact did this notion of


8 The concept of the Inner Light is discussed in Chapter Three.
equality ultimately have on Quaker involvement in different areas of reform? Was Quaker involvement in attempting to reform the morals of society the overriding concern, or did the Quaker belief in the rights of individuals come first and foremost? In considering this question, the extent to which Quakers should be considered a homogenous group, with the same values and principles, must also be considered, along with how issues such as philosophical differences affected Quaker rhetoric and actions.

In order to investigate the question of whether Quakers were mostly interested in the moral reformation of society, or whether they placed more importance on the rights of individuals, the terms moral reform, humanitarianism and human rights, which will be used throughout this thesis, will be discussed briefly. These three concepts have been chosen because they are understood by historians as being some of the motivating forces for social reform. The historian M.J.D. Roberts declares moral reform to mean ‘self-conscious, organised efforts by groups of concerned citizens to change moral values’ and to modify people’s behaviours accordingly.\(^9\) This definition adequately covers how this thesis uses the concept of moral reform, where it was seen as a way one could deal with problems, raised by dramatic economic and social changes, which began to become prominent in England in the later decades of the eighteenth century. Moral reformers were often driven by religious ideals and a quest to convert the lower orders, which they saw as a means of ensuring a civil and well ordered society. The focus was on reforming people’s behaviour and grew out of a concern that the rise in industrialisation was causing the breakdown of society and was a threat to the existing social order. If this perceived breakdown was not attended to, disorder and even revolution may have ensued. Quakers were also driven by this concern and were

heavily involved in attempting to reform the morals of society, especially amongst the lower classes.

Humanitarianism, on the other hand, can be seen as a force that motivated reformers to provide relief to those in need, but which came from a philanthropic impulse. Historian F. David Roberts provides an excellent overview of humanitarian impulses in his 2002 book *The Social Conscience of the Early Victorians,* in which he considered humanitarianism to be 'one of the most powerful forces defining the early Victorian social conscience.' Of the forces driving a new humanitarianism in the early nineteenth century, Roberts considers that it was the growth of rationalism, along with other forces such as the religious revival and the growth of empathy and compassion, that fused together to encourage a growing humanitarianism. Roberts sees Quakers as one group upon which this fusion of ideas had a forceful impact, and which led to their prolific humanitarian activities in abolition, capital punishment, prison reform, mental asylums, and animal rights, amongst others. Applying a broad definition to humanitarianism is difficult, but a good general understanding of the concept is that concern for the welfare of other human beings was at its core. Humanitarians were committed to improving the lives of those disadvantaged in society, and to this end, they were involved in many social reform movements which incorporated this aim.

A definition of what this thesis refers to as human rights is slightly more problematical in that the term ‘human rights’ only began to gain currency midway through the twentieth century. However, from the late eighteenth century onwards, ‘rights’ discourses were beginning to proliferate. The French and American revolutions had

---

delivered notions of equality and the idea that every person had a moral claim to be treated equally and justly. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries these ideals were often referred to as ‘natural rights’, but the understanding of the concept was often more theoretical than practical in nature. A natural rights philosophy in the nineteenth century was concerned with justice and individual liberty, but for many people it was a concept from which they were excluded. The language of rights was focused mostly on the rights of individuals to liberty, property, male suffrage and non-arbitrary government, and aimed at the upper and middle classes. In other words, developing human rights discourses in the early nineteenth century were concerned generally with political and legal rights. For many groups in society, ‘natural rights’ were unavailable. For Quakers, however, the notion of ‘rights’ was not a new concept. From their earliest beginnings, Quakers had been making claims for political and legal rights for everyone, including religious liberty, trial by jury, universal suffrage, and the political rights of women.\(^{15}\) Even though the term ‘human rights’, as understood in a contemporary context, is missing from the language in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this thesis will argue that when terms such as ‘rights’ and ‘natural rights’ appear in primary sources utilised throughout this thesis, especially in those relating to Quakers, the terms are referring to what in contemporary times would be considered some of the very basic ‘human rights’ of individuals. That is, everyone has basic rights to life, liberty, justice, standards of living, and freedom from discrimination, to name but a few rights now considered undeniable by many people and societies. Quakers were instrumental in endeavouring to ensure that all members of society, not just select groups, had access to their ‘natural rights’.

Broadly speaking, therefore, this thesis will use the term moral reform to refer to the desire to change people’s behaviour to suit a pre-conceived notion of ideal; humanitarianism will encompass legislative and structural attempts to improve people’s daily lives and therefore is concerned with human welfare; and human rights will refer to the political, legal, civil, social and cultural rights that were considered, at least by some people, as belonging to individuals because they are human. Social reform historiography has generally separated out the concepts of moral reform and humanitarianism, when in fact there are strong links between the two, as this thesis will argue. During the time period this thesis explores, a variety of different words and phrases were used to identify these different types of responses. One example can be seen when Quakers often called themselves ‘Friends of Humanity’ when referring to their social activism, a term they used when discussing the many different areas of reform work in which they were involved. At other times the terms ‘natural rights’ and ‘rights’ were used to denote the reasons behind why action was being undertaken. Because these terms did not follow rigid definitions, and the use of the term ‘human rights’ did not appear in common usage until the twentieth century, the terms ‘humanitarianism’ and ‘human rights’ will be used at times to identify specific behaviours. The terms will also be used interchangeably, as they often were throughout the time period this thesis covers, sometimes referring to the early emergence of what can be considered a contemporary understanding of human rights, and in other instances referring purely to concern with bettering people’s daily lives. It needs to be understood that even though the language of human rights was not available during the period this thesis investigates, it does not mean that a concern about human rights did not exist, only that this concern was understood in different terms.
A brief explanation is also required of the terms Evangelical and evangelical, which are also used extensively throughout this thesis. When the term ‘Evangelical’ is denoted with a capital letter, it will be referring to the movement which began in the 1730s.\textsuperscript{16} The term ‘evangelical’ with a small ‘e’ will be used in the context provided by historian Mark A. Noll, in which he explains that evangelicalism referred to ‘a set of convictions, practices, habits and oppositions...[which] grew out of the Protestant Reformation.’\textsuperscript{17} Noll states that evangelicalism was ‘constituted by the individuals, associations, books, practices, perceptions and networks of influence shared by the promoters of the eighteenth-century revivals’.\textsuperscript{18} The term ‘evangelical’, however, is fluid and never referred to one unified group.\textsuperscript{19} Many Quakers were influenced by evangelical impulses and it is this group that feature prominently in this thesis.

\textbf{Development of a Human Rights Philosophy}

Because this thesis focuses on Quakers and human rights, the remainder of this chapter will look at how a human rights philosophy has evolved over time. It will also explore how a growing concern with moral reform was taken up by groups, including Quakers, who were concerned with a perceived moral breakdown in society. It will provide an understanding of the concepts which this thesis utilises in an attempt to contextualise Quakers and their reform activism, as well as providing the necessary historical background to the period.

Contemporary human rights encompass many rights of the individual that the United Nations, for the past 60 years, has been gradually codifying into binding law. The

\textsuperscript{16} David Bebbington, \textit{Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s}, London, Unwin Hyman (1989), p.1
\textsuperscript{18} Noll, \textit{The Rise of Evangelicalism}, p.18
\textsuperscript{19} Noll, \textit{The Rise of Evangelicalism}, pp.16-21

There is now near-universal recognition that respect for human rights - the rights of political choice and association, of opinion and expression, and of culture; the freedom from fear and from all forms of discrimination and prejudice; freedom from want and the right to employment and well-being and, collectively, to development - is essential to the sustainable achievement of the three agreed global priorities of peace, development and democracy.20

Prior to the twentieth century, however, the language of rights, which had begun to gather momentum from Enlightenment rhetoric, was concerned mostly with legal and political rights. These rights bear little resemblance to the notion of human rights we hold today, which also now incorporate social and cultural rights. In fact, a contemporary understanding of human rights was not discussed internationally until after World War Two, and culminated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* being adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948.21 This document provided the global community with a universal code of human rights that encompassed economic, cultural, political, social and civil rights. The Declaration focused on individual rights, with recognition that ‘the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.’22 The Declaration was the first time that the international community allowed public scrutiny of the treatment of their citizens and came into being after the atrocities committed during World War Two. The concept of human rights, however, has been in existence in most societies, in varying degrees,

---


since ancient times. Over the centuries, the philosophy of rights has evolved until we have the modern Western concept of human rights that exists today.

In ancient times Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle theorised about ideas such as the nature of justice, the ideal State and the just individual. Different religions throughout the centuries have incorporated humanistic elements into their ideology that were the embryonic ideals of a modern human rights philosophy. Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, amongst other religions, all have the rights of individuals in their tenets in some form, including compassion, reverence and respect for others. It was Judeo-Christianity, however, that more fully influenced the modern notion of human rights because this belief system underpinned Western society. Ideals of the universal brotherhood of humankind, the supremacy of the spiritual over secular power, and the necessity for individuals to contribute to a just society have provided inspiration for the human rights movement. One of the Ten Commandments, ‘you must love your neighbour as yourself’, is embodied in the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and indicates the influence Christian ideology has had on a Western philosophy of human rights.

Most scholars of human rights place the emergence of our present Western concept in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The influence of Enlightenment thinkers towards natural rights, liberty and justice began to provide a language, from the seventeenth century onwards, that promoted the emergence of contemporary ideals of social justice and human rights. The seventeenth century was a period of intellectual

---

23 See, for example, Plato, *The Republic/Translated, with notes and an interpretive essay, by Allan Bloom*, New York, Basic Books (1968)
27 Article 1 states ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.’
upheaval when questions were raised concerning humankind’s place in the world, about the divine right of kings, and about knowledge. Prior to the Enlightenment influence, it was the concept of natural law which governed how human beings were supposed to behave. This unwritten natural law posited God as the creator of the universe and people lived according to the nature God gave them, and in a God-given ‘natural’ order of authority. Their obligation was to live a well-ordered life and avoid sin.\textsuperscript{28} The beginning of major advances in scientific knowledge in the seventeenth century, however, along with a questioning of God’s place, resulted in a reassessment of the relationship between God and nature.

A major example of this reassessment can be seen with regard to Copernicus’ theory of heliocentrism. This theory removed the earth from the centre of the universe and subsequently a total review of cosmology and the relationship between God and the natural world was required. New ways of looking at the natural universe were developed and God’s role in it began to be questioned. Instead of abandoning God, however, natural rights philosophers upheld that it was God’s providence that determined the scientific world. Isaac Newton’s 1687 \textit{Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy}, instead of eliminating God from the equation, provided a basis for examining the level of interest the Creator showed in his creation.\textsuperscript{29} William Derham, in 1713, gives another example of how God’s place in this new universe was protected when he wrote that:

\begin{quote}
...my text commends God’s works not only for being great, but also those curious and ingenious enquirers, that seek them out or pry into them. And the more we pry into and discover of them, the greater and more glorious
\end{quote}


we find them to be, the more worthy of, and the more expressly to proclaim their great Creator.\(^3^0\)

Reason and faith were not seen as incompatible; in fact, natural philosophy could exalt God through contemplation of His universe. God’s position was not usurped by new knowledge of the natural world, he remained as the Divine ruler who had created it to His will.

Out of this new ‘Age of Reason’ emerged the beginnings of a natural rights philosophy, with two of the acknowledged early precursors being the English philosophers Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and John Locke (1632-1704). ‘Nature’ had begun to assume an importance in the Enlightenment period and came to be seen as a moral ideal that was in the hearts of men. God’s ordering hand was still responsible for ‘nature’ and it allowed men to carry out His intentions.\(^3^1\) Hobbes was the first theorist to replace the concept of justice in society with a natural rights philosophy and argued that a right of human beings was to follow their nature, which meant they sought life, liberty and happiness.\(^3^2\)

John Locke’s writings, particularly in response to the rule of absolute monarchs who believed they ruled by Divine Right and were accountable only to God, claimed ‘That all Men by Nature are equal’ and had an ‘equal Right…to his Natural Freedom, without being subjected to the Will or Authority of any other Man’.\(^3^3\) The law of nature was God’s law for humankind and in his An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, first published in 1690, Locke argues why God’s commands should be abided by. Locke states that ‘He has a Right to do it, we are his Creatures: He has Goodness and Wisdom

\(^3^0\) William Derham, Physico-Theology: or, a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from His Works of Creation, London (1713), p.466
\(^3^1\) Outram, The Enlightenment, p.50
to direct our Actions to that which is best’. 34 To Locke and his contemporaries, the ‘Age of Reason’ did not provide the basis for denying God. His existence was not questioned, nor was their obligation to God’s law questioned. Nature was a means of exploring God’s creation and His intention.

Hobbes and Locke were both no doubt influenced in the development of their natural rights philosophy by the English Civil War and the fight against absolutism. Both were contemporaries of this period which had resulted in the death of a King, the power of the monarchy being reduced and the emergence of radical ideas concerning society, especially in relation to religious reformation and parliamentary liberties. They had first-hand knowledge of the outcome of royal ‘absolutism’ that had resulted in a Civil War to safeguard parliamentary and religious liberties. In his work *Two Treatises of Government* (1690) Locke argued that citizens had the right to rebel if the government violated their rights. 35 Locke maintained that the right to life, liberty and property was paramount and individual needs and interests should be protected by the government. The Lockean political philosophy of natural rights validated rebellion against despotic leaders who ignored natural law, and played a major part in shaping three major documents which represented this shift in thinking and which had a profound effect on the modern world. The following three documents represent the first textual articulation of these ideas.

The first was the 1776 American *Declaration of Independence*. By the mid eighteenth century, Western intellectuals had begun to adopt Locke’s philosophy and the idea of ‘universal’ rights began to resonate throughout the writings of philosophers such as

35 Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, p.346
Rousseau, Voltaire and Beccaria.\(^{36}\) The American Revolution was justified on the basis of a denial of the rights of individuals and the Declaration states ‘whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government’.\(^{37}\) The second document was the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen in 1789. Thomas Jefferson helped to draft this document which espoused the ‘natural, imprescriptible, and inalienable rights’ and the ‘sacred rights of men and citizens’.\(^{38}\) The third document was the American Bill of Rights which became a part of the American Constitution in 1791. This document entrenched such rights as the freedom of speech and religion, and limited the powers of the Federal Government. These documents all offered universal rights applicable to the general population, in theory if not in practice. They were also evidence of the growing focus on the rights of individuals, and the catalyst of radical political reform in the Western world.

After the American and French revolutions the discussion of rights began to proliferate. Increasing industrialisation had begun to change the nature of British society and resulted in the marginalisation of many people who were excluded from the benefits of the new economy. Individuals and groups began to challenge the existing theories of social justice espoused in documents, such as those mentioned above, when it became obvious that the liberal emphasis on laissez-faire economics and individual property rights were mostly of benefit to the wealthy and the emergent middle classes. Theoretically a natural rights philosophy gave everyone access to the same experiences and possibilities, but in reality this was not the case. Marginalised groups such as women, slaves and the poor did not benefit from a natural rights philosophy. Demands


\(^{38}\) ‘The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen’ in Palumbo, Human Rights, p.119
for economic and social justice began to abound when it became obvious that the right to life, liberty and property had excluded the majority of people.\textsuperscript{39} Documents such as the French and American Declarations espoused equal rights for everyone, but many groups in society were still excluded from a natural rights philosophy, and were left having to fight for these supposed rights. For many of these groups, the focus was on gaining political rights and to ensure these rights were applied to everyone, although often ‘everyone’ still only referred to the male gender. To achieve these aims, it was realised that political action was necessary.

Radical social commentators also began to write prolifically on topics that addressed a lack of equality within society, and popular fiction began to focus more on human relationships.\textsuperscript{40} Both these developments indicate a change in the way some members of society were beginning to think about each other. While many of these writings did not necessarily espouse social equality, many argued for ideal societies where everyone’s needs were met. Groups such as Chartists and Socialists, however, did begin to agitate for certain rights, and challenged the existing liberal agenda. Chartism, for instance, was first and foremost a movement demanding political rights.\textsuperscript{41} This was because changes to political structures were seen by many of the working classes as the answer to their problems.\textsuperscript{42} \textit{The People’s Charter}, from which Chartism derived its name, had a manifesto of six claims. These were universal suffrage for all men; protected ballots; no property qualifications for Members of Parliament; payment for Members of Parliament; equal electorates; and annual parliaments.\textsuperscript{43} Even though Chartists primarily demanded political rights, and did not include a call for women’s

\textsuperscript{42} Dorothy Thompson, \textit{The Chartists}, London, Maurice Temple Smith Ltd (1984), p.1
\textsuperscript{43} Brown and Daniels, \textit{The Chartists}, p.29
suffrage, women also took up the Chartist cause. Their interests, however, were primarily in response to changes to the Poor Law in 1834, which was seen as an attack on the family, instead of a call for women’s suffrage. For women, their call for the vote did not gain real momentum until 1866 when a Ladies’ Petition was presented to the House of Commons calling for voting rights for both genders. It took another sixty years, however, for women to receive equal voting rights in Britain.

Not everyone agreed with a natural rights philosophy as prescribed in the three major documents articulating universal rights. One notable person who disagreed was Jeremy Bentham, a political theorist writing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Bentham is considered the founding father of utilitarianism which, broadly speaking, argued for a political system that promoted the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Bentham was interested in public institutions and social organisation and throughout his life his writings reflect his concern with parliamentary and legal reform. Bentham considered natural rights to be fictitious, declaring ‘natural rights is simple nonsense: natural and imprescriptible rights, rhetorical nonsense, nonsense upon stilts’. To Bentham, the only claim to rights with any validity was legal rights and he considered ‘natural rights’ to be a contradictory idiom. He argued that a document such as the French Declaration did not acknowledge that rights needed to be protected by obligations and he saw this omission as incompatible with the needs of a viable system of law and government.

44 Thompson, *The Chartists*, p.34
46 van Wingerden, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement*, p.181
49 Dinwiddy, *Bentham*, p.78
impresscriptible’ rights were designed ‘to excite and keep up a spirit of resistance to all
laws – a spirit of insurrection against all governments.’\footnote{Bentham, ‘Anarchical Fallacies’, p.501}

Another famous political theorist, Karl Marx, also did not subscribe to a God-given
‘nature’; both Bentham and Marx condemned the notion of a Divine Will ordering
society and developed secular theories on ways that the working classes could gain
rights in a growing market society. Their secular world view was premised on the
understanding that only political reform could provide the means of ensuring that the
working classes could benefit from a more equal and just society. Bentham and Marx
criticised individualism and argued that humankind needed to forego selfish desires and
commit to a more communal way of life.\footnote{Jeremy Waldon, (ed.), \textit{Nonsense upon Stilts: Bentham, Burke and Marx on the Rights of Man}, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd, (1987), pp.44-45} It should be noted, however, that some
scholars consider Bentham’s writings to contain contradictions between individualism

To theorists such as Bentham and Marx, and groups like the Chartists, gaining political
and legal rights were their focus. They did not really concern themselves with the non-
political rights of members of society; this was left to groups such as the Quakers and
evangelicals. As will be argued throughout this thesis, Quakers took up the cause of
those in society who were excluded from natural rights rhetoric, including slaves, the
condemned, and the colonised. Quaker activists fought for the rights of all members of
society without exclusion, a position driven by their religious beliefs. The notion of
equality, which was one of the cornerstones of Quaker faith, ensured that Quakers were
not selective in their rights rhetoric; it was all encompassing. To writers such as
Bentham and Marx, however, religion was not the foundation upon which a rights
ideology was built. Marx saw religion as a social product that would be abolished once reality became bearable in a classless society. Arguing against a natural rights philosophy, Marx stated that theories of God vary with changing social environments and that religion was 'the opium of the people', which served only to justify the world as it was. Bentham regarded utilitarianism as scientific and objective and argued that human beings were motivated by self-interest and were therefore utility maximisers.

What this means is that philosophies, such as socialism and utilitarianism, included the rights of individuals, but eliminated the religious understandings that underpinned notions of natural rights. For Quakers, however, religion was integral to who they were and how they lived their lives. Quaker religious beliefs led them to 'a desire to take hold of every opportunity to lessen the distresses of the afflicted and increase the happiness of the creation.' Quakers fought against social injustices, stating that 'we as his creatures...are so far entitled to a convenient subsistence that no man may justly deprive us of it.' These religious understandings were integral aspects of Quaker activism, where they worked to ensure that all members of society were treated equally and justly as ordained by their Creator.

It is extremely difficult to demonstrate a direct causal relationship between the development of humanitarian ideals and rights and any one particular movement or impulse. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw the beginnings of agitation for social, political and economic reforms, all of which affected rights discourses on different levels. Micheline Ishay, Director of the International Human

57 Woolman ‘A Plea for the Poor’, p.239
Rights Program at Denver University, does attempt to isolate a single cause, arguing that socialists in particular drove the struggle for the rights of marginalised people such as slaves, women and children. This argument has some validity because socialist thought did emerge at this time and highlighted the systemic inequality in society, but it does exclude a large percentage of nineteenth-century reformers, particularly those who had religious ideology at the core of their reform efforts. Generally speaking, we can attribute the rise in humanitarian ideals to the social, economic and political conditions created by modernity and not by one particular cause.

A continuing theme, however, in an emerging humanitarianism is religious ideology which existed long before the rise of socialist and utilitarian thought and principles in the early to mid nineteenth century. Religion and humanitarian ideals often went hand in hand and the abolition of slavery in Britain in 1833 is an excellent example of this interconnectedness, where we can see a link between religion and humanitarian thought much earlier than the link to socialist philosophy. Religious ideals drove not only the Quaker concern with individual rights in the nineteenth century, but also many of the nineteenth-century social reformers. Religious ideology was a driving force for Quakers, who had at their core the concept of the Inner Light, which resulted in an egalitarian approach to their activism. Religious doctrine was also at the core of many non-Quaker reformers, who also advocated the rights of others, mainly political and legal rights, but the Quaker ethos of equality for all members of God’s family was not intrinsic to non-Quaker belief systems. Many reformers looked to institutional change to put in place policies and structures to ensure that rights such as liberty and free thought were accessible to everyone, but they did not take it further than this. Quakers

58 Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, p.120
59 The abolition of slavery will be discussed in Chapter Seven as part of this thesis’s focus on whether Quaker abolitionists were early rights activists or moral reformers.
60 The Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light is discussed more fully in Chapter Three.
did expand on these areas because their religious doctrine held the belief of the innate equality of all members of the human race. This conviction ensured Quakers worked to make sure that all members of society, not just a select few, were in a position to receive all the rights Quakers considered due to them.

Along with a growing focus on the rights of individuals by the early nineteenth century, there was also an increasing momentum within society concerning the reformation of morals. A growing interest in moral reform was a result of improved morality being seen as the best way to deal individually with issues raised by dramatic economic and social changes in the early nineteenth century. In part, this was due to new understandings about malleability of self and the state of nature. The Romantic period, which emerged from the turmoil of the French Revolution, emphasised the importance of such concepts as individualism, the primacy of emotions, imagination and freedom of expression.61 Individualism especially, with its focus on personal rights over and above the common good, was considered to have the ability to destroy the social order.62 Reforming society’s morals, therefore, was seen as the answer to a society that was perceived as possibly becoming a threat to the ruling classes.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century British society had changed quite dramatically from how it had looked in pre-industrial times. Industrialisation had seen the population of England and Wales between 1750 and 1830 rise from 7.5 million to 14 million.63 The unprecedented growth of urban populations resulted in some English cities in the early part of the nineteenth century growing between 30 and 50 percent in a

---

62 Furst, *Romanticism in Perspective*, p.55. The rise of the Romantics is also evidence of the existence of contradictory ways of thinking by the beginning of the nineteenth century.
This rapid urban population growth led to intense pressure in areas such as health, housing, employment and education. Prior to the rapid growth of cities, the 1601 Act for the Relief of the Poor provided for poor relief at the parish level, but parishes were unable to cope with the massive growth in urban populations. With very little state involvement in the provision of welfare, the poorer members of the lower classes, especially those in the growing urban areas, were often forced to rely on philanthropists and charity organisations to alleviate the worst of their suffering. This reliance increased in 1834 when an amendment to the Poor Law Act made it much more difficult for the poorer members of society to obtain benefits outside the workhouse system. This amendment was the result of the Poor Law Report of 1834 which claimed that the current Poor Law encouraged pauperism because the benefits were often as great as workers could earn with their own labour. The existing Poor Law was seen to encourage laziness and there was a fear amongst authorities that poor relief would be given to the able-bodied, who were undeserving. Also, it was thought that the morality of the poor would diminish if they were given handouts and not forcibly encouraged to look for employment. This self-help philosophy permeated nineteenth-century reform and was the mindset that provided the framework for nineteenth-century philanthropy and reform movements.

By the late eighteenth century the behaviour of the working classes had begun to cause concern amongst many of the upper and middle-classes, and reforming their behaviour

---

68 Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law*, p.8
was seen by many evangelical reformers as crucial to ensuring social order. One of the key players in this reformation of manners and morals was William Wilberforce. Traditionally known as the leader of the abolition of slavery movement, Wilberforce, through the King’s advisers, persuaded the King in 1787 to re-issue a previous royal proclamation against vice and immorality.\(^{69}\) This proclamation called for existing laws relating to disorderly behaviour to be enforced to stop the moral decay of society.\(^{70}\) At this time, reformers only wanted the authorities to ensure people were prosecuted to the full extent of the law, no doubt believing that this would keep society from disintegrating. For Wilberforce, reducing criminal activities was the key to moral reform.\(^{71}\) The notion was that if people acted according to the moral code of reformers such as Wilberforce, then criminal behaviour would end, and order would be restored. Also, Wilberforce and other like-minded people considered a nationally organised market society had the potential to cause the moral breakdown of society. One of the main reasons for this thinking was that, with the growth of a market society, the lower classes had access to employment and higher wages that allowed them the opportunity for conspicuous consumption.\(^{72}\) There was an assumption amongst the middle to upper classes that the lower classes were prone to laziness, disorder and criminal offences if they earned too much money, and if their expectations were raised too high.\(^{73}\) This view of the need for moral reform was therefore to ensure that the lower classes behaved according to the expectations of the middle and upper classes. This in turn

---

\(^{69}\) Roberts, *Making English Morals*, p.17

\(^{70}\) ‘A Proclamation, for the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue; and for Preventing and Punishing of Vice, Profaneness, and Immorality’ reprinted in William Man Godschall, *A General Plan of Parochial and Provincial Police, with instructions to overseers and constables, for better regulating their respective parishes and also his Majesty’s proclamation against vice, profaneness, and immorality, Lord Sydney’s letter to the several high sheriffs of England, and the resolutions of the quarter sessions for the county of Surrey, holden at Guildford, in July 1787, London, (1787), pp.89-97


\(^{72}\) Roberts, *Making English Morals*, p.26

\(^{73}\) Roberts, *Making English Morals*, p.27
would ensure an ordered and peaceful society and the existing social order would not be threatened.

Opponents of evangelical reformers argued that reform was a class-based movement because the upper classes were not targeted for their immoral activities, which included animal cruelty sports such as hunting. This is not necessarily true, as evidenced by the formation of the RSPCA for instance, which targeted cruelty to animals, but it can be argued that class was an issue in the reform movement because most reform was aimed at the lower classes. Hannah More was aware of this class inequity, stating in her *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society* in 1788:

> Will not the common people think it a little inequitable that they are abridged of the diversions of the public-house and the gaming yard on Sunday evening, when they shall hear that many houses of the first nobility are on that evening crowded with company, and such amusements carried on as are prohibited by human laws even on common days?

The important point here is that for moral reformers, the overriding concern was with the moral behaviour of the lower classes and their focus was generally not aimed upwards. Moral reform focused on individualism and internal change within each person. Reformers saw new solutions were needed for the dilemmas posed by great economic and social change, and moral reformation was generally seen as the answer.

The motivation underpinning moral reform has been contested by historians. In a collection of essays edited by A.P. Donajgrodzki, historians examined this concept of social control by looking at middle-class responses to the working classes. Writers considered institutions such as the military, religion, education, charity and social policy

---


to ascertain how the elite ruled the lower orders. In his introduction, Donajgrodzki explained the origin of the social control concept and how it was not necessarily always a major characteristic of many of these institutions, which may have had more than one focus. Social control was sometimes of an ‘unconscious nature’ and embedded within a ‘genuine, even a burning, passion for their cause.’ For moral reformers such as Wilberforce, humanitarian impulses may have been genuine, but the preservation of social stability was still paramount. Social control, argue many nineteenth-century historians, was at the heart of the need to reform the character of society.

One means of improving and controlling the behaviour of the lower classes was to set up societies such as the Society for the Suppression of Vice (Vice Society), which was formed in 1802 to fight against activities seen as immoral. The Society’s aims were to tackle issues such as ‘profanation of the Lord’s day’, ‘profane swearing’, ‘obscene books and prints’ and ‘disorderly public houses, brothels, [and] gaming-houses’. Also attacked were activities seen as being against Christian principles, including duelling and animal cruelty sports, with Wilberforce becoming one of the founding members of The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (later known as the RSPCA). While attacks against activities undertaken by the upper classes did occur, Alan Hunt argues that the aim of the Vice Society was to control and constrain the lower classes. Hunt asserts that one of the major reasons for this was the fear of a growing political

---

77 Donajgrodzki, Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain, p.15
78 Roberts, The Social Conscience of the early Victorians, p.317
79 For identification of (majority High Church) founders see Roberts, Making English Morals, pp.73-5
radicalism within the lower classes after the French Revolution.82 This view, like that of Donajgrodzki, posits that social control underpinned the reform movement.

Not all historians agree with the social control aspect of evangelical reform, with some historians in recent years emphasising the moral dimensions of providing for those in need.83 Other views of the push for reform of the lower classes consider that reformers were interested in improving their own position, or protecting their interests. Historian Geoffrey Finlayson writes that for some it was a form of social snobbery that enabled the participant to mix in circles above his or her station in life.84 Finlayson argues that by helping those living in rough conditions who could conceivably rise up against them, reformers were protecting a possible threat to property and public order by desperate people,85 although this could also be seen as social control. Historian Frank Prochaska disagrees with a social control position, stating that ‘At the level of human contact, in often tragic circumstances, the idea that philanthropy can be reduced to a form of middle-class social control, irresponsible to the genuine grievances of the poor, is not only inadequate but insensitive.’86 Prochaska argues that for many philanthropists, who were an integral part of social reform movements, their reform activism was ‘unexceptional’.87 It involved actions to assist in alleviating misery and helping people through their misfortune, acts carried out because of concern and not control.88

For some reformers, humanitarian ideals were central to their endeavours. They were concerned with how people lived, and the reasons behind the hardship and poverty

84 Finlayson, Citizen, State, and Social Welfare, p.50
85 Finlayson, Citizen, State, and Social Welfare, p.51
86 Prochaska, The Voluntary Impulse, p.52
87 Prochaska, The Voluntary Impulse, p.89
88 Prochaska, The Voluntary Impulse, p.89
faced by many. Social issues such as poor housing, the lack of education, and harsh circumstances were seen as the cause of people’s distress; it was not people’s behaviour creating the problem.89 Bernard Harris’s recent study on The Origins of the British Welfare State attempts to show that evangelical reformers were not necessarily only trying to retain social control over the lower classes. Whilst some reformers were attempting to preserve social order, there were others who saw it as their own moral duty to help improve the lives of the poorer classes.90 The humanitarian aspect of reform was very strong as a result of the influence of Enlightenment thinkers who provided a language of social justice and of rights. Reform was not only about social control; for some reformers it was also about humanitarian changes in order to improve people’s lives. As already discussed, there was a growing human rights philosophy that recognised the need of basic rights being available to all members of society. There is no doubt that some early reformers were often filled with compassion for the plight of the poor and attempted to ensure that some basic rights were available to the lower classes, even while they were advocating the moral reform of society. If the major focus of moral reform was social control, and the need to inculcate middle-class values into the working classes, an emerging focus on individual rights is also visible. An example of this complex interaction between reform and rights will be especially evident in Chapter Six when we see activists attempting to reform the poorer classes, but also being concerned with people’s rights to the basic necessities of life.

Reform Societies in Nineteenth-Century England

Quakers were integrally involved with ideas of moral reform and humanitarianism, as will become apparent throughout this thesis. This chapter will now provide a brief

89 Roberts, The Social Conscience of the early Victorians, p.319
overview of various reform societies of the time, and then locate Quakers as integral participants. Reform by individuals of themselves, through internal regulation, became important by the beginning of the nineteenth century. This led to ‘respectable’ people such as Wilberforce, who was part of a new evangelical movement, becoming part of the voluntary effort to aid existing authorities in working towards raising public morals. They were not prepared to leave it in the hands of those in authority whom they considered were not up to the task. Changing conditions in society required a concerted effort to ensure that the morals and behaviour of members of society were kept under control, leading to the formation of many voluntary societies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The perception that society was sinking into moral decay led to organisations such as the Society for the Suppression of Vice, as already noted, and the renewal of the Society for the Reformation of Manners, which had formed in London in the late seventeenth century but had faded from view until its re-emergence in the 1780s. Societies such as these were organised by evangelical moral reformers who, with their requirement to undertake good works to ensure salvation and their wish to convert the masses, became the mainstay of reform work in nineteenth-century Britain.

The most well-known of the evangelical reformers are often referred to as the Clapham Sect, or ‘The Saints’. Members of this group included renowned figures in the abolition movement such as Wilberforce, Henry Thornton, Granville Sharp, James Stephen, Zachary Macaulay, and a pioneer of education for the poorer classes, Hannah More. A brief investigation of the Clapham Sect, and their philanthropy and reform work, will give a broad picture of the activities undertaken by evangelical reformers in general. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that members of this group were not necessarily representative of all evangelicals. Many of the Saints were in privileged positions and
therefore had the means to undertake reform activities, but as all evangelicals followed the doctrines of atonement, conversion of the sinner, and sanctification, we can assume that as a group their motives and commitment were very similar.

The crux of evangelical reform work was conversion, and much of the Saints’ energy was expended on religious societies and missions, but they were still very concerned with the welfare of the lower classes of society. Their work in helping drive the abolition of slavery in the British colonies is perhaps their most renowned accomplishment, but they were also heavily involved in such issues as penal reform, factory reform, and education. This was owing to the rights of individuals beginning to be considered within the evangelical framework of moral reformation. For instance, the right of slaves to freedom, and the right of workers to reasonable working conditions, amongst other things, were taken up alongside the need for salvation. An example of evangelical concern for both rights and religion can be seen in a report from the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline when it was stated that the severity of the punishment ‘must be regulated by the character of the offence, the feelings of humanity, and the spirit of religion.’ It should be noted, however, that a concern for both the rights and the morals of lower classes were not always inextricably linked. Humanitarian ideals were beginning to become entrenched within a moral agenda, but as declared by Wilberforce, generally the main impetus of evangelical reformers was ‘restoring the influence of Religion, and of raising the standard of morality’ and to ‘boldly assert the cause of Christ.’

91 Owen, English Philanthropy, p.94
of slavery being the most obvious exception. In this particular instance, the freedom of
slaves was the defining issue, but religious beliefs were still integral to abolition
rhetoric.

Evangelical thought held that the poor were responsible for their poverty and this
greatly influenced the way that reformers undertook their charitable work in this area. Reformers believed that people were responsible for their own fate and argued that with
the right moral attitude everything else would follow, including work, wealth and a
happy family life. To this end, they offered religion as the answer to poverty. One of
the major ways this was achieved was by setting up Sunday Schools for the working
classes. These schools were not only to convert the masses, they were also to teach
them the virtues of thrift, temperance, sanitation and duty. In Hannah More’s words,
her motive for teaching the poor was simple:

They learn, on weekdays, such coarse works as may fit them for
servants. I allow of no writing for the poor. My object is not to make
them fanatics, but to train up the lower classes in habits of industry
and piety. I know of no way of teaching morals but by teaching
principles, or inculcating Christian principles without imparting a
good knowledge of Scripture.

While this paternalistic approach to reform was objected to by some contemporaries as
condescending, it did allow a basic level of education to become available to the poor
who otherwise would have had no access. British historian Nigel Scotland’s point that
these initial Sunday Schools provided the early beginnings to a future, more educated
working class is certainly valid, even if the motive at the time was mainly moral

---

94 Harris, Origins of the British Welfare State, p.62
95 Bradley, The Call to Seriousness, p.120
96 Bradley, The Call to Seriousness, p.147
98 Bradley, The Call to Seriousness, p.131
improvement. The provision of education to the working classes did benefit those in power by inculcating the population with appropriate cultural norms, thereby hopefully providing the ruling elite with a more pliant population. Education of the working classes, and its relationship to moral reform, will be discussed more fully in Chapter Four.

For reformers like the Clapham Sect, it would be fair to say that while they were concerned with notions of liberty and justice, their overriding aim was to reform the manners of the working classes. They did attempt, to a large degree, to inculcate the working classes with their own middle-class values and an examination of the language of the Vice Society provides a strong indication of their intentions. The Vice Society believed that public houses in particular corrupted the morals of the labouring poor and encouraged ‘the mis-spending of their money – the neglect of their families – their exposure to bad example – the mutual encouragement of vice – and the pernicious habit of excessive drinking.’  

While the Society was critical at times of the higher classes, who were sometimes negligent of their ‘moral and Religious duties’, they considered that ‘instances of shameless indecency or gross vice’ were mostly the domain of the lower orders. The Society ‘strongly recommended to all persons, who employ servants or apprentices, to take means for regulating their conduct, and preventing them from infesting the streets in the evening of the Sabbath.’  

Moral crusaders believed that the poorer classes needed to be kept away from vice, and that it was necessary for them to be kept industrious to ensure social cohesion. This indicates a concern with controlling behaviour rather than with the provision of support, and a concern generally aimed only at the poorer classes. A paramount belief in the divine social order ensured

100 Society for the Suppression of Vice, An Address to the Public, p.48
101 Society for the Suppression of Vice, An Address to the Public, p.48
102 The Christian Observer, Conducted by Members of the Established Church: for the Year 1808, being the Seventh Volume, London, John Hatchard, 1808, p.203
reformers did not want to change existing social structures; they only wanted to ensure that chaos was not the order of the day.\textsuperscript{104} A criticism levelled at Clapham Sect members charged them with dealing only with the manifestation of poverty but not the cause of it.\textsuperscript{105} For instance, John and Barbara Hammond, Fabian socialist historians, discussed the writings of William Wilberforce and Hannah More and wrote that:

It never seems to have crossed the minds of these philanthropists that it was desirable that men and women should have decent wages, or decent homes, or that there was something wrong with the arrangements of a society that left the mass of people in this plight.\textsuperscript{106}

The Hammonds acknowledged that Clapham Sect members such as Hannah More did sometimes blame the upper classes for the plight of society, but mostly they blamed them for their failure to help the More sisters to spread the gospel.\textsuperscript{107} These types of accusations directed at Clapham Sect members have some validity, but the cultural and social values of the time need to be acknowledged and the reformers should not be judged by twenty-first century Western concepts of social equality and egalitarianism. Evangelical reformers were working at a time when paternalism was the norm, and a contemporary human rights philosophy was still in its embryonic stage of development.

Another method the Vice Society utilised in an attempt to control the moral behaviour of the poor was to become heavily involved with the temperance movement. Evangelicals were very concerned with the effects of alcohol and became very pre-occupied with limiting the lower classes’ access to liquor. While official organisations such as the British and Foreign Temperance Society (1830), The United Kingdom Alliance (1853), The Church of England Temperance Society (1862) and The British Women’s Temperance Association (1876) gradually came into existence during the

\textsuperscript{104} Roach, Social Reform, p.19
\textsuperscript{105} Scotland, Evangelical Anglicans, p.48
\textsuperscript{107} Hammond and Hammond, The Town Labourer, p.227
course of the nineteenth century, preoccupation with the dangers of alcohol had begun in the previous century when Wesley urged his followers to avoid purchasing liquor. The Vice Society played a prominent part in the early decades of the nineteenth century in attempting to alleviate drunkenness amongst the working classes. The Vice Society was only the first of many national organisations which came into existence in the nineteenth century with the aim of reforming the morals of the lower classes. Michael Mason, a Professor of English, declares in his 1994 study *The Making of Victorian Sexual Attitudes* that in the early decades of the nineteenth century, evangelicals took up the cause of evangelical moralism more so than evangelical theology. There were many societies that grew out of a desire for moral reform, including those dealing with the issues of mendicity, vagrancy, and the reformation of manners.

The Vice Society’s main agenda was moral reform, but its involvement in the push for legislative changes gave it a broader base. It incorporated religious, and to a lesser extent, humanitarian ideals in its activism, but other religious societies of the time had a much narrower focus. One such society was the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), which was set up in 1804. Members of the Clapham Sect played a significant role in setting up this society, which quickly became one of the largest evangelical organisations in England. Original committee members included William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp, Zachary Macaulay and Henry Thornton. The BFBS

---

108 Scotland, *Evangelical Anglicans*, pp.92-93
109 Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, p.101
111 Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexual Attitudes*, p.66
112 See Roberts, *Making English Morals*
113 Scotland, *Evangelical Anglicans*, p.43
gave out approximately 16 million English Bibles in its first 50 years and grew to 460 auxiliaries, 373 branches and approximately 2500 local associations in the same period. The Society’s Laws and Regulations in 1805 stated that ‘the sole object shall be, to encourage a wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures.’ An advertisement informed the public of:

The prevalence of Ignorance, Superstition, and Idolatry, over so large a portion of the world; the limited nature of the respectable Societies now in existence; and their acknowledged insufficiency to supply the demand for Bibles in the United Kingdoms and foreign Countries; and the recent attempts which have been made on the part of Infidelity to discredit the evidence, vilify the character, and destroy the influence of Christianity.

To this end the BFBS distributed Bibles throughout the United Kingdom, United States, Europe and China. The Bible was seen as an important weapon in the fight against immorality, and access by the working classes to the Scriptures was considered a necessary tool in efforts for their reformation. We can see that by forming and/or joining societies such as the Vice Society and the Bible Society, evangelical reformers were very focused on reforming the behaviour and manners of society.

Many Quakers also followed this line of thinking and were very involved in the moral reformation of society, often participating in interdenominational societies such as the Bible Society. Three Quakers were inaugural committee members of the BFBS in 1804, including William Birbeck and Robert Howard. Joseph John Gurney was one

115 Roach, Social Reform, p.51
116 Bradley, The Call to Seriousness, p.136
117 British and Foreign Bible Society, The First Five Reports, p.3
118 Appendix to the First Report: ‘The Views of the Society were made known to the Public by the following Advertisement’ in British and Foreign Bible Society, The First Five Reports, p.25
of the instigators in the formation of the Norfolk and Norwich Auxiliary Bible Society in 1811\textsuperscript{120} and noted that:

Education and scriptural supply are by far the most powerful means, that we have in our hands, of improving the moral condition and heightening the character of our fellow creatures.\textsuperscript{121}

Quakers were also very involved in the temperance movement, as were many social reformers at this time\textsuperscript{122} and supported the cause heavily both within and outside their own society. It is a movement that can only be viewed from within a moral reform framework and for this reason Quaker involvement with the temperance movement will be briefly touched upon here. The temperance movement is a good example of a movement where there can be no doubt as to the intent of Quaker reformers. It also provides an example of competing positions within Quaker society concerning temperance. Some Quakers were moderationists who only advocated the banning of spirits; others were teetotallers following moral suasion arguments that trusted people to abstain from alcohol when they were educated on the moral degradation caused by over-consumption; while others were prohibitionists who saw the total banning of alcohol as the only way to improve society.\textsuperscript{123} These different positions show that it is impossible to position Quakers within the temperance movement as a unified group, with the Quaker Samuel Bowly writing in 1865 that he was at a loss to explain why ‘the question has not received a more universal support from our own Society, and that we are not as united upon it as we have been upon the anti-slavery, and many other

\textsuperscript{122}See Roberts, \textit{Making English Morals}, Chapter 4 for an overview of the growth of the temperance movement from the 1830s in Britain.
important philanthropic questions. 124 Samuel Bowly was in favour of total abstinence, but it appears that many Quakers were unwilling fully to embrace this position. This did not indicate non-agreement with temperance in principle, only that Quakers differed in the approach they sanctioned to eradicate the problem.

Teetotalism was never a compulsory Quaker doctrine, but a concern with the temperance issue is evident from the early years of the Quaker religion. George Fox issued an epistle in 1682 aimed at innkeepers, asking them to dispense to anyone no more ‘strong liquors than what is for their health and their good’. 125 A plea issued by the Yearly Meeting in 1751 also indicates the ongoing concern with temperance within the Quaker society:

...we beseech all to be careful of their conduct and behaviour, ‘abstaining from every appearance of evil’; and as an excess in drinking has been too prevalent among many of the inhabitants of these nations, we recommend to all friends a watchful care over themselves, attended with a religious and prudent zeal against a practice so dishonourable and pernicious. 126

Over a hundred years later, temperance was still an issue raised at the Yearly Meetings.

In 1857, a report from the Yearly Meeting recorded that:

This meeting has been brought under deep concern in view of the fearful amount of sin and misery existing in our land through the prevailing use of intoxicating liquors...Whilst we would carefully avoid interfering in any way with the Christian liberty of our dear Friends we would encourage them seriously to consider what may be their individual duty in relation to this important subject. 127

Quakers considered temperance a ‘great moral movement’,\textsuperscript{128} and that temperance societies aimed at improving ‘the physical, the moral, and in many instances, indirectly, the religious condition of the population’.\textsuperscript{129} Intoxicating drinks were considered one of the major causes of the breakdown of morality and ‘a very large portion of the evil’ facing society.\textsuperscript{130} An Address from the National Temperance Society was reprinted in \textit{The Friend} in 1843 because it was considered desirable to share the information, indicating common concerns held amongst temperance reformers. It referred to the:

\ldots long prevalent, deep-rooted, and almost universal habit of using intoxicating drinks, the powerful and seductive influence of which is constantly tending to demoralize and impoverish the people, and to excite them to almost every species of recklessness, disorder and crime…\textsuperscript{131}

The editor of \textit{The Friend} reiterated this concern, stating that for centuries intoxicating drinks had ‘occasioned a very large proportion of the crime that has disgraced our country, and that it has constantly produced, and is still producing a fearful amount of demoralisation, destitution, and improvidence.’\textsuperscript{132} While these concerns were mostly aimed at the working classes, there was also great concern with the behaviour and morals of the middle and upper classes. For some temperance reformers, these classes were sanctioning intemperance by setting a bad example, even if they followed the practice of strict moderation. Samuel Bowly, a total abstinence proponent, reported that abstinence among the working classes would not be possible ‘until the higher, but more especially the middle classes, had been won over’.\textsuperscript{133} Those amongst these classes who ‘assisted, however unintentionally, to keep alive the evils they were anxious to


\textsuperscript{129} \textit{The Friend}, (1843), p.25

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{The Friend}, (1844), p.139

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{The Friend}, (1843), p.70

\textsuperscript{132} \textit{The Friend}, (1843), p.71

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{The Friend}, (1851), p.102
destroy" were also part of the problem, and the only solution for many reformers was total abstinence.

Quakers did raise concerns regarding personal liberty within the temperance debate, with one writer acknowledging that Quakers needed to be very careful of ‘needlessly wounding the feelings of those whose sentiments may honestly differ from our own.’

At the heart of this statement, however, was not an individual’s right to choose their own behaviour, but only that temperance reformers were not too forthright in spreading the message of temperance. The ultimate aim of Quaker temperance advocates was total abstinence in order to reform the morals of society. Temperance was seen as the correct and moral solution, but Quakers wanted people to arrive at this conclusion themselves. Quakers considered ‘Gentleness and brotherly kindness will ever make more converts than aspersion and individual reproach.’

This very brief look at Quaker involvement in temperance indicates that this was one area of their activism where they were focused solely on improving the morals of society, with no other motive being in evidence. There were other areas of reform, however, where a growing concern with individual rights was apparent. While some reform activism was aimed at attempting to inculcate the lower classes with middle-class values to ensure a civil society, we also see instances where groups such as the Quakers are trying to ensure that the individual rights of all members of society were being met. One objective did not necessarily exclude the other, and for many Quakers, concern for both rights and morality were able to co-exist within their activism. Quakers began to operate from within early human rights principles, but along with

134 ‘An Address to the Society of Friends, on the subject of Total Abstinence from Intoxicating Liquors. From a Meeting of Members, held at Gracechurch Street, at the Close of the Yearly Meeting, 1843’ in The Friend, (1843), p.242
135 The Friend, (1843), p.25
136 The Friend, (1859), p.106
their interest in rights, Quakers were also very involved in moral reform. They worked in, and alongside, societies aimed purely at the reformation of the manners of the lower orders. Quaker involvement in societies such as the Bible Society, and the temperance movement, is indicative of this concern. Quaker activism, therefore, was not limited only to a moral reform focus, or to a rights-based focus. Their concern could encompass both issues in varying degrees, at various times, but a growing concern with individual rights was becoming an integral part of their reform activism by the early decades of the nineteenth century. The Quaker level of commitment to this area will be examined more fully throughout this thesis, alongside an examination of their moral reform activism.

Thesis Framework

In this chapter, the questions this thesis will ask have been set out. It has also provided a conceptual framework for the issues considered within the thesis, the time period covered and the sources utilised. The second part of this chapter provided an overview of the evolution of a human rights philosophy which has evolved into our current understanding of what is meant by the term human rights, and highlights how our modern concept of human rights was only in its embryonic stages in the nineteenth century. This chapter also investigated how moral reform came to be seen as the means of dealing with society’s problems, and the means of inculcating the lower classes with the ideals held by many in the ruling classes.

The next chapter will provide an overview of the historiography of humanitarianism/human rights and moral reform in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and which will indicate the lack of a Quaker presence in most of the historical research. It will also highlight, therefore, why Quakers are the subject of this thesis.
Chapter Three will provide the historical context in order to position Quakers within the period, and will provide a brief overview of how Quakers became involved in various reform and humanitarian movements. Chapters Four, Five and Six will look at Quaker involvement with internal reform movements, investigating the role they played in the provision of education, the abolition of capital punishment, and the provision of poor relief. Motivations will be explored in an attempt to ascertain the impulses directing Quakers at this time. Chapters Seven and Eight will explore Quaker involvement with two external issues, namely the abolition of slavery globally, and British interactions with Indigenous peoples in British colonies. The chapters dealing with internal and external issues will form the basis from which to investigate whether the focus of Quakers in these areas was moral reform, humanitarianism or whether the human rights of individuals was their ultimate aim. The thesis will also investigate whether any or all of these concepts interconnected with one another at different times.

This thesis differs from other studies on Quaker reformers in that it investigates a broad range of reform movements that Quakers were involved in, rather than focusing on one individual, or one reform movement. It will attempt to show that Quakers are worthy historical subjects who, despite their small membership, participated in a wide range of nineteenth-century social reform movements and who were also key players in the push for reform. This thesis will also attempt to situate Quakers in a human rights framework to show that they were not just a ‘peculiar’ sect, but rather the early proponents of a Western human rights philosophy that exists today.
2. Literature Review

This thesis argues that Quakers were prominent and integral participants in social activism by the beginning of the nineteenth century, and involved in numerous reform movements. To date, however, this small but influential group has mostly been neglected in the historiography of moral reform and human rights. Much of the historiography concerning reform movements in nineteenth-century Britain either neglects Quaker involvement totally, or positions them as minor players at best alongside leading reformers of the time. Historians have tended to focus on evangelicals, such as William Wilberforce, as historical subjects who are considered the driving force behind many of the reform movements in the nineteenth century, or on evangelicalism as a movement primarily directing the growth of moral responsibility and the transformation of English sensibilities.¹ Historical scholarship has been inclined to leave the history of Quakers to Quaker historians, thereby suggesting they are not worthy of individual attention by other historians. Quakers, however, not only helped instigate many of the reform movements, but were integral to many of the movements remaining viable, financial, and focused on their stated aims. This thesis attempts to break this silence in the broader historiography of humanitarianism, human rights and moral reform.

The abundance of Quaker primary sources makes it puzzling as to why there are not more Quaker-specific histories relating to their involvement in social reform. Abolition historiography is one of the few areas that incorporates analysis of Quaker activism, but even these texts primarily position them in the background. The historiography concerning social reform and humanitarianism in nineteenth-century Britain is

abundant, but mostly neglects the important contribution of Quakers in this area. Quakers are sometimes present in the literature, ranging from fleeting glimpses to being considered alongside other nineteenth-century reformers, but most studies of reform and humanitarianism do not consider Quakers specifically as historical subjects in their own right. One historian, Thomas Kennedy, in his 2001 study *British Quakerism 1860-1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community* does consider Quakers as historical subjects. Kennedy claims that Quakers had forfeited the concept of the Inward Light of Christ for scriptural authority for much of the nineteenth century and argues that it was not until the later decades of the nineteenth century, when once again the Inner Light became central to Quaker theology, that Quaker social activism rose to prominence.² This thesis will argue against Kennedy’s position because it aims to show that Quakers were active participants in many areas of social reform during the first half of the nineteenth century after emerging from their eighteenth-century Quietism.³

Quakers as a group transformed themselves from a self-isolated group of people into a thriving liberal, and theologically progressive, body of men and women by the late nineteenth century. In the early decades of the nineteenth century Quakers were led by ‘stodgy, desiccated and rigid’ evangelical Quakers who had forfeited the concept of the Inward Light of Christ for scriptural authority.⁴

There is a small body of historical research related to Quaker reformers and their work in various reform movements. With regard to research concerning nineteenth-century Quaker women reformers, there have been a small number of studies undertaken. Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845) is possibly the most well-known Quaker woman reformer

---

³ Quakers and Quietism is discussed in Chapter Three.
and has been the subject of much historical scholarship in her own right. Histories, both of her reform work and her life, have been regularly published since her death. Elizabeth Fry was the third child of John Gurney, an affluent Quaker manufacturer, and according to biographer June Rose, Fry was ‘the earliest of the great women reformers to inspire change’. After seeing first hand in 1813 the atrocious conditions women prisoners at London’s Newgate Prison were forced to endure, Fry began her prison work in earnest in 1816. Elizabeth Fry premised her reform efforts on the idea that the reformation of prisoners would result in a diminished crime rate, and she has become renowned for her endeavours in improving the dehumanising and cruel conditions women prisoners faced. Other recent studies of Elizabeth Fry include Quaker historian Gil Skidmore’s 2005 publication, Elizabeth Fry: A Quaker Life, which utilises Elizabeth Fry’s letters and journal to demonstrate how Fry was inspired in her reform work, while giving a glimpse of her insecurities in her personal life. Another study is David Goff’s 2008 re-publication of a volume of Elizabeth Fry’s biography, originally published by the London Tract Association of Friends in 1858, A Brief Memoir of Elizabeth Fry. These recent studies are testament to the ongoing historical interest in Elizabeth Fry’s prison activism.

Another Quaker woman, who only very recently has become the subject of dedicated research by Shirley Aucott, and then only in a short booklet, is Elizabeth Heyrick (1769-1831). It is surprising that there has not been more research on Heyrick considering she was the first person to call for the immediate emancipation of slaves in

---

6 Rose, Prison Pioneer, p. 13
9 David Goff, A Brief Memoir of Elizabeth Fry, Richmond, Friends United Press (2008)
British colonies. Aucott acknowledges that Heyrick has not been recognised for the important contribution she made to the anti-slavery movement, but her research on Heyrick is a beginning. There are a number of other Quaker women who were social activists in the nineteenth century and whose reform work also needs to be the subject of research.

There are dedicated studies on Quaker men, but again also in reasonably small numbers. William Allen is one such Quaker who has been the subject of historical scholarship concerning his reform activities. Allen’s interests were widespread and diverse and included involvement in soup kitchens, the provision of education, the abolition of slavery and capital punishment, poor relief, and juvenile delinquency. Nineteenth-century biographies discuss Allen’s many endeavours, including his involvement with the Spitalfields Soup Society and the British and Foreign School Society. More recent studies include George F. Bartle’s 1992 article William Allen, friend of humanity: his role in nineteenth-century popular education and Margaret Nicolle’s 2001 localised study of Allen’s role in reform, William Allen: Quaker Friend of Lindfield 1770 – 1843. These studies give us a glimpse of Allen’s humanitarian undertakings and his involvement with various reform movements.

The Quaker Joseph Sturge (1793-1859), often referred to as ‘the Christian Philanthropist’, has been the subject of historical biographies, including an 1864 book by Henry Richard, Memoirs of Joseph Sturge, and Stephen Hobhouse’s 1919 study

11 Aucott, Elizabeth Heyrick, (in Foreword, no page no.)
15 Nicolle, William Allen
Joseph Sturge: His Life and Work. More recently, Alex Tyrrell’s 1987 study Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain demonstrates Sturge’s involvement with the Moral Radical party, a term used to denote reformers who aimed for political change within a moral revolution.

Joyce Taylor has undertaken a study of the Quaker Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838) in her 1996 book Joseph Lancaster: the poor child’s friend. Lancaster was an integral player in providing education to the poorer classes and his monitorial system provided the basis for popular education throughout much of the nineteenth century. In the introduction to Taylor’s study, historian Roy Porter points out the neglect of figures such as Lancaster in favour of famous educationalists such as Thomas Arnold of Rugby, and acknowledges Taylor’s efforts in rectifying the neglect of important nineteenth century educationalists such as Lancaster. In Taylor’s words, Lancaster ‘deserves to be remembered’ even if his teaching methods were eventually discarded in the 1840s for a more structured system. Lancaster was responsible for many children in the poorer classes receiving an education that would otherwise have been unavailable to them, and he was also responsible for setting up training for teachers, another area that had previously been almost non-existent. Because of Lancaster’s non-denominational approach to educating the masses, the established church was forced into expanding its educational activities to the working classes in the face of the perceived threat from education provided by Dissenters. The impact Lancaster had on the British national education system was therefore profound and Taylor’s study positions him at the forefront of the rise in popular education, and no longer an ignored historical subject.

---

17 Stephen Hobhouse, Joseph Sturge: His Life and Work, London, J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd (1919)
20 Taylor, Joseph Lancaster, pp.ix-x
21 Taylor, Joseph Lancaster, p.111
22 Taylor, Joseph Lancaster, p.112
Charles L. Cherry’s 1989 book, *A Quiet Haven: Quakers, Moral Treatment, and Asylum Reform*, while not a biography, does explore Quaker William Tuke (1732-1822) and his efforts with the mentally ill in both Great Britain and the United States.\(^{23}\) Cherry explores Tuke’s motivation in establishing a mental asylum at York in 1796, arguing that there were many influences which drove him, especially the social and religious heritage of Quakerism. A duty to ensure that expressions of the Inner Light were not hindered in any one ‘by slavery or other forms of physical and mental oppression’ drove Quakers like William Tuke to push for reform.\(^{24}\) Cherry’s study focuses only on Quaker dealings with the mentally ill and the reasons for their concern with this issue. The York Retreat advocated moral management of the mentally ill, in particular observance of religious principles, a practice which was considered helpful to the patient in controlling harmful impulses.\(^{25}\) Other activities instigated with the aim of bettering the condition of the patients included playing chess, providing books on subjects such as mathematics and natural science, and tea parties where manners and decorum were expected to be displayed.\(^{26}\)

These studies on individual Quakers provide us with a biographical sketch of their lives, and their work in various reform movements, but the number of studies is still very small. Also, with the exception of a few Quakers already mentioned, most studies and memoirs of individual Quakers, even the most well-known, were mostly published during the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\(^{27}\) The implication of these earlier biographies is that historians have not always seen Quakers as part of a


\(^{24}\) Cherry, *A quiet haven*, p.91

\(^{25}\) Cherry, *A quiet haven*, p.100

\(^{26}\) Cherry, *A quiet haven*, p.100

\(^{27}\) For instance, a search of library catalogues indicates that most historical studies or biographies on William Allen were published during the nineteenth century, although he is considered one of the foremost Quaker humanitarians.
larger movement concerned with reform. The more recent studies, however, while attempting to place Quakers on the historical stage, are still extremely limited considering the various reform movements Quakers helped establish, and continued to support, throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The integral role played by Quakers in numerous reform movements is one of the key themes of this thesis.

While Quakers have often not been considered as historical subjects in their own right, excepting those studies already mentioned, Quakers are often discussed within other more general studies on reform movements, and usually examined alongside evangelical reformers. A brief look at studies which consider the activities of evangelical reformers can therefore be useful in ascertaining Quaker involvement in some of the nineteenth-century reform movements.

Penal reform is one area in which Quakers were especially active, and some historians have historicised them as participants in the movement, although mostly as adjuncts to evangelicals. Michael Ignatieff’s 1978 book *A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850* is a classic exposition of a ‘social control’ interpretation of prison reform. It provides a brief discussion on Quaker involvement in penal reform, but focuses mostly on Elizabeth Fry’s prison visits, and William Allen’s contribution to prison reform.28 VAC Gatrell’s 1994 study *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868* acknowledges that groups such as evangelicals and Quakers did open up the topic of penal reform for debate. Gatrell perceived these types of reformers as coming from the middle classes, or as he noted,

---

the more inclusive term ‘polite and would-be polite classes.’

He argues that these middle-class groups mostly agreed that ‘sympathetic emotion was the bond of social and personal relationships, and that it was a mark of cultivation to empathise with suffering and strive to relieve it through benevolent works.’

Gatrell states that while these emerging notions of sensibility were agents of change, a purely cultural explanation is not convincing. He does not follow the traditional historiographical position that improving morals, and an increasing humanity, brought about penal reform. Gatrell argues that other factors such as the politics and economics of the scaffold also came into play, negating the culture of sensibility as a sufficient explanation for penal reform.

Gatrell declares that ultimately middle-class groups wanted reform of the penal code to ensure that scaffold crowds were excluded from the event. This was owing to the sardonic commentaries by the working classes on ‘judicial murder’ and their mocking of pretensions to a civil society. In other words, it was concern with the morals of the lower orders that drove middle-class prison reform.

Gatrell acknowledges the Quaker contribution to penal reform but states that whilst their contribution can be interpreted as impressive, their interest was spasmodic and very selective regarding the cases they took up. According to Gatrell, Quakers spent very little of their time focusing on prison reform, contributed a very small amount of funds to the cause, and were not concerned with the poorer classes of society facing execution, only when the felon was generally Quaker and rich. Gatrell argues that Quakers do not deserve their reputation as some of the leading proponents in the movement to abolish the death penalty as their involvement was limited, and class-

---

30 Gatrell, The Hanging Tree, p.226
31 Gatrell, The Hanging Tree, pp.24-25
32 Gatrell, The Hanging Tree, p.227
33 Gatrell, The Hanging Tree, p.610
34 Gatrell, The Hanging Tree, pp.403-409
based. The problem with Gatrell’s position is that while not all Quakers may have been involved in the movement, many leading Quakers were, including William Allen and Peter Bedford. As this thesis will discuss in Chapter Five, George Fox put forth an argument against capital punishment, especially for crimes concerning property, as early as 1659, and leading Quakers such as William Allen and William Forster helped form the Society for Diffusing Information respecting the Punishment of Death and the Improvement of Prison Discipline in 1808. While this thesis does not consider Quaker involvement in individual case studies, their intellectual intent applied to all classes, not just the elite.

Richard Follett’s 2001 study *Evangelicalism, penal theory, and the politics of criminal law reform in England 1808-1830* investigates evangelical contributions to criminal law reform, and explores the issue of morality in a more historically contextualised manner. Follett examines the politics of criminal law reform, focusing on evangelicals, and attempts to show how the language of religion impacted on political action and discourse. Follett agrees with the traditional historiographical position by arguing that morality had grown in importance by the beginning of the nineteenth century and he investigates how this affected political figures and their push for criminal law reform. Follett challenges the centrality of utilitarianism and Bentham’s position which was, according to Leon Radzinowicz, as one of the ‘greatest of English legal reformers’, and argues that it was the evangelicals in Parliament, more commonly referred to as the Saints, who played a critical role in criminal law reform. Follet declares that the Saints’ contribution to penal reform has been underrated by historians, many of whom have perpetuated the ‘great myth’ that Jeremy Bentham was

---

35 Follett, *Evangelicalism*
36 Follett, *Evangelicalism*, p.3
the originator of English criminal law reform.\textsuperscript{38} He argues that there were two central means by which Evangelicalism impacted on penal law reform. Firstly, evangelical Members of Parliament voted against the Government to win support for penal law reform, and secondly, they influenced the discourse on punishment and reform options.\textsuperscript{39} One way they achieved this was to ensure their arguments in support of penal law reform were printed in numerous periodicals,\textsuperscript{40} another was via The Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge upon the Punishment of Death, and the Improvement of Prison Discipline, generally referred to as the Capital Punishment Society. This society distributed publications and tracts and established regional networks to disseminate information throughout the country.\textsuperscript{41} These methods of disseminating information, amongst others, helped to cultivate and foster public support for criminal law reform. In this way, the impact of evangelicalism on criminal law reform was significant and the evangelicals’ role was crucial in ensuring penal reform passed through Parliament.\textsuperscript{42}

What Follett does not acknowledge is the input of Quakers within the penal reform movement. Quakers were integral to penal reform, with both William Allen and Peter Bedford involved in the formation of the Capital Punishment Society, alongside leading evangelicals.\textsuperscript{43} Allen’s journal \textit{The Philanthropist} was also utilised as a means of disseminating information on reform issues, including penal reform. Both the Capital Punishment Society and \textit{The Philanthropist} played an integral role in disseminating information on penal reform, and the omission in Follett’s study of Quakers, who worked prominently alongside the leading evangelicals in the movement, needs to be addressed. Follett’s study is important in that it does consider the impact evangelical

\textsuperscript{38} Follett, \textit{Evangelicalism}, p.3  
\textsuperscript{39} Follett, \textit{Evangelicalism}, p.3  
\textsuperscript{40} Follett, \textit{Evangelicalism}, pp.133-138  
\textsuperscript{41} Follett, \textit{Evangelicalism}, pp.138-145  
\textsuperscript{42} Follett, \textit{Evangelicalism}, p.184  
\textsuperscript{43} See Appendix A for examples of inter-denominational cooperation in the Capital Punishment Society.
reformers such as the Saints had on criminal law reform, but it ignores other religiously-motivated reformers, such as the Quakers. The language of religion was utilised by many reformers in an endeavour to provide a society based on religious values, and Quakers need to be added to this important and influential group.

Another area of reform in which Quakers were very active participants was educational reform. Because of this involvement, Quakers should play a role in the historical accounts of the provision of education, but once again they rarely appear. Historical scholarship concerning nineteenth-century education generally does not consider the involvement of Quakers and tends to take more of a sociological and educationalist approach to the issue. Education was seen as the means of providing the lower classes with lessons in morality, along with basic levels of literacy required for both religious purposes and employment. Quakers were at the forefront of education provision with the Quaker Joseph Lancaster instigating the first monitorial school system, which aimed to provide universal education for the poor, and creating the first teacher training establishment. Historians of education, however, have chosen to focus more on why education was provided rather than who was providing it. One approach taken by historians is that education was used as a means of social control, and Richard Johnson is a proponent of this view, arguing that educating the poor in early Victorian times was about power, authority and control. Phillip McCann explores to what extent popular education in elementary schools was able to inculcate the values and ideologies of the ruling elite into working-class children, and the effect education had on forming the social conscience of the working classes. John Lawson and Harold Silver's 1973 A Social History of Education in England provides a broad overview of English

44 Taylor, *Joseph Lancaster*, p.112
education, from its Anglo-Saxon beginnings up to 1970, discussing the impact historical events had upon education. From these studies, it is evident that the approach taken by historians of education rarely considers who was involved in providing the education, therefore studies exploring the providers of education is a neglected area of scholarship. What is also interesting with regards to histories of education is that there are very few recent studies, which is surprising considering the impact that the provision of education had on the working classes, and therefore society in general.

It is also surprising that there are not more studies focusing on the role played by Quakers in the provision of education throughout the nineteenth century. W.A. Campbell Stewart’s 1953 *Quakers and Education: As seen in their Schools in England* does explore Quaker participation and traces the history of Quaker schools in England, investigating whether Quaker educational principles changed over time. Campbell Stewart acknowledges that the intention of the book was not historical research, but rather an opinion on educational theory and practice placed in appropriate historical and social settings. The study takes more of an educational than an historical approach and gives a brief overview of schools and their history, costs, staffing, and subjects taught. Within the historiography of education, Quakers have never been seen historically as major providers of education, or educational reformers, despite Lancaster’s importance. As with penal reform, Quakers have been omitted for the most part from the main body of academic research into the history of education, and largely ignored as agents of social change. The silence regarding educational reform

---

49 Chapter 4 provides the historical context to Joseph Lancaster’s involvement in popular education and teacher training.
and Quaker involvement needs to be remedied and this thesis makes an attempt to do that.

There is a general body of scholarship that concentrates on English philanthropy and reform in various contexts and time periods, but the area of moral reform has only received comprehensive historical attention in the last decade or so. One of the more recent studies on this topic is *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform: From the 1690s to 1850* (1998), edited by historians Hugh Cunningham and Joanna Innes. This study focuses on the period before the State became ultimately responsible for charity, and when the church and voluntary organisations played a greater role.\(^5\) *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780 – 1850* (2003) is a series of essays, edited by Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes, which covers reform initiatives dealing with issues such as slavery, the arts, medicine and law.\(^5\) The interconnectedness between moral and institutional reform is explored in these essays, along with what the term ‘reform’ meant to contemporaries. The major theme of the study investigates the manner in which the concept of reform changed over time, from radical to moderate, and the diversity of reform efforts.\(^5\) Burns and Innes use this collection of essays to examine how both institutional and moral reform engaged with one another, in various ways, in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Institutional reform required political change but there were generally moral undertones to these campaigns. Conversely, moral reform campaigns to democratise cultural institutions such as the opera and theatre, and to make them more accessible to everyone, required breaking down institutional structures that were often exclusive to the elite. Despite Quaker involvement in the abolition of

---

52 Burns and Innes, *Rethinking the Age of Reform*, p.2
slavery in particular, none of the essays give any weight to Quaker contributions in areas of reform, except an occasional passing reference.

Historian G.R. Searle looks at the interplay between economics and morality in *Morality and the Market in Victorian Britain* (1998). Searle’s focus is the period 1830-1870 when the doctrines of ‘individualism’, *laissez-faire*, and free enterprise capitalism were at their peak. The quest was for citizens to work out how the principles of market liberalism could combine with morality, and how conflicting claims could be accommodated. Searle’s chapter on moral reform shows how the conflict between morality and economics was played out in regard to issues such as prostitution, gambling, Sunday trading and alcohol. Searle pays little attention to the philosophical or theological understandings that underpinned the reform movements he considers. He does acknowledge, however, that ‘business evangelism’ made some attempt to set moral standards and restrain corporate materialism and cites the example of Quaker businessman Joseph Sturge who was concerned with ‘conducting the business on the principle of strict Xtian [sic] equity and uprightness’. This is one of the few occasions where Quakers are mentioned, although not in any depth. With rare references to Quaker reformers, if at all, these general historical studies on moral reform movements mostly render Quaker contributions invisible and omit a very small, but very influential, group that is worthy of its own historical study.

There are some recent historical studies concerning moral reform in which Quakers do appear, albeit in a rather ad hoc fashion, and generally in studies concerning larger issues. M.J.D Roberts is one historian who has explored the topic of moral reform in

---

his 2004 study *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787 – 1886*. Roberts does not ignore Quakers and categorises them as moral reformers who, along with their attempts to reform mostly the lower classes, also undertook humanitarian causes such as the abolition of slavery. Roberts reconstructs various reform initiatives, including temperance, abolition and social purity, to place each one in its historical context, which also serves as a general survey of these movements. In his study, Roberts argues that a ‘moral reform tradition’ was created by the English middle classes as a means of modifying social behaviour and instilling their own moral values into a society dealing with competing forces generated by a free market. Quakers were just one group of middle-class reformers, amongst many, who were attempting to inculcate their own views of moral conduct into nineteenth-century British society. Roberts argues the mid-1780s was an important period of moral reform commitment, and the period when the reform of the behaviour of the working classes had taken on a renewed urgency. Moral reform was ‘a weapon in the cultural armoury of an emergent urban middle class’ and was used by them to not only make sense of their duty to others, but also an attempt to influence the way society in general saw the world. While Quakers appear in Roberts’ work, they are not central figures but merely a small part of the middle-classes that Roberts investigates.

The development of the social conscience in the early decades of the nineteenth century is the topic of historian F. David Roberts’ 2002 study *The Social Conscience of the Early Victorians*. Roberts declares that paternalism gave way to a laissez-faire vision by 1860 and he examines the value systems that drove this change. These include voluntarism, philanthropy, humanitarianism and self-reliance. Roberts’ study looks at how issues such as a free market, philanthropic societies, and a growing

57 Roberts, *Making English Morals*
humanitarianism impacted on the social conscience of the early Victorians. To F. David Roberts, nonconformists were at the forefront of the call to reform morals, using their ministers to preach Christian values such as the need for kindness, benevolence and industry. Most early Victorians looked to individual moral improvement as the solution to political economy. In a few instances throughout his study, F. David Roberts recognises the input of Quakers into humanitarian endeavours in the nineteenth century. He states that despite their small numbers, ‘their humanitarian achievements were out of all proportion’, and that ‘Quaker humanity was found everywhere.’ In spite of these claims, Roberts does not grant Quakers the attention they deserve, instead also relegating them to occasional honourable mentions.

Christopher Leslie Brown, an historian whose 2006 study *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* considers that the major aim of Quakers was the moral reform of society, argues that Quakers became involved in humanitarian issues, such as abolition, to further their own cause. Brown asserts that abolitionists such as Quakers used abolition as a measure of their own moral worth and took up the cause of abolition owing to their own self-interest. This self-interest had various guises, and not only economic self-interest. It included the desire to be free of the danger, corruption and guilt that slavery could bring about, the desire to rid society of slavery because it affected value systems, or the undesirable effect slavery had on colonial society. Both studies by F. David Roberts and Brown indicate that Quaker activism is now being seen by some historians as having a moral reform focus, with Brown arguing self-interest as

---

60 Roberts, *Social Conscience*, p.458
63 Roberts, *Social Conscience*, p.323
one of the major motivating factors. The problem with Brown’s approach is that while self-interest was no doubt a small part of some reformers’ motives, they also worked to improve the lives of others. Brown’s approach negates any humanitarian impulses of Quakers, while my research aims to show that Quakers were extremely concerned with the human rights of others, and were not driven by motives of self-interest to any large degree.

This overview of some of the historiography of moral reform indicates that the tendency of historians has been to focus mostly on specific aspects of reform rather than the broader topic of moral reform as its own category of scholarship. Historian M.J.D Roberts is one of the exceptions to this type of focus. The overview also highlights the debate over whether reformers were involved in social control, as argued by M.J.D. Roberts, or whether their involvement was due to more complex issues. Brown argues that self-identity was integral to moral reformers, and he positions reformers as ‘self-concerned, self-regarding, and having a self-validating impulse’.67 These texts by M.J.D. Roberts, F. David Roberts and Brown explore the issue of moral reform using different theoretical frameworks, but still either ignore Quakers as social activists, or position them only within a moral reform framework. This thesis, in its investigation of reform movements, will consider whether inculcating middle-class values into the lower classes was one of the main aims of Quaker reformers, or whether humanitarian impulses ultimately played a more important role.

The history of English reform, as revealed in the studies discussed, sometimes acknowledges the contribution of Quakers as reformers, but there are very few histories that offer them more than a fleeting appearance on the historical stage. Quakers are mostly always linked with other reformers, generally Anglican evangelicals, and at

67 Brown, Moral Capital, p.26
times understandably so, because Quaker activists often worked alongside the leading evangelicals. However, there were many occasions when Quakers took up the mantle first and worked tirelessly to help set up committees, and then contributed time, effort and money to ensure the viability of the movement. Quaker efforts in reform movements deserve much more than the occasional inclusion in reform historiography. Quakers should not be seen as peripheral to the main players; they should be considered major contributors, especially when considering the many and varied reform causes in which they were involved. It should be noted that historians such as VAC Gatrell, Christopher Leslie Brown and F. David Roberts have focused in some detail on Quaker reformers. With their interest mainly concerned with evangelical reformers, however, it is understandable that they did not have the time to focus more on Quaker-specific sources. They have added to Quaker scholarship with their assessments of Quaker involvement in penal reform and the abolition of the slave trade, but the major targets of their research were evangelicals, not Quakers.

Research concerning nineteenth-century human rights activists is also negligible, with Quakers making only sporadic appearances in the histories of human rights. It is worthwhile summarising the historiography, however, in order to make clear the major argument of this thesis, that is, Quakers were early human rights activists, and yet are almost totally missing from any historiography on human rights. There is a large and growing body of historical research relating to human rights, but nowhere are Quakers considered the early forerunners to today’s human rights activists.

In the main, the historiography of human rights can be categorised within two broad strands: one is a history of progress and the other a history of paradoxes. The first is a Whig interpretation by historians who see human rights as part of the history of progress. This broad telling of history argues that the growth of human liberty is a
result of the ongoing achievement of history itself. Historian Paul Lauren’s *The Evolution of International Human Rights* (2003) is one such study that chronicles the evolution of human rights as a history of progress. Lauren looks at early references to visions of human obligation in religious, philosophical and political texts, then at international campaigns for human rights in the nineteenth century. Historian Michael Ignatieff’s 2000 study *The Rights Revolution* is another history of progress. Ignatieff claims that a ‘rights revolution’ has occurred since the 1960s which has resulted in many formerly marginalised groups now gaining equal rights.

Intellectual histories show us how ideas affect social change and are another approach taken in order to understand the emergence of human rights. Intellectual historian Knud Haakonsen’s 1996 study *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment* contributes to the history of philosophy by focusing on early modern natural law theory and illustrating the gradual shift from duties to rights. Haakonsen begins his survey with seventeenth-century European natural law theorists and then moves on to show the intersections between eighteenth-century Scottish moral thought and the history of European natural law theory. He argues that by the end of the eighteenth century Americans, and Thomas Jefferson in particular, were shifting beyond the theory of natural law and duty to a theory of subjective and inalienable natural rights. European natural law theory posited that it was our duty to preserve God’s moral creation, which entailed the need to be social and support the common good. American intellectuals, like Jefferson, instigated a subjective rights theory which did not follow the traditional natural law theory. These intellectuals shaped a subjective

---

70 Ignatieff, *The Rights Revolution*, p.1
72 Haakonsen, *Natural Law*, p.63
rights theory which shifted the emphasis from duties to rights. Whereas duties implied subservience and a relationship of superiors and inferiors, rights focused more on equality. In revolutionary America, basic inalienable rights meant that God’s moral creation was best nurtured when each person took care of themselves, and their duties. Rights were no longer subordinate to duties; the emergence of a natural rights philosophy during the Enlightenment resulted in the rise of individualism and the idea that natural rights should be protected. The Enlightenment gave emphasis to individual autonomy and the concept that science and reason could solve problems facing humanity such as political absolutism, economic exploitation and prejudice.73

The optimistic position taken by histories of progress allows that with the rise in human rights NGOs such as Amnesty International, human rights violations will lessen as international practices improve. What they do not accomplish is to give us any accounts of the victims of human rights violations, nor the histories of activists who fight to end human rights abuses on the front line. Human rights, as a history of paradoxes, does not see human rights history as a linear one of progress. This strand identifies the exclusions and inconsistencies of the history of human rights and explores the paradoxical nature of human rights claims. In Human Rights and Revolutions (2000) cultural historian Lynn Hunt discusses how revolutions could grant and deny rights to certain people at the same time, and also how universal and natural rights are denied to many citizens.74 Hunt illustrates that while the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in August 1789 instigated the most universalistic model of human rights at the time, the rights of women, slaves and political minorities were not immediately granted.75 While Hunt’s study focuses on the origins of human rights in the eighteenth

73 Lauren, The Evolution of International Human Rights, p.16  
century, historian Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom argues that the paradoxical nature of human rights is ongoing. Wasserstrom looks at the twentieth-century Chinese Revolution to show that while the paradoxes identified by Hunt remain, others are outcomes of the contemporary period. Wasserstrom argues that issues such as cross-cultural understanding were mostly insignificant to eighteenth-century human rights debates but that these understandings play a major part in contemporary human rights discourse.

Lynn Hunt also draws on historical documents relating to natural rights that emerged during the French Revolution in her edited study The French Revolution and Human Rights: a Brief Documentary History (1996). This study brings together historical documents debating the implications of natural rights theory from 1789-1794 and shows how the notion of human rights has defined the characteristics of modern politics and humanity. Hunt ascertains that the questions that arose regarding who was defined by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen when it was issued on August 26, 1789 have been debated ever since this time. The ongoing debate has resulted in many groups excluded from ‘human rights’ since the Declaration, with many groups such as women, free blacks and slaves, and the poor, gradually declaring their human rights ever since. Hunt acknowledges that whilst the Declaration in theory at least included every individual in France, there were omissions, and she includes other historical documents from the period to show how debates concerning these omissions developed. Hunt argues that along with the American Revolution, the French

---

77 Wasserstrom, ‘The Chinese Revolution’, p.20
79 Hunt, The French Revolution, p.16
Revolution provided the beginnings of an idea that would gradually encompass more and more groups throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{80}

Lynn Hunt also questions why empathy for others proliferated at this time in \textit{Inventing Human Rights: A History} (2007). Hunt argues that in the eighteenth century people developed a dislike of cruel and barbarous behaviour, owing to individuals recognising their own traits in other people. The notions of ‘bodily integrity and empathetic selfhood’\textsuperscript{81} developed rapidly in the second half of the eighteenth century, in part owing to an escalation of novel reading. Reading novels was a major means of developing notions of equality and empathy across social boundaries, and people came to see others as being like themselves. Hunt states that novels as a genre escalated after 1740 with new novels increasing six-fold in Britain during the first six decades of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{82} Reasons for this rise are varied, with academics citing such reasons as capitalism, aspirations of the middle class, the emerging nuclear family, and a change in gender relations.

Micheline R. Ishay in her edited book \textit{The Human Rights Reader} (1997) uses historical writings to demonstrate how contradictory ideas of rights have been expressed throughout history.\textsuperscript{83} Ishay has separated the documents under the broad headings of religious humanism and stoicism; liberalism; socialism; contemporary twentieth-century century perspectives; the right to self-determination; and how to achieve rights. This separation differentiates the intellectual history of human rights from the themes that shape contemporary discussions. Ishay contends that one major division in the question of what does constitute basic human rights is the religious versus secular debate.

\textsuperscript{80} Hunt, \textit{The French Revolution}, p.30
\textsuperscript{81} Hunt, \textit{Inventing Human Rights}, p.30
\textsuperscript{82} Hunt, \textit{Inventing Human Rights}, p.40
Religious leaders argue that religious documents should be the guide to all human interaction, whereas the secular view holds that human rights claims should not be beholden to divine revelation.\textsuperscript{84} Within the secularist viewpoint there are also competing challenges by groups excluded from early articulations of human rights. The study of these historical writings allows us to see how contradictory views of human rights have been expressed and codified over time.

A collection of essays edited by Michael J. Lacey and Knud Haakonssen, \textit{A Culture of Rights: The Bill of Rights in philosophy, politics, and law - 1791 and 1991} (1991), analyses a specific historical document in an attempt to chart the evolution of natural rights.\textsuperscript{85} This type of scholarship involves investigating how the rhetoric of rights was used in particular historical settings and analysing the politics attached to the claims. Lacey and Haakonssen’s study looks at the cultural history of the American Bill of Rights in two specific time periods: at its inception and in 1991. Academics from the disciplines of history, jurisprudence, political theory and philosophy have contributed essays which deal with the historical context of the Bill of Rights and the complexities of the culture of ‘rights’. Lacey and Haakonssen argue that after its foundation the Bill of Rights played little part in national development, but that over time the Bill of Rights has become nationalised and now plays a major role in shaping American society.\textsuperscript{86}

Historian Dale van Kley’s collection of essays in \textit{The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789} (1994) searches for the origins of \textit{The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789} in the political ideas and conventions of the three centuries prior to the Declaration, the period French historian

\textsuperscript{84} Ishay, \textit{The Human Rights Reader}, p.xiii
\textsuperscript{86} Lacey and Haakonssen, \textit{A Culture of Rights}, pp.4-7
Alexis de Tocqueville refers to as the ‘Old Regime’. This strand of historical revisionism is the result of renewed interest in the origins of the French Revolution, and questioning of the liberal beginnings of the Revolution and its French or Anglo-Saxon roots. The central premise of the essays is to look for ‘political and cultural continuities between the Old Regime and the French Revolution’ and to consider the Declaration as the climax of that regime. Van Kley argues that the origins of the Declaration are substantially French while acknowledging that other European theorists such as Locke and Grotius had some input.

What is evident from this review of human rights historiography is that there are two distinct strands: one that focuses on the progress of human rights and the other on the paradoxes. It is difficult though to embrace the history of human rights as progress when we consider the exclusions from this history. Feminist Arvonne S. Fraser attempts to fill one of these gaps by giving the evolution of women’s rights over five centuries. Fraser demonstrates that Mary Wollstonecraft’s 1792 book *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, often considered to be the catalyst of the push for women’s rights, in fact just added to the debate that had been underway for over three centuries. Fraser is one scholar now contributing to these neglected areas of history and is indicative of how in the later decades of the twentieth century, and beginning of the twenty-first century, human rights historiography has expanded to include the rights of minorities and the marginalised. To see human rights merely as a history of progress is a narrow

---

89 van Kley, *The French Idea of Freedom*, p.8
90 van Kley, *The French Idea of Freedom*, p.10
approach that does not allow the voices of the oppressed and neglected to be heard, and that ignores the complexities and nuances of this research area.

This overview has shown us the distinct strands of human rights research and its focus on the general, theoretical and philosophical level. It also highlighted the focus on ideas and the involvement of groups. What my research seeks is the particular. This thesis will attempt to write Quakers into the history of human rights and explore their motives and actions in relation to human rights. It will be a practical history that puts Quakers into the field of human rights research by investigating what they did, who they did it to, and most importantly, why they did it. That is not to say Quakers have been totally missing from human rights historiography. British abolition historiography does in the most part include Quakers on the historical stage on some level, but a brief look at the research will give us a better idea as to what extent they are included, and what importance is placed on their involvement.

Abolition historiography is an area of research where one would expect to find Quakers as subjects in their own right. Quakers, along with evangelicals such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, are considered synonymous with the abolition movement in Britain. Thus far, however, historical scholarship has mostly neglected their contribution as integral players in abolition, choosing instead to co-opt them as adjuncts to the main narrative. An investigation of abolition historiography will generally find Quakers as historical subjects, and sometimes mainstream players alongside the evangelical Saints, but not studied as an autonomous group. Moreover, historians generally have not focused solely on Quaker motives, aspirations and contribution as moral reformers or human rights activists within the abolition movement. This is surprising considering the involvement Quakers had with the abolition movement. Quakers were responsible for the first petition to the British
Parliament calling for an end to the slave trade, and three quarters of the initial committee members on the Abolition Committee were Quakers.

Quakers also continued to be involved with a movement to end slavery globally after slavery was abolished in British colonies in 1833, however there has been very little historical research undertaken concerning this later time period. Traditionally British abolition historiography has focused mainly on the issue of slavery and the lead-up to its abolition in British colonies. The abolition of slavery is seen as an act that showed the world Britain's humanitarianism and liberal ideals, and is still a rich field of historical research.

Research on the abolition of the slave trade, and slavery, in British colonies is abundant with historians looking at the political, social and economic factors that drove the movements. In *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760-1810* (1975) historian Roger Anstey argues that the abolitionists underwent a moral transformation that then resulted in their involvement in the abolition movement. Anstey states that philosophical and theological changes greatly influenced the abolitionists and that a new humanitarian philosophy emerged that assailed slavery. He does, however, see a change in moral philosophy during the eighteenth century as being only one of the driving forces behind abolition, not the ultimate key factor. Anstey credits the religious zeal of Quakers and evangelicals as driving the abolition movement. His argument is that they were the active agents of reform, and that their religious enthusiasm began the abolition movement and continued to carry it forward. While Anstey argues that philosophical and theological ideology was important, and that evangelicals and Quakers were central to the abolition campaign, he posits that it was ultimately the

---

93 Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.97
94 Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.96
95 Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.235
political process that ended the slave trade, and slavery. Anstey declares that even though intellectually abolition was favoured, without a political campaign the necessary legislation would never have been passed. Abolitionists needed to use the political process to ensure the statute allowing the slave trade was rescinded. Therefore, time and effort went into lobbying politicians to achieve the legislative change needed to abolish slavery in British colonies, and in this Quakers played a major role. Anstey argues that the abolitionists’ campaign, on the grounds of justice, morality and belief in their role of needing to make the world righteous, to avoid divine retribution, was very important, but not sufficient to end slavery. Conversely, however, without lobbyists such as Quakers and evangelicals applying pressure to key political players regarding abolition, there may never have been sufficient reason for Britain to end the trade.

Historian Seymour Drescher’s 1987 study *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilisation in Comparative Perspective* is another abolitionist history that acknowledges the Quaker contribution to the abolition movement, but also places them as supporting players in the antislavery movement. Most historians of abolition do not focus on the intellectual motivations of Quakers. They place them in the history, but do not attempt to understand the religious underpinnings, or humanitarianism, behind Quaker involvement. Nor do they acknowledge the impact Quakers had on the abolition movement, both in formulating ideas and strategies, and helping drive a public awareness campaign that highlighted the injustices inherent in the slave trade.

What is also evident is that abolition historiography has generally not engaged with the contribution of British abolitionists to eradicating slavery globally after 1838. This is

---

98 Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.xxiii  
an area where more research would give a better understanding of the on-going involvement of Quakers in abolition. Quakers were major players in the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS), with over half of the committee members between 1839 and 1870 belonging to the Quakers.\footnote{Howard Temperley, \textit{British Antislavery 1833-1870}, Columbia, S.C., University of South Carolina Press (1972), p.68} With most abolition historians focusing on the period up to the total abolition of slavery in British colonies by 1838, the Quaker abolitionists who continued to oppose slavery in countries outside the British colonies have been largely neglected. Slavery still existed in many countries after 1838 and Quaker abolitionists continued to work towards freeing slaves globally throughout the nineteenth century. They did not limit their involvement to British colonies; their interest was in ensuring slaves globally were granted their rights and freedom.

The historian Karen Halbersleben has begun to fill the gap in Quaker abolition historiography with her 1995 article focusing on a Quaker woman abolitionist, Elizabeth Pease. Halbersleben looks at this Quaker reformer and her work in the antislavery movement, women’s rights and non-resistance.\footnote{Karen Halbersleben, “Elizabeth Pease: one woman’s vision of peace, justice and human rights in nineteenth century Britain”, \textit{Quaker History}, Vol. 84, No. 1 (Spring 1995), pp.26-36} Halbersleben briefly summarises Pease’s reform endeavours and contends that both her radical ideology and religious beliefs informed her activism.\footnote{Halbersleben, “Elizabeth Pease”, p.33} In a letter to a friend, Pease combines her spiritual belief in the equality of all before God with a pledge to oppose ‘the destruction of the rights of the great mass of people.’\footnote{Elizabeth Pease, “Letter to Anne Warren Weston, 24 June 1841”, cited in Halbersleben, “Elizabeth Pease”, p.33} Halbersleben contends that it was Pease’s ‘overriding Quaker-inspired concern with the rights of the individual in the face of coercive power’ that motivated her reform activities.\footnote{Halbersleben, “Elizabeth Pease”, p.26} Quaker theology drove Pease’s...
radicalism and her interest in defending the rights of all human beings. Halbersleben’s article on Elizabeth Pease is one of the few articles devoted to a Quaker activist, and hopefully in time there will be many more exploring other Quaker social reformers, but it does give a tiny glimpse of what Elizabeth Pease contributed to reform movements. Halbersleben notes that although Pease’s diary has been lost she left a large amount of written correspondence. It is surprising, therefore, that Quaker reformers like Pease, who have left a quantity of correspondence, are not the subject of more historical studies dedicated to Quaker reformers. Sources such as Pease’s correspondence need to be studied in order to understand more about Quaker beliefs and motivations.

An investigation of abolition historiography also indicates that historians have primarily analysed the history of the abolition movement as a whole from the eighteenth century onwards, while not focusing particularly on individual abolitionists. The obvious exception to this, of course, is William Wilberforce. The focus of historian Christopher Leslie Brown’s 2006 study on British abolitionism, which has already been discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to moral reform historiography, is on the decades leading up to the establishment of the Abolition Society in 1787. Brown asks where did the antislavery impulse come from that drove the abolition movement prior to 1781? Rather than only looking at who was involved in abolition, of importance to Brown is ‘what were they trying to do?’ Brown argues that the abolition movement arose out of tentative beginnings that were random and without uniformity, and he investigates how moral opinion turned into moral action. He acknowledges that current research

---

106 Halbersleben, ‘Elizabeth Pease’, p.27
107 Halbersleben, ‘Elizabeth Pease’, p.27
108 Brown, Moral Capital
109 Brown, Moral Capital, p.25
110 Brown, Moral Capital, p.2
aims to take an approach that does not idealise the motives of early abolitionists. The traditional interpretation, until recently, has taken the ‘Great Men in history’ approach which posits that influential individuals have been responsible for major historical events. This can be seen in the interpretation first articulated by Thomas Clarkson in which the reason given for the abolition movement was that it was driven by Christians who saw the injustice in slavery and acted to remedy a great sin. Brown states that the prevailing explanations for the abolition movement, which include the Enlightenment, capitalism and evangelicalism amongst others, do not account for the sudden emergence of abolition activism. These explanations do not account fully why political activism took place when it did and Brown contends that while some people were sincerely interested in helping slaves, more often than not it was their self-interest that drove them. Brown sees this in terms of changing views of empire and nation during eighteenth-century Britain, driven in a large part by the American Revolution. He argues that antislavery action was transformed by the American Revolution which ‘gave new pertinence to what had been a question of marginal interest.’ When Britain lost the war, moral capital was gained by using antislavery initiatives as a symbol of the national character, as a means of restoring ‘the honor of the British Empire.’ By challenging slavery, the abolition movement could be seen as virtuous while promoting moral renewal, justice and humanity.

111 Brown, Moral Capital, p.21
112 Thomas Clarkson’s first essay Is it right to make men slaves against their will? was published in 1816 as An essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species, particularly the African, translated from a Latin Dissertation, which was honoured with the first prize in the University of Cambridge, for the year 1785. His many other writings on the issue of slavery include A summary view of the slave trade, London, J. Phillips (1789); An essay on the comparative efficiency of regulation or abolition, as applied to the slave trade. Shewing that the latter only can remove the evils to be found in that commerce, London, J. Phillips (1789); History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade, 2 Vols, London, Longman, Hurst, Rees & Orme (1808)
113 Brown, Moral Capital, p.23
114 Brown, Moral Capital, p.1
115 Brown, Moral Capital, pp.25-26
116 Brown, Moral Capital, p.461
117 Brown, Moral Capital, p.461
Brown also places Anglican evangelicals and Quakers at the centre of the abolition movement. Slavery was of concern to evangelicals, but their main aim at the time was to promote evangelical religion and ‘religious objectives.’ Brown’s argument is that evangelicals used abolition to encourage the pursuit of moral reform without asking people to give up their entertainment. According to Brown, they promoted their moral reform agenda indirectly via the abolition cause, and therefore did not alienate those who would normally be suspicious of moral reform campaigns. Abolition was therefore the initial means by which to begin their mission to advance religion throughout society.

By the 1780s, according to Brown, antislavery ideals were aligned with such principles as British liberty, patriotism and respectfulness, and evangelicals utilised these principles to enhance their broader campaign for moral reform. Evangelicals hoped that their abolition crusade was just the beginning in their fight against nominal Christianity and their quest to bring morality into political life. Brown argues that Quakers were also extremely concerned with moral reform and saving souls, rather than abolition, prior to the formation of the Abolition Society in 1787. Brown suggests that it was not until pressure from American antislavery Quakers forced their hand that English Quakers became more public advocates for abolition. Until this time, English Quaker leaders were more concerned to maintain ‘the safety and security of the religious society’ and feared the aftermath if they publicly stood against slavery. Younger Quaker members, who had been exposed to a more liberal education, also

---

118 Brown, Moral Capital, p.335
119 Brown, Moral Capital, p.386
120 Brown, Moral Capital, p.387
121 Brown, Moral Capital, p.387
122 Brown, Moral Capital, pp.388-389
123 Brown, Moral Capital, pp.412-418
124 Brown, Moral Capital, p.419
125 Brown, Moral Capital, p.420
began a push for a renewed commitment to moral values, a push that the leaders ultimately could not ignore unless they wanted to be considered pro-slavery.\textsuperscript{126}

Brown sees these conflicts within British Quakerism in the 1780s as the impetus for Quakers to move from their Quietist period into political activism.\textsuperscript{127} Abolition was one means of giving renewed momentum to their religious fellowship.\textsuperscript{128} Quakers were lauded as being 'the most benevolent society in the universe'\textsuperscript{129} after they initiated the first antislavery petition to Parliament in 1783 and this helped them to place themselves as principled purveyors of morality and propriety. To Brown, antislavery sentiment turned into political action in the 1780s, and abolition gave Quakers and evangelicals the chance to use a moral cause to further their own moral agendas. In this regard, Quakers were able to portray themselves as humanitarians concerned with liberty and freedom, which provided them with a public identity when they began to emerge from their Quietist seclusion. And again, Brown positions Quakers as players alongside evangelicals, even though once more it was Quaker impetus that drove the abolition movement, especially in the formative years.

One of the problems with Brown’s interpretation of Quaker involvement in the abolition movement is that he argues that Quakers only took up humanitarian issues when they suffered a crisis of self-identity. Abolition provided them with the means to re-enter the public domain and position themselves as humanitarians fighting for the rights and freedom of slaves, which was actually driven by their own self-interest. This thesis will question Brown’s argument to some degree because, as will be shown, Quakers had a long history of involvement in humanitarian issues which did not only begin in the 1780s. While it is true that during the eighteenth century many Quakers did retreat into

\textsuperscript{126} Brown, \textit{Moral Capital}, p.420
\textsuperscript{127} Brown, \textit{Moral Capital}, p.393
\textsuperscript{128} Brown, \textit{Moral Capital}, p.424
\textsuperscript{129} David Barclay, 'Letter to James Pemberton, 2 July, 1783', cited in Brown, \textit{Moral Capital}, p.424
seclusion from the outside world, and they did re-emerge late in the eighteenth century when they were facing a crisis of survival owing to small membership numbers, they still participated on some level in outside causes. Chapter Six discusses their outside involvement at this time in more detail.

Quakers not only continued their push to end slavery globally after 1838, but also turned their interest towards British imperial expansion, and the treatment of Indigenous peoples in British colonies. Julie Evans, Patricia Grimshaw, et al, in their 2003 book *Equal subjects, unequal rights: Indigenous peoples in British settler colonies, 1830s – 1910* investigate settler colonies in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. The study explores how political rights (or a lack thereof) were established in these colonies and how Indigenous populations were assimilated into, or excluded from, the imposed political order. Humanitarian concern with Indigenous populations in settler colonies is briefly discussed, and the contribution of evangelicals such as William Wilberforce and Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton acknowledged. As a study of political rights, *Equal subjects, unequal rights* does not focus on the involvement of humanitarians, either practically or theoretically, within these colonies. Quaker concern with the rights of Indigenous populations is ignored, even though the Quaker Thomas Hodgkin was one of the original founders of The Aborigines Protection Society, and was involved in informal Quaker meetings which preceded the setting up of the *House of Commons’ Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements)*. Historical research concerning Indigenous populations in British colonies, from a Western human rights perspective, is very limited and there is scope for further research relating to this area of study. Also, there is a need for research specifically focusing on Quaker involvement with Indigenous populations. This is because, as this thesis will show, it was an issue that Quakers engaged with both within, and outside, their society.
This literature review has shown that many historians do acknowledge that Quakers were involved in nineteenth-century reform movements. Some historians even position them as key figures but, for whatever reason, Quakers are generally not considered worthy of their own historical study, with a few notable exceptions such as Elizabeth Fry and William Allen. This review has also shown that Quakers are missing from human rights historiography. The reason for this is two-fold: firstly, historical analyses of nineteenth-century human rights activism is negligible; and secondly, Quakers have not generally been perceived historically as human rights activists, except perhaps by themselves, and therefore not discussed outside of Quaker history. The next chapter will explore Quaker beginnings and their theological position in order to explain what drove their social reform activism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
3. Quaker Beginnings

Quakers were only one of the dissenting religious groups involved in social reform movements by the early nineteenth century. Some members of other sects, such as the Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists, were also involved in issues such as the abolition of slavery, and prison reform. In order to provide the context for Quaker involvement in reform movements throughout the period this thesis covers, a brief narrative explaining how and when the Quakers came into being, and how they came to be involved in reform and humanitarian movements by the late eighteenth century, is necessary.

Quakers, or Friends, emerged during a time of political and social turmoil in mid-seventeenth-century Britain, and along with other radical sects such as Ranters, Levellers and Fifth Monarchists, opposed the existing structures of society, including the political, religious and social order. Puritanism at this time represented a comparatively moderate sect, and was beginning to gain power and influence. One of the major causes of disharmony from dissenting religious groups was that the practices of the established church, and especially episcopacy, were considered unfaithful to the Bible. Dissenters wanted reform of the national church, and the end of state interference in spiritual concerns. The idea of a ‘godly reformation’ was gaining strength amongst many levels of society, driven mainly by radical Protestants who believed that the Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century had not gone far enough in ridding the Church of corrupt practices, and that church reform was still incomplete.

Out of these tensions emerged religious groups such as the Quakers and Baptists, and

---

1 It should be noted that this is only within the context of these other religious groups, as Puritans were also considered fairly radical at particular times.
3 Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, p.300
their dissenting beliefs that challenged the religious orthodoxy of the day. For Quakers, their belief that God could speak directly to everyone especially challenged the doctrines of most Protestant belief systems. This ensured that Quakers suffered severe persecution from the ruling authorities for many decades after their formation.

The religious doctrine central to Quaker theology, and which set them apart from mainstream Protestants, was that the ‘light’ of Christ, or the Inward or Inner Light, was available to everyone. Quakers claimed that Christ spoke directly to individuals and it was this belief that influenced Quaker doctrine and set them apart from the religious orthodoxy, and even from other dissenters. Quaker belief in the primacy of the individual, and the worthiness of all human beings, was the antithesis of contemporary thought in the seventeenth century. Quaker theology argued that all people are created equal and that everyone could experience God; His love was universal and freely available to every human being. This notion of equality drove Quaker theology, values and practices, and set Quakers apart from the established church and its doctrines. This was a total rejection of the Calvinist belief in predestination, which posited that the eternal state of each person is pre-determined by God and only the chosen can receive salvation. Quakers denied this rigid Calvinist doctrine of election, proclaiming the possibility of salvation for all. Quaker doctrine did not take the Bible literally nor did it consider it the only belief source, instead the scriptures were considered a spiritual guide which helped to confirm the presence of God in their lives.

According to the Quaker Robert Barclay who, in 1678 published his Apology for the True Christian Divinity, the Bible was ‘not to be [the] esteemed and principal ground of all truth and knowledge, nor yet the adequate, primary rule of faith and manners.’

Even though not published until nearly thirty years after the formation of the Quaker movement, Barclay’s seminal text of the Quaker faith, at the time of its publication, ‘received the unqualified approbation of the Society of Friends, as containing a just and correct exposition of their faith and principles’.  

Many early nineteenth-century Quakers viewed Barclay’s text as an excellent exposition of the Quaker belief system, although some evangelical Quakers criticised Barclay’s lack of emphasis on the Bible. Quakers shunned almost all of the rites that were practised by the Anglican Church, including the need for churches, priests and sacraments, and challenged the authority of the clergy. Human agency was also renounced as Quaker meetings centred around waiting for a response from God, not through a human intermediary. Direct revelation was at the core of Quaker theology, and God was the highest authority. The early Quaker society’s egalitarian attitudes and values quickly became embedded as Quaker orthodoxy and informed their philanthropic and reform activism, especially during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The formation of the Quakers and their radical belief system has often been ascribed to George Fox by historians of the Quaker movement. Richard Bailey argues that, especially in the early decades, Fox was a charismatic leader exalted by his disciples,

---


and was ‘an undisputed prophet’. The view that George Fox was the person most responsible has been challenged in recent times by some historians who argue that Fox was only one of a number of early leaders. There is no doubt, however, that Fox, whether wholly or partly responsible for the formation of the Quaker movement, was one of the leaders who helped establish the Quaker movement and led it throughout the first few decades of its existence. As a prolific writer Fox left an extensive and detailed account of his thoughts and life, and of the early decades of the Quakers, thereby giving us an excellent insight into the beginnings of Quakerism and his major role in its formation. These extensive writings have worked to position Fox as a key player, and it is worthwhile examining Fox’s life to make sense of Quaker ideas about equality.

In the 1640s George Fox left his home in Drayton-in-the-Clay in Leicestershire looking for some direction in his life, and spiritual enlightenment. The Civil War period had seen the growth of religious dissent and during Fox’s wanderings he underwent ‘openings’ in which revelations came to him, which he recorded in his journal. One revelation was ‘the Lord opened to me that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ’. Another was ‘that God did not dwell in these temples which men had commanded and set up, but in people’s hearts’. To Fox, this meant that God could speak directly to individuals and did not require an established ministry to reveal His word. Historian L. Harry Ingle argues that

---

11 Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism*, p.21
12 George Fox’s journal has been published in varying formats. The first was the 1694 *A Journal or Historical Account of the Life, Travels, Sufferings, Christian Experiences and Labour of Love in the Work of the Ministry of that Ancient, Eminent and Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, George Fox*, published after his death.
14 Penney, *The Journal of George Fox*, p.6
this was the catalyst that launched Fox’s attack on established religion and its rites. However, it was not until a voice spoke to Fox, saying ‘There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition’ that Fox became convinced of the Truth. He wrote ‘that every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ’ and it was this doctrine of the inward Light of Christ that became the central tenet of the Quaker faith. Fox believed that every person could know the grace of God; he did not see it as only the prerogative of the Elect. It was this position that allowed Quakers to see all people as being equal before God, and was ultimately the catalyst for their reform activism. Quaker religious principles were always at the heart of their involvement because, to Quakers, religion and humanity could not be separated. It is the aim of this thesis to explore how much these ideas affected participation in nineteenth-century reform, and also to ascertain whether a fundamental belief in equality was the driving force behind Quaker activism, in the broader community, from the late eighteenth century onwards.

As an understanding of the Inner Light, or Christ Within, is central to comprehending Quaker motivations and actions, a further look at some early Quaker writings dealing with this theological position would be beneficial at this point. George Fox, in a text published to justify the Quaker theological position, wrote that the Light ‘enlighten[ed] every man that cometh into the world’. In explaining the Quaker core belief in the Inner Light, Fox stated that:

And this is the Light which people are to believe in, through which they may become the Children of God; and this is the Light that shines in the darknesse, and out of the darknesse in the heart, which gives the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, from whence it

---

15 Ingle, First Among Friends, p.43
16 Penney, The Journal of George Fox, p.8
18 George Fox, Some Principles of the Elect People of God who in Scorn are called Quakers, for all People throughout Christendome to Read over, and thereby their own States to Consider, London (1661). Available Quaker Heritage Press, Online Texts. http://www.qhpress.org/texts/gfprinc.html (accessed 12 February 2010)
comes; and this is the Light which they that love darkness hate, and will not come unto it, because it reproves them...and by believing in it are become Children of Light, and by receiving of it have we power to become the Sons of God.\textsuperscript{19}

To the Quaker Isaac Penington (1616-1679), who wrote \textit{Some questions and answers, showing mankind his duty} in 1662, ‘God is near to every man with the breath of his life...which man’s spirit opening unto, and drinking in, it becometh a seed or principle of life in him’.\textsuperscript{20} Robert Barclay, in his \textit{Apology for the True Christian Divinity} (1678), stated that there is a ‘saving Light and grace in all, the universality of the love and mercy of God towards mankind’.\textsuperscript{21} According to Barclay, the Inner Light, once received, turned people ‘from the evil to the good’ and they could ‘learn to “do to others as they would be done by,” in which Christ himself affirms all to be included.’\textsuperscript{22} From these early writings we can see a glimpse of the theological underpinnings of the concept of the Inner Light, and also notions of the Quaker belief in equality. These belief systems set Quakers apart from other religious groups and informed their social activism, particularly in the nineteenth century. Quaker faith was a very personal experience and did not follow the idea of predestination that only particular people were amongst the elect. The Quaker religion had no reliance on outward signs of faith, such as creeds, dogma and institutions, but rather focused on a Quaker’s own personal relationship with God; it was a lived experience rather than conformity to doctrine.\textsuperscript{23}

Quakers were not the first religious group in England to espouse ideas of an individual relationship with God, and to attack church practices seen as excessive and corrupt.

\textsuperscript{19} Fox, \textit{Some Principles of the Elect}
\textsuperscript{21} Barclay, \textit{Apology}, Philadelphia, p.97
\textsuperscript{22} Barclay, \textit{Apology}, Philadelphia, p.97
Many radical religious subcultures had emerged prior to the beginnings of the Quaker movement. One such group was the Lollards which emerged in the fourteenth century and was considered anticlerical. The Lollards believed that everyone could have a direct relationship with God and that the words of the Bible should not only be accessible through priestly intervention.\textsuperscript{24} Another group were known as Seekers, a term loosely applied to groups of ‘discontented Christians’. This group could be considered theological allies to the Quakers as they also met in silence until the Holy Spirit spoke through a minister, and they also shunned any outward trappings of established religion such as sacraments.\textsuperscript{25} English separatists were yet another dissenting religious group who emerged in the 1580s and advocated the separation of church and state. Separatists had broken from the established church when they considered it corrupt and decided that reform was not possible through remaining with the Church of England.\textsuperscript{26} In 1652 Fox and fellow Quaker leaders began to establish contacts with pockets of dissenting religious groups, including Seekers and Separatists, and link them together. Swayed by Fox’s preaching, many joined the Quaker society and began to spread the Quaker message.

By 1654 there were Quaker communities in many northern counties and Quaker groups also began to appear in London. The Quaker stronghold initially was in the north of England, an area considered a backwater with large parishes, absentee Bishops and a very poor education system.\textsuperscript{27} The ideas espoused by Fox and the Quakers regarding the Inner Light had many implications, some of which attacked the very core of social, religious and political order. At this time, the idea of the equality of everyone would have been beyond the comprehension of most. The Great Chain of Being was an

\textsuperscript{24} Ingle, \textit{First Among Friends}, p.12  
\textsuperscript{26} Spurin, \textit{Roger Williams}, p.1  
\textsuperscript{27} Ingle, \textit{First Among Friends}, p.72
intellectual understanding of how the universe was structured which placed everybody and everything in a strict hierarchical order, with God at the apex. Quaker ideology attacked this understanding, where all positions on the ‘chain’ were static and linear, with their notions of equality. Quaker ideology allowed for women preachers and prophets, for instance, a position still not realised by women in many Protestant churches today. Catie Gill, an English lecturer, comments on Quaker women’s equality in her 2005 study *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community: A Literary Study of Political Identities, 1650 – 1700*. Gill states that it was very unusual for a movement to allow women to adopt these roles, however the Inner Light being available to everyone ensured notions of equality within Quakerism.

Quakers also attacked the tithe system in which money had to be paid to often lazy and corrupt ministers, and was a tactic that gained them followers who also opposed the tithe system. Quakers also did not distinguish between classes of people and addressed everyone as thee and thou, rather than the singular you, which denoted superiority. Another traditional formality that Quakers refused to participate in was the doffing of hats to superiors; Quakers only removed their hats in prayer. Quakers also refused to swear judicial oaths, taking a stance on the Bible passage which read ‘Swear not at all.’ As the refusal to swear an oath was a punishable offence, this became an easy avenue for the courts to jail Quakers rather than having to mount a case against them. The Quaker belief in equality challenged existing norms of social ordering and ensured that they were set apart from the rest of society. From some of these Quaker beliefs and practices, we can discern their early concern with the rights of

---

29 Ingle, *First Among Friends*, p.75
individuals, although enunciated differently to the language of rights in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The early Quaker belief system considered equality more in terms of spiritual equality, in that God’s message was available to everyone. As time wore on, this expanded to include more rights of individuals, rather than just the spiritual.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the Quakers had become institutionalised, and some of the behaviours and notions of the early society had all but disappeared. The 1689 Act of Toleration had granted the Quakers freedom to continue down their non-conformist path. Formal meetings were established, and the hierarchy of the group was set. According to historian Michael Birkel, Quakers now began to withdraw from the world to protect themselves from a community that did not share their doctrine.33

The following century is known as the Quietist period for Quakerism, when Quakers shunned the outside world and attempted to cocoon themselves from outside influences. The Quakers became an inward looking group that was quite distinct from the rest of British society. Quaker culture was a simple culture that rejected frivolous behaviour and took no part in the arts. Its dress and language were plain and leisure activities were seen as ‘ungodly’. As opposed to their early formative years, Quakers did not seek converts and thus became an exclusive group that, as Harold Loukes describes, ‘were like a new monastic order, living within walls thrown up for the protection of true devotion, their life revolving around their own centre’.34 Their meetings were often silent, only broken occasionally by ministers when led by the Light to speak.

---

34 Loukes, *The Quaker Contribution*, pp.52-53
The key concept of Quietism is ‘the idea that the path to God is based in retreat from the world and self.’\textsuperscript{35} Eighteenth-century Quakers also began to doubt whether they were spiritually ready to receive Christ in their heart, requiring continuous re-purification and regeneration of their soul.\textsuperscript{36} Silence in worship became sacred; Quakers ‘waited in the Light’ for directions to action. Quietist ministry attempted to receive God’s word without any interference from one’s own life experiences and thoughts.\textsuperscript{37} This form of worship was derived from Barclay’s \textit{Apology for the True Christian Divinity} which, as discussed earlier, came to epitomise the Quaker faith in the eighteenth century. To Barclay, the Inner Light was the foremost source of knowledge of God, and the principal Rule of Christians was ‘an inward Spiritual Law, ingraven in the heart, the Law of the Spirit of Life, the Word, that is nigh in the heart and in the mouth.’\textsuperscript{38} Barclay decried reason and conscience against the ‘Light Within’\textsuperscript{39} and it was to this principle that many eighteenth-century Quakers again turned. Quietism held that Truth could not be learnt from human agency; to the Quakers, reason and intellect could not provide knowledge as this was imparted directly by God.\textsuperscript{40} Anti-intellectualism was a mainstay of Quietism and ‘human efforts’ were seen as contrary to waiting passively for the Word of God to be known.\textsuperscript{41} Harold Loukes argues that waiting for God to speak directly to their condition actually resulted in the stifling of debate and took away opportunities for spiritual growth and learning.\textsuperscript{42} This outcome is understandable in the context of Quietist principles and explains the withdrawal of the Quakers from society in the eighteenth century. As a result, the issues of social reform and equality that underpinned early Quaker responses appeared to lose their immediacy within

\textsuperscript{35} Dandelion, \textit{An Introduction to Quakerism}, p.59
\textsuperscript{36} Birkel, \textit{Silence and Witness}, pp.27-28
\textsuperscript{37} Loukes, \textit{The Quaker Contribution}, pp.54-55
\textsuperscript{38} Barclay, \textit{Apology}, Philadelphia, p.68
\textsuperscript{39} Barclay, \textit{Apology}, Philadelphia, p.23
\textsuperscript{40} Punshon, \textit{Portrait in Grey}, p.121
\textsuperscript{42} Loukes, \textit{The Quaker Contribution}, p.57
Quakerism during this century, at least in relation to the outside world. The focus instead of most Quakers was firmly on members within their own church, and their behaviour, although as will be discussed in later chapters, not all Quakers remained cocooned from the outside world, with some still concerned with social issues outside Quaker society.

The Quaker society in 1800 in no way resembled the early society of the seventeenth century, whose early adherents had seen institutionalism as detrimental to receiving the Inner Light. The Society had turned inwards and become more of an exclusive sect, functioning with the least influence from the outside world. The eighteenth-century Quaker society oversaw the development of codified tasks for Ministers, Elders and Overseers, each with responsibilities to ensure the smooth organisation of the society, membership, and control of the conduct of its own members. While all members, theoretically, controlled the Quaker society, it had become necessary to nominate individual Quakers to ensure unity within the group, rather than the ad-hoc method that had applied in the past. General Advices and Queries were issued by the Yearly Meeting, and still are today, to provide guidance for members. The Advices and Queries have evolved over time and contain rules and extracts from minutes intended as strict guidelines of conduct. In 1800, the Advices and Queries contained information concerning such topics as furniture, servants, books, wills and gambling, and issues such as these were overseen by selected members to ensure discipline within the society.

The introduction of Birthright membership in 1737 was another fundamental change from early Quaker society, and which deemed that everyone born into a Quaker family

43 Loukes, *The Quaker Contribution*, p.64
44 Loukes, *The Quaker Contribution*, pp.64-65
was automatically considered a member of the society. This was a radical change from the early years of true religion being a lived experience and becoming a Quaker by convincement, which meant that a person had become convinced of the Quaker ways and joined the Society. Birthright membership did not exclude other people from becoming Quakers by convincement, but according to some Friends, this rule did result in a decline in Quaker membership over time. This was because Birthright members did not experience a personal religious experience and therefore did not bring to Quakerism an enthusiasm and vitality usually evident in convinced members.45

Birthright membership may have contributed to yet another far-reaching change from the seventeenth century, which was in the number of members belonging to the society. While it is impossible to quantify the number of Quaker members, estimates indicate that by 1800 Quaker numbers in Britain could have almost halved from the figures of 60,000 generally cited for 1680.46 One major reason for this drop in membership, and perhaps of most detriment to the survival of the Quakers, was the policy of disownment for ‘marring out’.47 Quakers were disowned if they married outside the Quaker society, thus ensuring a steady decline of membership throughout the eighteenth century. Given the Quakers’ predisposition to isolation, and their disownment policy, it is likely that Quakers numbers did steadily decline throughout the course of the eighteenth century. The Quaker society had become institutionalised during this time, ensuring a radically different group to that set up by its early charismatic leaders. Strictly controlled policies, a retreat from the world, and declining membership was seriously threatening the viability of the Quakers at the end of the eighteenth century and action needed to be taken to address the issues contributing to the decline.

46 Cited in Vann, The Social Development of English Quakerism, p.159
This decline in membership was one reason that some Quakers began to question their traditions and belief system. Eighteenth-century Quietism had seen the Quakers become inward looking and sectarian and silent worship had become the mainstay of their society. Quaker marriage rules had resulted in three disownments for every two new members, resulting in a steady decline of membership, and rather than embrace the evangelical zeal of the Methodist revival the Quakers had closed ranks and chosen to remain apart from the rest of the world. Quakers were becoming more at odds with a changing world and facing a crisis of survival. Various influences, however, ensured that the Quaker society did not fade into oblivion at this time, with many Quakers re-emerging into the outside world towards the end of the eighteenth century.

One factor in this re-emergence was that some Quakers saw the need to educate Quaker children more broadly, which is discussed further in Chapter Four. Another factor was that contact with members from other religious groups undertaking philanthropic activities began to encourage some Quakers to look outside the strict confines of Quaker society. Also new converts to Quakerism, who had been influenced by the evangelical revival, brought with them their Christ-centred faith which began to impact on many Quakers. A good example of this influence was Mary Dudley, a Quaker by convincement and a close friend of the Methodist John Wesley prior to her joining the Quakers in 1773. In a biography collated by her daughter, Mary Dudley writes that ‘She was much esteemed by John Wesley’ but that she ‘freely confessed to him, and other members of the Society of Friends, that her views were not perfectly accordant with their tenets.’ Other influential Quakers in the Quaker revival, and who

48 Punshon, Portrait in Grey, p.135
49 Punshon, Portrait in Grey, p.159
50 This is discussed more fully in Chapter Four.
51 Vipont, The Story of Quakerism, pp.178-179
52 Mary Dudley, The Life of Mary Dudley, including an account of her religious engagements and extracts from her letters, London, (1825), p.9
ministered throughout Britain with evangelical fervour, were Thomas Shillitoe and the visiting American Quakers Rebecca Jones and Stephen Grellet. What they had brought to the Quakers by the end of the eighteenth century was ‘missionary zeal for the salvation of lost souls’ which had a major impact on Quakers who harboured evangelical sympathies.

It was not only ‘convinced’ Quakers, however, who began to imbue their Quaker faith with an evangelical passion. Other Quakers who had birthright membership also began to imbue their Quaker faith with evangelical principles. The well known Gurney family is a case in point, with the young Quaker preacher Joseph John Gurney being one example of a young member of the Quaker society influenced by evangelical members of other denominations. According to Quaker historian Elfrida Vipont, it was Joseph, more than any other Quaker, who was responsible for bringing an evangelical fervour into Quaker circles and helping them to break out of their Quietism period. Quaker historian Edward Grubb, in 1914, wrote that Gurney:

Aroused new spiritual life and a richer evangelical experience in many Friends, [and] stirred them to a far deeper sense of the value of the Bible and the importance of Biblical instruction, and helped to free the Society from the stiffness and traditionalism which was keeping it in bondage.

Gurney was not intolerant of other Christian practices and beliefs and he was successful in bringing the evangelical theology into Quaker society. Joseph John Gurney is considered a ‘major force’ in encouraging Quakers once again to engage with members of all Christian churches, and to place the Bible at the centre of worship, a Biblicism

54 Jones, The Later Periods of Quakerism, p.281
55 Vipont, The Story of Quakerism, p.179
57 Swift, Joseph John Gurney, p.163
58 Swift, Joseph John Gurney, p.xv
integral to evangelicalism. For many Quakers, this represented a changing view of the Bible from being considered a secondary authority to that of being the ultimate religious authority. It also signifies the period when many Quakers began to join with evangelicals and push for the reform of society.

It also signified, however, a time when a fear of rationalism and Biblicism created a schism in British Quakers between what could be called traditional Quakers and those who followed a more evangelical theology. Isaac Crewdson, a Manchester Quaker, had written a book in 1835 titled *A Beacon to the Society of Friends* in which he warned British Quakers against the impact of liberal thought, such as that which had occurred in America.  

American Quakerism had already suffered separations, the major schism in the 1820s resulting in two groups who came to be known as Hicksites and Orthodox. Today, American Quakers hold many different Yearly Meetings, and according to Quaker historian Pink Dandelion, there can be considered six different groupings of Quakers in the United States of America. Isaac Crewdson had taken an extreme evangelical Quaker position in which the Bible was given the highest authority, and the concept of the Inner Light was considered unscriptural and therefore needed to be supplanted. Understandably, traditional Quakers did not agree with this position and it created conflict, ultimately resulting in the resignation of Crewdson and many of his followers. Crewdson’s position indicates the varying strands in Quakerism that were present in the nineteenth century and provides evidence of one of the separations that involved Quakers who held differing theological beliefs. Quakers such as Joseph John Gurney, Isaac Crewdson and Sarah Grubb, a Quietist who opposed Gurney’s

---

60 Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism*, p.175
62 Mingins, *The Beacon Controversy*, p.34
evangelical leanings, are examples of Quakers who all held diverse beliefs from each other, and who validate the position that grouping Quakers together as a homogenous entity is not possible.

Different theological understandings ensured that Quakers were a diverse group with diverging beliefs. Quaker historian Mollie Grubb argues that British Quakerism had three distinct strands during the nineteenth century, which can be considered a reasonably accurate appraisal. These three strands were Quietists, evangelical Quakers, and a group who followed the middle ground and did not take up extreme positions.63 While there were differences within the Quakers on issues such as the primacy of the Inner Light versus the authority of the Bible, there was not a serious separation. British Quakers certainly developed differing beliefs but none that caused a schism, thereby avoiding the Great Separation that occurred in America.

Evangelicalism played a key role in Quaker involvement in social reform movements in the early nineteenth century. Quakers, especially those with evangelical leanings, began to spend their days in what were considered serious and useful activities so that when their day of judgement came they could give a good account of their lives. According to theologian Ian Bradley, writing in 1976, conversion was central to evangelical theology and while good works were not a necessary condition of salvation, they were considered as the only real evidence of a true conversion.64 Good works therefore became one of the foundations of evangelical religious belief, a requirement of salvation. In order to understand the impact evangelicalism had on nineteenth-century British society, and ultimately the influence it had on the Quakers, a brief look at how and why the rise of evangelicalism occurred would be useful.

64 Bradley, *A Call to Seriousness*, p.21
The Evangelical Revival in Britain began in the 1730s and 1740s and was inspired by growing evangelical beliefs within the Anglican Church. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, is one of the more famous evangelicals of this period. Wesley had been influenced by a variety of intellectual movements such as Pietism and Arminianism, movements that did not follow the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Mark A. Noll, in his 2003 study *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, argues that the German pietist movement, which emerged in the seventeenth century, was a vital influence for evangelical awakenings in the eighteenth century. Pietism lauded a return to the Scriptures; to lay people actively involved in religious life and godliness; to preaching ‘heart-felt love’ to non-believers; and to a true Christian ministry which understood and practised genuine godliness. Methodists continued pietist principles that included the doing of good, a practice which provided inspiration to British and American evangelicals in their undertaking of ‘good works’. Evangelical preaching was ‘aimed directly at popular affections, expecting life-changing results’ and which emphasised ‘the message of divine grace as the God-given remedy for sin’.

Historian David Bebbington’s 1989 study *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* provides a useful analysis of evangelicalism in which he argues that there were four defining attributes of Evangelicalism: Biblicism, where the Bible is central and is a direct result of divine inspiration; Conversionism, in which evangelicals became transformed because of an event or a general awakening; Crucicentrism, in which the doctrine of the atonement is central; and Activism, in which evangelicals had a duty to convert others. These are the basic tenets of evangelicalism which were not necessarily static but subject to regional interpretations. The evangelical movement also cannot be

---

65 Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, p.60  
67 Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, p.64  
69 Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp.2-19
approached from a denominational framework as it was a history of ideas which impacted on most Protestant denominations.\textsuperscript{70} There were evangelical elements within the Church of England, but the movement also re-invigorated many of the older Protestant dissenters in Britain,\textsuperscript{71} including the Quakers.

Reasons for how and why evangelicalism developed are the subject of historical debate. According to historian Doreen M. Rosman, there are at least two distinct strands to studies of nineteenth-century evangelicalism.\textsuperscript{72} The first approach is that the rise of evangelicalism forced social change and is responsible for the Victorian mindset.\textsuperscript{73} Historian Ford K. Brown, in \textit{Fathers of the Victorians: The Age of Wilberforce}\textsuperscript{74} (1961), follows this approach, arguing that a small band of evangelical reformers initiated a moral revolution that was responsible for Victorian values. Beginning in 1787, thirty years later ‘it had covered England with reforming institutions and made its leader one of the foremost moral figures of the world.’\textsuperscript{75} Ian Bradley also considers evangelicalism to be largely responsible for Victorian customs and played an enormous part in shaping the character of the Victorians.\textsuperscript{76} Bradley acknowledges that evangelicalism was not the only force at play in shaping Victorian ideals but that it was the most important.\textsuperscript{77} Richard Altick, a scholar of Victorian Britain, considers that the forces at work were utilitarianism and evangelicalism which merged to create middle-class values.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{71} Ditchfield, \textit{The Evangelical Revival}, p.7
\textsuperscript{72} Rosman, \textit{Evangelicals}, p.7
\textsuperscript{73} Rosman, \textit{Evangelicals}, p.7
\textsuperscript{75} Brown, \textit{Fathers of the Victorians}, p.1
\textsuperscript{76} Bradley, \textit{The Call to Seriousness}, p.14
\textsuperscript{77} Bradley, \textit{The Call to Seriousness}, p.18
The second approach deals with the environment and sees the rise of evangelicalism as a product of a particular time and place. Scholars who adopt this approach see similarities between early evangelicals and their contemporaries and do not consider evangelicals as distinct from the remainder of society.\textsuperscript{79} External factors such as the effect on society from the French Revolution, and the growth of deism, are seen as helping to give rise to evangelicalism. This second approach investigating the rise of evangelicalism is taken by historian W.R. Ward in his 1972 study \textit{Religion and Society in England 1790-1850}. Ward argues that the generation following the French Revolution was the most important in English religion because this generation needed radically to adjust its methods in Christianising the population. A religious revival was needed to reconstitute society which had become undisciplined owing to a weak State and an archaic national Church.\textsuperscript{80} David Bebbington also takes this approach in \textit{Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s}, stating that 'Evangelical religion has been moulded by its environment' and that the Enlightenment influenced the Evangelical revival.\textsuperscript{81} A new cultural mood, influenced greatly by the English philosopher John Locke, resulted in the dual authority of religion and rational thought, which in turn created Evangelicalism.\textsuperscript{82}

Many Quakers were influenced to some degree by evangelicalism and its doctrines and, as this thesis argues, were heavily involved with evangelicals in undertaking 'good works'. While some elements of evangelical beliefs became the mainstay for many Quakers, there were still differences in their theological viewpoints. Quakers did not put dogma before a lived experience, especially evangelical doctrines they considered had no currency. For Quakers, their religion was individual and not based on creeds.

\textsuperscript{79} Rosman, \textit{Evangelicals}, p.8
\textsuperscript{81} Bebbington, \textit{Evangelicalism in Modern Britain}, p.ix
\textsuperscript{82} Bebbington, \textit{Evangelicalism in Modern Britain}, p.57
and sacraments. They followed their own light, their own faith, and their own truth.\textsuperscript{83} Like any Christian, Quakers still exalted Christ, but they eschewed any ancient formulated belief systems as they considered ‘Religious truth must grow like all truth. It must spring out of living experience. It must fit the convictions and aspirations of the time.’\textsuperscript{84} Quaker social activism was not therefore based on it being a requirement of salvation, but undertaken as a form of human service. Quaker faith was based ‘upon a spirit of love and service rather than upon a rite.’\textsuperscript{85} While evangelicalism influenced many Quakers, and provided an impetus for their humanitarianism in the wider world, most Quakers retained their belief in social activism being a way of life, and not a requirement to be fulfilled for salvation.

By the early nineteenth century Quakers, who as a consequence of their non-conformist beliefs had been denied access to universities and politics, were key players in areas such as commerce, business, and science. They were members of a group traditional historians have categorised as ‘middle class’, a concept which has been the subject of historical debate. Cultural historian Dror Wahrman, for example, argues that the predominant narrative until recent times has been that industrialisation caused changes in the social structure, thereby resulting in a new middle class.\textsuperscript{86} Wahrman challenges this narrative, arguing that changing political circumstances ensured that the ‘middle class’ was never a clearly defined social group; changing political discourses continually altered people’s perceptions of their society, and thereby social groupings were fluid.\textsuperscript{87} Wahrman raises some key issues concerning self-identity and the language of class, but does not dispute that people in British society considered they had

\textsuperscript{83} Jones, \textit{The Faith & Practice of the Quakers}, p.47
\textsuperscript{84} Jones, \textit{The Faith & Practice of the Quakers}, p.46
\textsuperscript{85} Jones, \textit{The Faith & Practice of the Quakers}, p.74
\textsuperscript{87} Wahrman, \textit{Imagining the Middle Class}, pp.17-18
a middle class, or a social middle. By the 1820s, the middle-classes were often identified by occupation, generally in the commercial or professional field. Quakers were usually members of this rapidly growing, and increasingly influential, social grouping by the early decades of the nineteenth century, and were taking part in the development of new ideas regarding existing society. Many Quaker families were synonymous with industry, from Lloyds and Barclays in banking and Cadbury, Fry and Rowntree in confectionery. This growing involvement in business resulted in Quakers interacting with many non-Quaker individuals, thereby providing opportunities for discussion and sharing thoughts. Middle-class ideals such as justice, liberty and freedom had been, in some form, part of Quaker theology since its inception, and it was not difficult for Quakers to take up these ideals in the broader community once again.

The move into the wider community was a relatively easy move for Quakers to make because, although the Quietist period had seen Quakers withdraw into themselves and not interact with the outside world, they had still practised ideals of justice and humanitarianism within their own society. As we have seen some Quakers, such as William Allen and Joseph John Gurney, began to mix with evangelicals, sharing common interests and sitting on interdenominational philanthropic committees with them, and were thereby influenced by this new middle-class ideology of the reformation of manners and a new morality. While this influence could be considered a result of class position, this thesis will show that as a consequence of their faith, Quakers were always interested in moral and social reform, albeit often within their own society, prior to their emergence once again into public life in the late eighteenth century. For instance, as early as 1656, The Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656 requested ‘That collections be timely made for the poor’, and ‘for relief of prisoners, and other

---

88 Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, pp.17-18
90 This is discussed more fully in Chapter Six.
necessary uses, as need shall require'. 91 A 1686 Epistle noted the need to give money ‘for the further relief of our poor Friends, that are or may hereafter be in sufferings for their faithful testimony.’ 92 Becoming involved with evangelicals and other Non-conformists in reform and philanthropic movements, however, did bring many Quakers well within their circle of influence, and the impact was significant. This did not mean, however, that changes to how Quakers interacted with the outside world were only as a result of religious influences from other denominations. It was influences such as the Enlightenment, and growing democratic ideals, that also impacted heavily on Quakers, and encouraged their re-entry into the outside world again. 93

Quakers were involved in the set-up of a number of inter-denominational organisations, testimony to a growing affiliation of many Quakers with evangelicalism. An outcome of this type of interdenominational participation was a slow merging of many evangelical beliefs into Quakerism. 94 Evangelical beliefs were making an impact on society in general and the Quakers in particular. While Quakers had always been interested in issues such as equality and justice, and had practised these tenets both within and outside the Quaker movement prior to the eighteenth century, Quietism had resulted in Quakers generally only utilising these beliefs within the Quaker movement. What we start to see now is that many Quakers began to again apply these principles outside their own membership. Quakers became involved with evangelical reformers and began to direct their humanitarian principles towards non-Quakers, once again taking up notions of equality for everyone, not just for those within their own Society.

92 A Collection of the Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends in London to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings in Great-Britain, Ireland, and Elsewhere, from 1675 to 1805; being from the first establishment of that meeting to the present time, Baltimore, Cole and Hewes (1806), p.27
94 Mingins, The Beacon Controversy, p.27
Evangelicalism was not the only reason Quakers took up humanitarian principles again outside their own group, but it did provide the impetus for Quakers to return to their older principles from the pre-Quietist period. Matters such as penal reform, the abolition of capital punishment and slavery were taken up by Quakers within the broader community as these were issues Quakers considered impacted on the rights of individuals. The next chapter begins the exploration of Quaker contribution to reform movements, and will consider Quaker motivations in the provision of popular education.
4. Education

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Quakers were at the forefront of the provision of popular education. They were involved in setting up schools providing an education for children of the poor, as well as classes for illiterate adults. Education had come to be seen by many members of society including Quakers, as an instrument of change. It was considered a tool to combat crime and poverty, and to promote social cohesion.¹ English radicals such as the utilitarians James Mill and William Godwin, and political propagandist Thomas Paine, positioned education as central to social reform.² William Godwin wrote in 1783 that ‘our moral dispositions and character depend very much, perhaps entirely, upon education’,³ while James Mill stated that education ‘is the key-stone of the arch; the strength of the whole depends upon it’.⁴

Prior to the late eighteenth century education for the masses had been provided on an ad-hoc basis, and was dependent upon teachers and funds being available. Education was mostly provided through charity schools that offered a very basic level of learning to poor children, or through industrial schools providing vocational instruction.⁵ By the later decades of the eighteenth century education had come to be seen by many groups, at different levels of society, as the best means of transforming a society that was beset by moral, social, religious and economic problems.⁶ This chapter investigates Quaker involvement in the provision of popular education and explores whether Quakers

² Lawson and Silver, A Social History, pp.228-229
³ William Godwin, An Account of a Seminary that will be opened on Monday the fourth day of August, at Epsom in Surrey, for the instruction of twelve pupils in the Greek, Latin, French, and English languages, (1783) cited in William Godwin, Four Early Pamphlets (1783-1784), facsimile reproductions with an introduction by Burton R. Pollin, New York, Scholars Facsimiles & Reprints (1977), p.43
⁵ Lawson and Silver, A Social History, pp.170-171
⁶ Lawson and Silver, A Social History, p.229
considered education a right, or whether reforming the morals of society was the basis of their educational endeavours. What is meant by the term ‘education’ will also be considered, and whether the emphasis on what constituted education changed from the seventeenth century through to the nineteenth century. Quakers had placed a value on education from the seventeenth century within their own society, and by the early nineteenth century this interest had expanded to include all members of society.

Before the late eighteenth century the provision of education had remained reasonably static in England, with no significant changes occurring to the education curriculum. This was in contrast to changes to education provision that occurred after the arrival of the industrial age, as will become evident throughout this chapter. Before the onset of industrialisation, communities were mainly rural and agricultural, and charity schools provided education for the poor at a level considered suitable by the providers of endowments. Schools in parish workhouses also provided a similar education for the poor. Schooling was ‘primarily a means of inculcating moral and social discipline,’

Education historians John Lawson and Harold Silver, in their 1973 study *A Social History of Education in England*, state that by around 1640 only small social groups such as the nobility and gentry, professionals, merchants and master tradesmen would have been fully literate, meaning they would be able to both read and write. Conversely, the lower classes would have been mostly illiterate, with the majority of the population being rural and impoverished. Education, at least relating to literacy levels, was considered irrelevant to those surviving on or near the subsistence level. The ‘middling sort’, described by Keith Wrightson as including social groups such as

---

7 Lawson and Silver, *A Social History*, p.188  
8 Lawson and Silver, *A Social History*, p.143  
9 Lawson and Silver, *A Social History*, p.111
yeomen, husbandmen, merchants and small tradesmen, would have had varying degrees of literacy.

The level of literacy at this time amongst the ‘middling sort’ was in part due to the growth in Protestantism which required an ability to read the Scriptures, thereby encouraging the spread of education to more social groupings. It was also around this time that educational reform was advocated, along with other social reforms, by not only prominent and well-established men, but also by radical groups such as the Diggers and the Levellers. Educational relevance and social usefulness were some of the aims of the mid-seventeenth century reformers, who saw the need for a more relevant and practical form of education available to all, not just the privileged. Many of these reformers were utilitarians and influenced by intellectuals such as the English philosopher Francis Bacon, and John Amos Comenius, an acclaimed educational thinker throughout Europe. While there were some educational reforms during the period of the English Interregnum, by the time King Charles II returned to the throne in 1660, very little had changed. Education was still mostly for the privileged minority, followed a classical curriculum, and most of the proposed reforms from the period of the Commonwealth of England soon fell by the wayside. An increasing number of people were able to read, but these were generally from the middling orders of society.

After 1660 the number of nonconformist schools and academies began to grow, along with charity schools run by various religious denominations. A study of bishops’ subscription books kept after 1662 indicates the wide range of schooling being provided, including endowed parish schools teaching a basic level of literacy to poor

---

11 Wrightson, *English Society*, pp.198-199
12 Lawson and Silver, *A Social History*, p.154
13 Lawson and Silver, *A Social History*, p.156
Quakers were also involved in the provision of education during this period, with George Fox believing that Quaker children should be educated in ‘whatever things are civil and useful in the creation’ and not only in religious education. In his journal in 1667, George Fox wrote that ‘returning towards London by Waltham, I advised the setting up of a school there for teaching children; and also a women’s school at Shacklewell.’ From this point onwards education of Quaker, and to a much lesser extent, non-Quaker children, was of paramount importance to Friends.

This concern with educating Quaker children can be seen in epistles issued from Yearly Meetings, with an epistle in 1688 entreatng all Quakers to lead by example, and to educate their children ‘in modesty, sobriety, and in the fear of God’. In 1690, an epistle was issued that stated in relation to children:

Not to send them to such schools where they are taught the corrupt ways, manners, fashions, and language of the world, and of the heathen in their authors, and names of the heathenish gods and goddesses; tending greatly to corrupt and alienate the minds of children into an averseness or opposition against the truth, and the simplicity of it: but to take care that you train up your children in the good nurture, admonition, and fear of the Lord, in that plainness and language which become truth.

Another epistle from the Yearly Meeting in 1691 stated that ‘we desire that Friends go on in that care to promote such education and schools, for the advantage of their children and posterity.’ In 1700 the Yearly Meeting issued an epistle that continued in the same vein as the previous, stating ‘that a godly care be taken by you for the due

---

14 Lawson and Silver, *A Social History*, p.170
16 Penney, *The Journal of George Fox*, p.252
18 LYM, *Epistles*, p.48
19 LYM, *Epistles*, p.56
education of Friends’ children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.’

These epistles indicate the belief the early Quakers had in education, although this concern was mainly to ensure that Quaker children were taught Quaker principles, within the confines of the Quaker church, and were untainted by the outside world. This position, however, was similar to other denominations that were also providing an education based on their own religious principles. Anglican schools at this time were focused on religion as the main subject and schools were to be, according to Bishop White Kennett in 1706, ‘little garrisons against Popery.’ Teachers were to be ‘a Member of the Church of England’ and were required to ‘instruct the children in the Church Catechism’. Education in this period was not non-denominational, as we shall see Quakers encouraging in the nineteenth century, but insular to religious groups who aimed to keep their members away from the influence of other religious ideologies. Teaching literacy was not the focus of education at this time; the major purpose was the teaching of religious doctrine.

An interesting departure from the Quaker position on education occurred in 1695 with a plan offered by a Quaker John Bellers titled Proposals for Raising a Colledge of Industry of All Useful Trades and Husbandry. In this plan Bellers advocated an establishment whereby the rich would profit, the poor would be provided with an ample living, and young people would receive an education that would give them a basic level of literacy, along with a sound training in industry. Bellers envisaged an

---

20 LYM, Epistles, p.97
22 W.O.B. Allen and Edmund McClure, Two Hundred Years: The History of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1698-1898, New York, Burt Franklin (1898), p.138
23 John Bellers, Proposals for raising a Colledge of Industry of all useful Trades and Husbandry, with Profit for the Rich, - a plentiful Living for the Poor, - and a good Education for Youth - which will be advantage to the Government, by the Increase of the People, and their Riches, London, T. Sowle (1696), p.20
establishment of free-standing, co-operative communities in which no money would be needed, it would be non-denominational, and all middlemen eliminated:

It would be a work of great Humanity, we owe to those of our own Nature as we are Men, and that as well becomes a Christian as any, and the ill Provision for the Poor in England one of the greatest Reproaches to our Christian Profession. The want of a due Provision for Education and Relief of the Poor in a way of Industry, is that which fills the Gaols with Malefactors, and the Kingdom with idle Persons...but a Sound, Prudent Method for an Industrious Education of the Poor, will give a better Remedy against these Corruptions, than all the Gibbets and Whipping-posts in this Kingdom.²⁴

Bellers encouraged education of the poor, but only to a basic level of reading and writing, as he stated that ‘beyond reading and writing, a multitude of scholars is not so useful...labour sustains, maintains, and upholds, tho’ learning gives a useful varnish.’²⁵ Bellers saw basic literacy as a helpful tool to the poor, but he considered that ‘a virtuous industrious education tends more to happiness here and hereafter.’²⁶ He considered that industrial training was of more benefit to the poor, and would provide them with a decent living, while at the same time also fulfilling the needs of the rich for labour. Issues of virtue and morality also featured throughout his writing, with Bellers considering that by educating children early, they could be taught how to live moral and useful lives. Bellers argued that:

...as debauchery is the ruin of the best estates, so is it of the best trades; and therefore it’s as absolutely needful to breed the youth up in temperance, as to learn them trades, it will make their trades profitable, and them useful to the commonwealth.²⁷

Moral reform of the poor was a major focus of Bellers’ plan and he wrote that he believed ‘there is many who would be glad to see the Poor reformed in Manners.’²⁸

---

²⁴ Bellers, Proposals, p.5
²⁵ Bellers, Proposals, p.28
²⁶ Bellers, Proposals, p.28
²⁷ Bellers, Proposals, p.30
²⁸ Bellers, Proposals, p.4
indicating early Quaker concern with the moral reformation of the poor. Surprisingly, Bellers’ plan did not focus on the teaching of religious beliefs and stated that he saw the College as being ‘a civil fellowship, more than a religious one.’ This was a deviation from the general Quaker educational focus on religious doctrine first and foremost. Bellers did note that he was speaking from a Christian position of love and following the religious adage of caring for one’s neighbour, but his proposal was more concerned with his view of the public good than indoctrinating religious belief through education.

Bellers’ proposal was never implemented owing to a lack of funds. In 1698, however, the Six Weeks Meeting in London, in response to a report it had commissioned on poverty among London Quakers, did agree to establish a workhouse that would provide housing and employment for poor Quaker children and adults. This suggests that Bellers’ views were supported in part by other Quakers, but only for Quaker members. In 1701 the London Quarterly Meeting asked for a subscription to lease an available building for this purpose and £1,888 was raised to open a Quaker workhouse at Clerkenwell. ‘The ancient friends were at first numerous, and but a short time elapsed before boys, and, subsequently, girls were admitted into the house to be employed at work, and for education.’ From its original proposal to provide a workhouse for poor Quakers living in London, its focus soon changed to more of an educational facility for Quaker children.

---

29 Bellers, Proposals, p.39
30 Bellers, Proposals, p.7
32 Hitchcock, Richard Hutton’s Complaints Book, p.xv
33 Unpublished manuscript, ‘Signed on behalf of the Committee of Friends’ School and Workhouse, Clerkenwell, the 26th of the second month, 1808. John Corbyn, Clerk. Printed by W. Phillips, George Yard, Lombard Street
34 Hitchcock, Richard Hutton’s Complaints Book, p.xvi
The education provided at Clerkenwell, in the early decades of the eighteenth century, was provided by Richard Hutton, who was employed as a steward from 1711 to 1737. Hutton taught reading and writing but lamented the lack of ability, especially in relation to writing, that many of the students came to the school with. Hutton considered that rather than being taught Latin, students should have been first taught to write and spell English at a basic level. The curriculum taught by Hutton focused mainly on literacy skills required for employment and business skills that apprentices would require, including writing invoices and sales receipts, bills of debts, and writing up cash books. Like Bellers’ proposal previously, the education provided at Clerkenwell consisted of literacy tuition that was focused towards industry and directed towards students obtaining employment in the business world. For girls attending Clerkenwell, their education consisted less of reading and writing, and more of domestic skills, also setting them up for employment. The learning of sewing skills occupied most of their time, along with laundry and kitchen tasks. Reading classes were only held before breakfast in the summer, and every second morning in the winter. In 1786 the institution relocated to Croydon in Surrey, and at the end of the nineteenth century again relocated and became the Friends’ School at Saffron Walden in Essex, where it is still operational.

What is evident about Bellers’ proposal concerning education of the poor and training for industry is that it was ahead of its time, with both Robert Owen and Karl Marx acknowledging the influence Bellers’ proposals had upon them in the nineteenth century. Bellers’ plan aimed to cater for all the poor in society, not just Quakers, and

35 Hitchcock, Richard Hutton’s Complaints Book, p.10
36 Hitchcock, Richard Hutton’s Complaints Book, p.10
37 Hitchcock, Richard Hutton’s Complaints Book, p.14
38 Hitchcock, Richard Hutton’s Complaints Book, p.28
39 Hitchcock, Richard Hutton’s Complaints Book, p.28
was more utilitarian than religious. Clerkenwell School also provides evidence of a
Quaker focus on industrial training for the poorer classes, but as we have already noted,
this was not really indicative of the thinking concerning education at this time.
Education generally had much more of a religious focus, and unlike Bellers’ proposal,
was usually denominational.

There was also a growing concern in the broader community regarding the moral and
religious education of the poor during this period. An example of this can be seen with
the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), which was formed in 1698 in
reaction to challenges faced by the Church in the post Revolutionary period. The
SPCK’s aims included promoting the spread of Christian knowledge, both at home and
overseas, and in particular, the Christian education of poor children.\(^{41}\) To this end, the
SPCK proposed establishing catechetical charity schools ‘for the Benefit of such Poor
Children…whose Parents or Friends are not able to give them Learning’.\(^{42}\) Dr Thomas
Bray, one of the founding members of the society, wrote that ‘a constant Course of
Catechising our Youth in the Fundamental Principles of Christianity, is the only means
that can effectually obviate and Cure those Great and prevailing Evils’ facing the
Church.\(^{43}\) Members of the SPCK set up charity schools for the poor, with a Welshman,
Sir John Phillips, founding 22 charity schools in Pembrokeshire.\(^{44}\) By 1704 there were
54 charity schools in London and Westminster alone, containing over 2,000 children.\(^{45}\)

---

\(^{41}\) Craig Rose, ‘The origins and ideals of the SPCK 1699-1716’, cited in John Walsh, Colin Haydon,
Stephen Taylor, (eds.), *The Church of England c.1689 – c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*,

\(^{42}\) Thomas Bray, *An Account of the Methods whereby the Charity-Schools have been Erected and
Managed [electronic resource]: and of the encouragement given to them; together with a proposal for
enlarging their number, and adding some work to the childrens learning*, London, Joseph Downing
[electronic resource], 04235.01, Farmington Hills, Michigan, Thomson Gale, University of Western
Australia

\(^{43}\) Dr Thomas Bray, *Lectures*, epistle dedicatory (unpaginated), cited in John Walsh, et al, *The Church of
England*, p.181

\(^{44}\) Rose, ‘The origins and ideals’, p.185

\(^{45}\) A.S. Turberville, (ed.), *Johnson’s England: An Account of the Life & Manners of his Age*, Vol. 11,
A driving force behind societies such as the SPCK was the need to suppress the threat posed to the established Church by Dissenters whom it was considered challenged the fundamentals of Christian belief. The SPCK especially saw Quakers as a danger to society, with their minutes of 8 March 1699 recording the steps seen as necessary ‘to redeem that misguided people to the knowledge and belief of Christ’. Books were sent to SPCK members for use ‘in detecting the vile errors of the Quakers’ and they also took a keen interest in the Quaker schools at Wandsworth and Clerkenwell. The SPCK considered that there was a need for the poorer classes to be inculcated with the beliefs of the established Church, not the beliefs of Dissenters. Schools set up by the SPCK, therefore, did not focus so much on the teaching of reading and writing, but more on imposing religious doctrine on pupils.

From the establishment of organisations like the SPCK, and the issuing of epistles concerning Quaker education, we can see that education in the early eighteenth century had a religious focus first and foremost, but did include the rudiments of literacy and numeracy. SPCK schools taught the Catechism as a priority, but also taught a basic level of writing and arithmetic considered necessary to the working classes. Classes were also held for both sexes, on equal terms. For Quakers, schools provided a basic level of education, but also taught practical labour skills as they believed in the value of trades, without any distinction on who took them up. Quakers became prominent in industry as a result of their exclusion from certain employment opportunities, including holding public office and obtaining professional degrees, because of their religious

---

46 Allen and McClure, *Two Hundred Years*, p.25
48 Rose, ‘The origins and ideals’, p.187
51 Stewart, *Quakers and Education*, p.30
beliefs. Quakers and non-Quakers alike wanted to inculcate their own religious belief systems into their students to ensure compliance with the dogma they were teaching, but also to provide the poorer classes with middle-class moral values. The provision of education to the masses, however, was sometimes regarded with suspicion by some members of society. This was because, it was argued, education would raise the aspirations of the poor and encourage them to look beyond the necessary menial labouring jobs required for a stable economy. Education would also give the poor access to radical literature, thereby rendering them susceptible to radical ideas. This position is clearly seen in the writings of Bernard Mandeville, a London doctor and writer, who in 1723 wrote that:

To make the Society happy and People easy under the meanest Circumstances, it is requisite that great Numbers of them should be Ignorant as well as Poor. Knowledge both enlarges and multiplies our Desires, and the fewer things a Man wishes for, the more easily his Necessities may be supply’d. The Welfare and Felicity therefore of every State and Kingdom, require that the Knowledge of the Working Poor should be confin’d within the Verge of their Occupations, and never extended (as to things visible) beyond what relates to their Calling.53

While Mandeville was being, at least in part, satirical, John Lawson and Harold Silver report that this viewpoint was held by the ruling elite until the early nineteenth century.54 They suggest that the elite had come to understand that the turmoil of the mid-seventeenth century was the result of too many educated men with no position in society,55 who then became critics of the established order. Learning to read and write gave people access to knowledge which had previously been available mostly to the ruling elite, which resulted in a growing fear of popular education and its consequences for the prevailing social hierarchy. The Anti-Jacobin, a newspaper which began in

52 Stewart, Quakers and Education, p.30
54 Lawson and Silver, A Social History, p.179
55 Lawson and Silver, A Social History, p.179
1798, gives examples of this fear, publishing articles attacking Sunday Schools. Its editor William Gifford wrote in 1799 that ‘We are no friends to Sunday-schools which we are convinced, have been the nurseries of fanaticism.’ Gifford also wrote that Sunday Schools had been ‘rendered channels for the diffusion of bad principles, religious and political.’ What is evident is that there were two schools of thought regarding education of the poor. One view was that education of the poor would possibly harm society, the other decreed that education was essential to the moral reformation of society. Quakers obviously belonged to the latter school of thought and saw education as important in order to inculcate the poorer classes with the values Quakers considered necessary to ensure a civil and moral society. It was not until the later decades of the eighteenth century, however, that Quakers really began to focus on the provision of education outside the Quaker society, an involvement that will be discussed shortly.

The eighteenth century, routinely referred to now as the Quietist Period in Quaker theology, had resulted in Quakers retreating from the world in order to guard against outside influences that might hinder them in finding the path to God. This affected their interactions with the outside world, including an involvement in non-Quaker education. The Yearly Meeting in 1760 declared that ‘it is desired that the schools under the care of Friends should be preserved as much unmixed as may be with others.’ Again in 1762, an epistle was issued which stated that:

> In order that the Mind may be more effectually guarded and preserved pure, it is earnestly recommended to Parents and others, to consider the Disadvantage of placing them out for Education or Business, where they must unavoidably be subject to the Dangers of mixt Company and Conversation, by which the good and salutary Impressions, heretofore

---

56 William Gifford (1799), cited in Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, pp.168-169
57 William Gifford (1799), cited in Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, p.169
58 LYM, *At the Yearly Meeting held in London, the Fifth Month, 1760*, London, s.n., (1760). LSF, Vol. F/ 6
made on their Minds, may be effaced, the Effect of present Visitations prevented, to their great if not irretrievable Loss.\textsuperscript{59}

W.A. Campbell Stewart, in \textit{Quakers and Education}, described the two middle quarters of the eighteenth century for Quakers as ‘the worst years in the Society’s educational history, when there was little general conviction about the necessity of a good schooling, and the Society was able to excuse its shortsightedness and apathy in the negative counsels of Quietism.’\textsuperscript{60} This is perhaps a bit strong because, as evidenced by the Epistles, there was still a concern amongst many Quakers with educating Quaker children. Interaction with the outside world, however, was still mostly discouraged.

Not all Quakers accepted Quietist theology during this period, and again divergent opinions within Quaker society indicate why they cannot be positioned as a single entity with shared beliefs. A special Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings was set up in 1760 amidst a growing concern with the educational standards within Quakerism.\textsuperscript{61} In opposition to Quietist principles, which involved a fear of learning, some Quakers desirous of an education for their children were sending them to non-Quaker schools, which left the students open to temptations, and often resulted in them leaving the sect.\textsuperscript{62} Quaker children were being sent to non-Quaker schools because of a desire for a higher standard of education than that received at Quaker schools at this time. This was possibly owing to a lack of skilled teachers due to their poor pay rates.\textsuperscript{63} In 1760 Dr. John Fothergill, a doctor at the Quaker school in Clerkenwell from 1747 to 1765, presented the report of a Special Committee on Education to the Yearly Meeting. John

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{59} John Fry, \textit{An Alphabetical Extract of all the Annual printed Epistles which have been sent to the several Quarterly-Meetings of the People call’d Quakers, in England and elsewhere, from their Yearly-Meeting held in London, for the Promotion of Peace and Love in the Society, and Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, from the Year 1682 to 1762 inclusive, being eighty-one Years}, Second Edition, London (1766), p.3. LSF, Vol. 142/1
\textsuperscript{60} Stewart, \textit{Quakers and Education}, p.49
\textsuperscript{61} Stewart, \textit{Quakers and Education}, p.47
\textsuperscript{62} Stewart, \textit{Quakers and Education}, p.48
\textsuperscript{63} Stewart, \textit{Quakers and Education}, pp.47-48}
Fothergill was one Quaker who saw ‘the dangers of educational neglect’ and his comment on Clerkenwell was that ‘Too few of the youth educated therein have turned out useful and respectable members of society.’ Obviously the lack of skilled teachers, along with possibly not enough focus on literacy, numeracy, and religion, was impacting on the level of education Quaker children were receiving at Clerkenwell. Fothergill’s comments indicate his early understandings of the benefits of education as an agent of both moral and social reform.

After its initial set-up as a Quaker workhouse, the purpose of Clerkenwell had been to provide an education for poorer Quaker children. In 1778, the Yearly Meeting agreed to set up another school for poor Quaker children and purchased Ackworth School for this purpose. The following minute was adopted: ‘William Tuke, from the Committee appointed to consider the affair of boarding schools, for the education of Friends’ children whose parents are not in affluent circumstances, brought in a report: which being several times read, is agreed to by this meeting.’ The London Yearly Meeting became the governing body of Ackworth School, and still operates as such today. Ackworth School opened in 1779 for 300 children of both sexes. The stated aim of the school was ‘that the principles we profess be diligently inculcated, and due care taken to preserve the children from bad habits and immoral conduct. That the English language, writing, and arithmetic, be carefully taught to both sexes. That the girls also be instructed in housewifery and useful needlework.’ Dr Fothergill, who was one of the founders of Ackworth School, wrote a letter to a Friend containing information about

---

66 Samuel Tuke, Five papers on the past proceedings and experience of the Society of Friends, in connexion with the Education of Youth: read at the meetings of the Friends’ Educational Society, at Ackworth, in the years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, York, John L. Linney (1843), p.60
67 Tuke, Five papers, p.61
the proposed school. This letter indicated the concern he voiced in 1760 regarding the education provided at Clerkenwell, and the need to ensure that Quaker children were schooled in the principles of Quaker doctrine:

Many children amongst us sustain a grievous loss, by not being early and properly made acquainted with the principles we profess. For want of this instruction, they become too easy a prey to the customs of the world; and those habitudes which would be as a kind of hedge about them, and protect them from many temptations, are thrown down, and all the allurements of vice and folly suffered to seduce their affections to their ruin. When they cease to be distinguished from others by their garb and deportment, they too often cease to be distinguished from the world by their morals, and the rectitude of their conduct.68

Quaker Samuel Tuke, a school teacher committed to the provision of education, and also the grandson of William Tuke, one of the people responsible for the opening of Ackworth School, wrote an historical account in 1840 of Quaker involvement in education. Tuke’s account was titled *Five Papers on the Past Proceedings and Experience of the Society of Friends* and covered the middle decades of the eighteenth century, revealing the indifference by a large section of Quakers concerning education during this time. Tuke wrote that when the Yearly Meeting sent proposals to Quarterly Meetings encouraging the raising of subscriptions to fund suitable training establishments for teachers, the call seemed to fall upon deaf ears. He recorded that ‘Such appears to have been the prevailing indifference upon the subject of education at this time’ that donations were very small, and the subject ceased to be a topic at Quarterly Meetings.69 Samuel Tuke notes, however, that for some Friends, the ‘subject continued unabated’70 and eventually the proposal was made to fund a school for the children of poor Quakers, and Ackworth School came into existence. According to Samuel Tuke, this was because the Yearly Meeting had ‘found it necessary to act on

---

68 Tuke, *Five papers*, p.62
69 Tuke, *Five papers*, p.55
70 Tuke, *Five papers*, p.55
behalf of the body, and to institute for its use one large boarding-school establishment71 owing to the indifference of many Friends to education. Quietist principles led the thinking of many Quakers and obviously still dominated the mindset of a large group. These principles tended to leave learning in the hands of God and not educational institutions. There was enough impetus, however, from liberal Quakers to instigate new education policies and not wait quietly for Divine guidance. Samuel Tuke recorded that it seemed that the primary object of Ackworth School ‘appears to have been to train them up in sound Christian habits’72 and Dr Fothergill’s letter confirms this belief. Understanding the word of God was paramount to ensuring that Quaker children followed Quaker beliefs, and were also instilled with the knowledge to enable them to lead moral lives.

In 1785 Esther Tuke, a York Quaker, also opened a school for girls who were unable to attend Ackworth owing to age or pecuniary reasons, despite Ackworth being a school for poorer Quaker children. The aim of Esther Tuke’s school was also first and foremost the ‘religious improvement of the minds of youth, and the training of them in true simplicity of manners,’73 indicative of the general focus of many Quakers concerning schooling at this time. Quakers were still mostly concerned with educating their own members, primarily in Quaker doctrine. They also continued to limit contact with the broader community, ensuring Quaker children did not come under the influence of the outside world and be liable to corruption by external vices.

It was also around this time that Sunday Schools for children began to appear. In 1780 the Sunday School movement was begun by Robert Raikes in Gloucester who set up a school for the children of chimney sweeps, and the movement quickly began to gather

71 Tuke, Five papers, p.69
72 Tuke, Five papers, p.62
73 Tuke, Five papers, p.93
momentum and support. Assurances were given, though, by enthusiasts of Sunday Schools, that the only education to be provided would be limited to reading and moral training in keeping with a general fear of over-educating the poorer classes.\textsuperscript{74} There was still a great deal of hostility amongst the ruling elite to the provision of education to the poor and limiting education to religious instruction eased the fears of the public.\textsuperscript{75} Sunday Schools were also considered more acceptable than normal schooling because they did not stop children from undertaking employment,\textsuperscript{76} often essential to a family’s survival.

What is evident is that prior to the late eighteenth century, the progress of providing education to the poor was reasonably stagnant. Despite the various educational reforms that had been proposed around the middle of the seventeenth century, very few changes had been achieved.\textsuperscript{77} While reading, writing and numeracy were taught, as well as industrial learning, the teaching of religious doctrine was still a major focus of educators. Quakers were still intent on not mixing with the outside world, and charity schools were still very focused on religious piety. Charity schools also suffered from a want of suitable teachers,\textsuperscript{78} which also would have had at least some impact on the curriculum taught. The attitude held by many that education above an elementary level should not be provided to the lower classes ensured that any changes to the provision of education were minimal. A fundamental shift occurred in the provision of popular education towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, when concern with social discipline became the prevailing issue.

\textsuperscript{75} Taylor, \textit{Joseph Lancaster}, p.3
\textsuperscript{76} Taylor, \textit{Joseph Lancaster}, p.3
\textsuperscript{77} Turberville, \textit{Johnson’s England}, Vol. 2, p.209
\textsuperscript{78} Turberville, \textit{Johnson’s England}, Vol. 2, p.211
It was at this time that education came to be seen as an instrument of change and new ideas on education began to emerge in an attempt to deal with the growing problems afflicting society. Schooling for the poor had not been seen by the elite as particularly relevant, and was feared by some, but in a rapidly changing society this position began to alter. Growing industrialisation had resulted in large population shifts to towns and cities, and in many areas there was unemployment and economic distress. This created an enormous strain on existing social structures, and provided conditions in which it was feared a criminal element could proliferate. Also, new social ideals resulting from the political radicalism of the French Revolution, Bentham’s utilitarian philosophies, Rousseau’s radical ideas on education, and evangelicalism, amongst other sources, were important factors in the development of popular education. Concern with the crime rate and the cost of the Poor Law were also factors which resulted in education, especially the teaching of literacy and numeracy, coming to be seen as a social investment.

The ideals espoused by radicals such as Bentham and Rousseau resulted in changes to the provision of education, especially to the poor. Education began to focus more on literacy and numeracy, and was provided to the lower classes in order to inculcate the next generation with respect for the existing political and social order, and to diffuse any threat to the ruling elite. Studies by education historian Philip McCann and Richard Johnson support this position, with Johnson declaring that ‘the early Victorian obsession with the education of the poor is best understood as a concern about authority, about power, about the assertion (or the reassertion) of control.’ One of the main reasons for the provision of education, although not the only purpose according to

79 Lawson and Silver, A Social History, p.228
80 Lawson and Silver, A Social History, p.228
82 Johnson, ‘Educational Policy’, p.119
Johnson, was that it was seen as a means of maintaining existing social and political structures.\(^{83}\) Johnson considers that the minds of the working classes were shaped through the provision of education and the aim was to produce people who were compliant, loyal, deferential and religious, all qualities considered necessary for a civil society.\(^{84}\) McCann, in an examination of education in the Spitalfields area, ascertained that education had ‘the aim of controlling the populace in the interests of social and economic stability.’\(^{85}\) To McCann, education was seen by many as the method by which social disorder could be counteracted whilst preparing poor children for life ‘in a stratified, exploitative industrial society.’\(^{86}\) James Mill, a Scottish historian and philosopher, considered that a well-ordered society would result if people were educated to ensure they had ‘a knowledge of the order of those events of nature on which our pleasures and pains depend, and the sagacity which discovers the best means for the attaining of ends’.\(^{87}\) The provision of popular education for many people, therefore, came to be seen as a means of ensuring a moral society that would not challenge the status quo. Education was aimed at moulding the minds of the popular classes, with values considered by the educators as essential to a well-ordered society.

Education also served a purpose in a rapidly industrialising society of educating a new workforce. Skills were required for tasks as simple and as varied as being able to read job opportunities, safety notices in mines and factories, and the drawing up of apprenticeship papers.\(^{88}\) By the beginning of the nineteenth century, various writers/philosophers clearly framed the education of the lower classes as necessary to

---

83 Johnson, ‘Educational Policy’, p.119
84 Johnson, ‘Educational Policy’, p.119
86 McCann, ‘Popular Education’, p.2
87 Ball, *James Mill*, p.184
88 Sanderson, *Education*, p.13
ensure the stability of a new industrialised workforce, and as a cure for social problems. This was a very different position to the provision of education in the late seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries where, for many, educating the poor to read and write was considered harmful to the existing social order, or where only the rudiments of literacy were taught to the masses. The notion of why education needed to be provided to the working classes had changed dramatically with the arrival of industrialisation, when new social policies and structures needed to be put in place to deal with a rapidly changing society.

This overview of the provision of popular education has shown that up until the late eighteenth century the policy of educating the labouring classes did not fundamentally alter. The emphasis was on the imposing of religious doctrine, with basic levels of literacy sometimes being taught. By the late eighteenth century, however, education came to be seen by many as necessary to ensure the social, economic and political order. Quakers also began to take up the rhetoric of the need for education as a tool for reforming society, with many breaking with their Quietist principles which had informed Quaker thinking for a century.

One such Quaker was Joseph Lancaster who had joined the society as a young adult. In 1798 Lancaster became involved with providing universal education to the poor after he had previously been employed as a school assistant and considered teaching methods to be boring and inadequate.\(^8^9\) Lancaster believed, along with many Quakers, that education should be a ‘national concern’ and that without education, the poor became ‘a prey to vice’ that could not be remedied.\(^9^0\) Lancaster set up a school in 1798 which

\(^8^9\) Taylor, Joseph Lancaster, p.3
\(^9^0\) Joseph Lancaster, Improvements in Education as it Respects the Industrious Classes of the Community, containing among other important particulars, and account of the institution for the education of one thousand poor children, Borough Road, Southwark; and of the new system of education on which it is conducted, Sixth Edition, London, Darton and Harvey (1806), pp.xli-xlii
offered free tuition to students, both Quaker and non-Quaker, whose parents could not afford even a small fee. Following Quaker ideology that did not seek to proselytise and gain converts to Quakerism,\textsuperscript{91} Lancaster ensured his school was non-sectarian, stating in 1803:

I long to see men, who profess Christianity, contend not for creeds of faith, words, and names, but in the practice of every heavenly virtue...I consider a sectarian spirit as the source of dissension and persecution. I write thus, not only to expose its evil tendency, and caution others, but as a declaration of my own sentiments...I desire to avoid making the education given to such a large number of children in my institution a means of instilling my own peculiar religious tenets into their minds...I am a member of the society of Friends called Quakers...I am not vain enough to set up as arbiter of the religious opinions of others, but wish all men would agree, as much as it is in their power, to do good; and when doing so, cast all their sectarian opinions out of sight.\textsuperscript{92}

As the remainder of this chapter will indicate, Joseph Lancaster’s philosophy on teaching the poor followed Quaker belief that the provision of education was integral to a moral and well-ordered society, but should be non-sectarian and not benefit one particular religion.

In 1801 Lancaster’s school moved to bigger premises in Borough Road, Southwark owing to the large number of students who began to attend. A lack of funds forced Lancaster to set up a system whereby older boys, known as monitors, taught the younger children, a system which came to be known as the monitorial system. This enabled a large number of children to be taught cheaply and reasonably effectively, as laid out in Lancaster’s 1803 book *Improvements in Education as it Respects the*

\textsuperscript{91} The lack of proselytising in the Society of Friends is discussed more fully in Chapter Six.
\textsuperscript{92} Joseph Lancaster, *Improvements in Education as it Respects the Industrious Classes of the Community*, containing among other important particulars, and account of the institution for the education of one thousand poor children, Borough Road, Southwark; and of the new system of education on which it is conducted, From the Third London Edition, with Additions, to which is prefixed A Sketch of the New York Free School, New York, Collins & Perkins (1807), p.xlv
Industrious Classes of the Community. This book specified class set-ups and the use of monitors in great detail. Lancaster’s system of teaching the poor soon gained popularity and visitors to the school in its early years included the Duke of Bedford and Lord Somerville, and subscriptions were received from donors including Archbishops, Chief Justices, Earls and Ambassadors. This clearly indicates a growing concern in the upper echelons of society with the need to educate the working classes to read. In 1805 George III met Lancaster and donated £100, stating that ‘it is my wish that every poor child in my dominions should be taught to read the Bible.’ Lancaster travelled throughout the country garnering enthusiasm and support for his teaching system, but owing to his extravagance often found himself in serious financial difficulties. Lancaster was always in debt and often monies raised for his school projects could not be accounted for, a position that ultimately resulted in his downfall as an educator.

Lancaster aimed to provide a non-sectarian, non-denominational education to the poorer classes, writing that:

Above all things, education ought not to be subservient to the propagation of the peculiar tenets of any sect. Beyond the number of that sect, it becomes undue influence; like the strong taking advantage of the weak. Yet, a reverence for the sacred name of God and the Scriptures of truth; a detestation of vice; a love of veracity; a due attention to duties to parents, relations, and to society; carefulness to avoid bad company; civility without flattery; and a peaceable demeanor; may be inculcated in every seminary for youth, without violating the sanctuary of private religious opinion in any mind.

Lancaster’s school indicates a shift in Quaker educational philosophy from their position in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when education was provided generally only to Quaker children within the Quaker church. It is evidence of a move

---

93 Lancaster, Improvements in Education
94 Lancaster, Improvements in Education, p.207
96 Taylor, Joseph Lancaster, p.83
97 Lancaster, Improvements in Education, pp.vii-ix
towards providing non-denominational education, a position Quakers believed was the best means of educating all children. In 1808 William Corston and Joseph Fox, both non-Quakers, and Lancaster resolved ‘to constitute themselves a society for the purpose of affording education – to the children of the poorer subjects of King George III,’ and the association was named the ‘Society for Promoting the Lancasterian System for the Education of the Poor’ (Royal Lancasterian Society).’\(^{98}\) In 1814 the Society was renamed the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS)\(^{99}\) and a number of Quakers were involved in both positions of authority, and as general committee members. Quakers involved in the BFSS in its early years included William Allen, Charles Barclay, G.W. Alexander and Joseph Gurney. Interestingly, the BFSS also had women committee members, including the Quaker Mrs Hudson Gurney as a Vice Patroness for many years, and Mrs Joseph Gurney.\(^{100}\)

The aim of the BFSS was to promote the advancement of education, but one still with a heavy religious focus. This is evident in the ‘Rules and Regulations for setting up Auxiliary Societies in Aid of the BFSS.’ This document stated that schools are to be ‘open to the children of persons of every religious denomination;’ that ‘No Catechism peculiar to any religious sect shall be taught in the Schools; and the general Reading Lessons shall consist of extracts from the authorized version of the Holy Scriptures.’\(^{101}\) This was representative of the new general approach taken by Quakers in the provision of education, and opposed to the approach of the established Church, as will be discussed shortly. Quakers became involved in providing a non-denominational education and one in which lessons also consisted of reading, writing and arithmetic for

\(^{98}\) Taylor, Joseph Lancaster, pp.23-24
\(^{99}\) Taylor, Joseph Lancaster, p.24
\(^{100}\) For complete lists of committee members, refer to Reports of the British and Foreign School Society.
both boys and girls, with needlework also being taught as part of the girls’ curriculum. By looking at the monitorial system of education provided by the Quaker Lancaster, it is clear that Quakers were not attempting to gather converts to their own faith; they were only interested in ensuring that schools taught Christian beliefs. Education came under a moral reform agenda that aimed to teach the habits seen as necessary to participate in a ‘civil’ society.

Concern with morals and habits is evident in Lancaster’s writing. Religious education was considered a means of improving the morals of students, and Lancaster declared that irrespective of one’s religious beliefs, any religious education, and especially the ability to read the Bible, also ‘proves beneficial to society, in the improved principles and conduct of its members.’\textsuperscript{102} The Duke of Bedford wrote to Lancaster, after visiting Lancaster’s school in Borough Road, stating that Lancaster’s method of education ‘cannot but tend to better the condition, and improve the morals, of the lower classes, in a very eminent degree.’\textsuperscript{103} What is missing from Joseph Lancaster’s rhetoric is any reference to education as a right. The stated aims were clearly related to moral reform only, with no consideration that people had a right to be educated.

Another early Lancasterian School was opened in Spicer Street, Spitalfields in February 1812, with one of Joseph Lancaster’s early assistants, Mr Thomas Harrod, as the master of the school. This school began as a result of visitors from the Spitalfields Soup Society, who, during the course of visiting houses to ascertain where relief was required, realised the level of ignorance that existed amongst the poor. It was estimated that around seven-eighths of the 2500 children they had dealings with had no

\textsuperscript{102} Lancaster, \textit{Improvements in Education}, p.ix  
\textsuperscript{103} Lancaster, \textit{Improvements in Education}, p.5
education. William Allen, Peter Bedford, and Joseph Foster were amongst the Quakers involved in both the Soup Society and the committee to set up the Spicer Street school. McCann asserts that this was indicative of the ‘integrated nature of charitable and educational provision in the district.’ The terms of admission to the school were as follows:

Every child free from contagious disorder, of whatever religious denomination his parents may be, the said child being not less than six nor more than fourteen years of age, may be admitted into the school upon payment of one penny per week. One quarter to be paid in advance. Hence persons who have little to spare, but who do not like to receive charity, may have the satisfaction of reflecting that they have paid for the education of their children...To provide those who have but little to spare, with an opportunity of having their children instructed in spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic; in the principles of piety and virtue, in the necessity of honesty, veracity and sobriety; and of having them at the same time inured to habits of subordination, industry and cleanliness.

The middle-class value of self-sufficiency is evident in this quotation, whereby it is considered better for parents to pay for their children’s education, no matter how small the sum, than receive charity. The quotation also once again provides evidence that education was to be of a non-sectarian nature and, along with literacy and numeracy, the teaching of moral values was also of importance.

William Allen’s interest in the provision of popular education can be understood by looking at his diary entry in 1808 after his first visit to Lancaster’s school in Borough Road. Allen was impressed with the vision of a thousand children ‘collected from the streets, where they were learning nothing but mischief, one bad boy corrupting another, all reduced to the most perfect order, and training to habits of subordination and

---

106 McCann, ‘Popular Education’, p.13
107 Tallack, *Peter Bedford*, pp.27-28
usefulness, and learning the great truths of the gospel from the Bible.'

Dissenters like William Allen saw education as the answer to immorality and in another diary entry in 1809 he wrote:

The more I consider the subject of general education, the more I am convinced of its importance; the poor will be brought to a knowledge of their duty, which is one step towards the diminution of crime, and, as the physical strength of the community resides in this class, it is of the utmost importance that the individuals composing it should have clear ideas of right and wrong.

Allen’s position indicates his belief that education provided the opportunity for moral improvement through internal regulation, a position held by Quakers in general. A perceived growing juvenile delinquency problem amongst the lower classes was concerning the middle and upper classes, and education was seen as the answer to alleviating the problem, with growing interest in Lancaster’s monitorial methods.

Monitorial schools enabled large numbers of poor children to receive an education, albeit a very basic one, that otherwise would not have been available to them. The poor had the opportunity to learn to read the Bible while at the same time learning subordination and obedience to the ruling social order. William Allen considered the Lancasterian school system as the means by which both sexes could ‘acquire those habits of morality and industry which lead to a life of virtue and religion’.

Allen saw that neglecting the education of the poor had resulted in an alarming rise of criminals and that we need to ‘strike at once at the root of the evil, by encouraging and promoting the education of the poor....to eradicate those vicious habits’. To Allen, educating the poor was the best means of ‘diminishing crime, than all the penal statutes that could be

---

109 Allen, Life of William Allen, Vol. 1, p.112
110 Bartle, ‘William Allen’, p.16
112 Allen, ‘On the General Education of the Poor’, p.80l
enacted. Education provided the poorer classes with the means to learn to regulate themselves, thereby fewer external controls would be required. Allen considered that ‘the crime and misery, which abound among our poor, are chiefly to be ascribed to the neglect of their education’, a neglect which he considered resulted in overcrowded prisons and a rising crime rate. Moral reform was seen as the answer to a society perceived as heading towards civil unrest and anarchy. If the poor were provided with moral and religious training, they would become decent and hardworking contributors to society.

Opposition arose, however, to Lancaster’s monitorial teaching methods and the provision of non-denominational education. This opposition was originally driven by Mrs Sarah Trimmer, a High Church Anglican intent on promoting the established Church, and who considered this method of teaching as hostile to the established Church. Mrs Trimmer considered Lancaster to be the ‘Goliath of Schismatics’ whose growing influence needed to be curbed. Also, Lancaster was accused of poaching his methods of teaching from Dr Andrew Bell, who pioneered the Madras System in India and which had the support of the Anglican Church. The differing views on what form of religion should be taught in schools resulted in rivals to Lancaster setting up the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, throughout England and Wales (National Society). This approach came to be known as the National School system, whilst the Lancasterian approach was known as the British School system. The National Society’s support base came from the Tory, High Church party which supported universal education but only if it was

---

113 Allen, Life of William Allen, Vol. 1, p.175
114 William Allen to the Russian Ambassador (1815) in Kaestle, Joseph Lancaster, p.141
under control of the Church. The mainstay of the established Church’s argument was that ‘the Church is in danger’ and that if children were taught to read the Bible without inculcating the creed of the Church of England, the Church would ultimately be destroyed. Dr Herbert Marsh, a Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge, was one of the most vocal opponents of the Lancasterian method. He said that ‘teaching children to read, and accustoming them to read the Bible, without inculcating the particular creed of the Church of England, is the way to extirpate the Church of England.’ Dissenters considered that opponents fought the British School system, arguing that ‘The Church is in danger!’, purely ‘to prevent the introduction of some benefit to mankind.’ They considered the notion that education other than that provided through the National School system as being ‘inimical to Christianity’ was foolish. Dissenters considered that ignorance was not favourable to Christianity and that teaching reading, thereby enabling the Scriptures to be read, but without the inculcation of a creed, was by far a better choice for society than leaving children in ignorance.

Within this debate, however, is one of the rare occasions when a language of rights was visible. The issue raised was the right to religious freedom. An article in *The Philanthropist* in 1812 discusses the established church’s neglect of the education of the poor, and its condemnation of dissenters, such as the Quaker Joseph Lancaster providing religious education that did not teach the Church of England creed. The writer argues that even though the established church was unable to provide education to the poor that Lancaster’s schools had been providing, the Anglican clergy:

116 Kaestle, Joseph Lancaster, p.21
118 ‘A Review of the Arguments’, p.57
119 ‘A Review of the Arguments’, p.64
120 ‘A Review of the Arguments’, p.64
would rather see, as they have hitherto seen, the children of the poor belonging to their church brought up in the streets and in the fields, where no creed is taught, but ignorance is retained and vice engendered, than see them in the schools of Lancaster, where no creed indeed is taught, but where reading and writing are taught, and where those habits are acquired, of industry, attention, orderliness, &c. on which good conduct in life depends.¹²¹

Proponents of the Lancasterian method argued that every person had a right to access religious education. If the established church was not able or willing to provide religious education to everyone, then supporters of Lancaster’s methods should have the right to do so in a way that ‘all Christians were agreed about.’¹²² This appears to be the only time that a position was taken by Dissenters that was underpinned with notions of the rights of the poor to an education. Their focus was still very much on providing a religious and moral education, as well as reading and writing, but it was to be available to all children who had been ‘totally neglected’ by the established church.¹²³ The difference that is evident between these two positions is that the established Church was insistent that their religious creed should be applied to all education, whereas Dissenters were content with the rights of conscience being protected.¹²⁴

A Parliamentary Select Committee appointed in 1818 to inquire into the education of the lower orders commented on these two opposing positions that resulted in schools set up either by the established church, or by dissenters. The Committee was concerned that ‘education is not checked by the exclusive plan being adopted in one of them’.¹²⁵ Where only one school was being provided in a district, they declared that ‘it is manifest that any regulations which exclude dissenters, deprive the Poor of that body of

¹²¹ ‘A Review of the Arguments’, p.71
¹²² ‘A Review of the Arguments’, p.63
¹²³ ‘A Review of the Arguments’, p.59
¹²⁵ ‘Report of the Parliamentary Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis and Beyond, 1818’ in Maclure, Educational Documents, p.19
all means of education.’¹²⁶ The committee considered that the safest path was for local parishes to employ the schoolmasters, but that ‘children of sectarians shall not be compelled to learn any catechism or attend any Church, other than those of their parents.’¹²⁷ It would appear that the government was attempting to arrive at a solution that would appease both groups, the reason being that the parochial system was a far cheaper option than the government having to provide funding to educate the masses.¹²⁸ Until the later decades of the nineteenth century, education was a matter for private enterprise and there was no real active state involvement in its provision. This explains the major involvement of groups such as Quakers in providing private education to the lower classes who could not afford public education institutions.

The provision of education to poor children was not the only focus of Quakers, as they also saw a need to provide an education to illiterate adults. William Singleton, a Methodist, and Samuel Fox, a Quaker, opened the first Early Morning School for Adults in Nottingham in 1798, which offered classes in Bible study, as well as reading and writing.¹²⁹ Between 1811 and 1816 Adult Bible Classes were begun in towns such as Bristol, Leeds, York, and Leicester,¹³⁰ providing classes for both Quaker and non-Quaker attendees. The Society of Friends provided a room, attached to their Meeting-House, for the Bristol Adult School to use, and also supported it financially.¹³¹ Evidence of the motives behind these adult education classes can be ascertained from writings by the Quaker, Thomas Pole. In 1813 he wrote An Address to the Committee

¹²⁶ ‘Report of the Parliamentary Committee’, p.19
¹²⁷ ‘Report of the Parliamentary Committee’, p.21
¹²⁸ Maclure, Educational Documents, p.4
of the Bristol Society for Teaching the Adult Poor to Read the Holy Scriptures, which stated:

Education, the perusal of the sacred Scriptures and other religious books, have a tendency to moralize and Christianize the minds of men. Instead of idleness, profaneness and vice – they inculcate diligence, sobriety, frugality, piety and heavenly mindedness.\[132\]

The Bristol Society drew up rules for ‘an Institution for Instructing Adult Persons to Read the Holy Scriptures’, of which Dr Pole’s 11th Rule stated that a Scripture reading should be given at the beginning and end of each meeting.\[133\] These rules were intended not only for the Bristol Adult School, but for the founding of Adult School Societies in other areas of the country. On religion, Dr Thomas Pole, like Lancaster, advocated an interdenominational approach to adult education:

The Bible should be the only Book read in the Schools, and no lessons should be used that contain a sentiment not approved by every denomination of Christians. All books containing disputed points of doctrine are peculiarly exceptionable, and no person should be allowed to distribute pamphlets and papers among learners in which such points are raised, either openly or privately.\[134\]

Religion and moral education was again a major focus of teaching in Adult Schools, with one of the stated objectives of the York Adult School being ‘as far as possible to combine a secular education [with] a practical knowledge of Scripture truths.’\[135\] The movement did not grow rapidly, with J. Wilhelm Rowntree, in his 1903 *A History of the Adult School Movement*, writing that ‘these early Adult Schools were simply undenominational Bible classes for adults’\[136\] and did not consider they catered for the


\[133\] Sowden, *Learning for Life*, p.10


\[135\] Frederick John Gillman, *The Story of the York Adult Schools from the commencement to the year 1907*, York, Delittle, Fenswick & Co (1907), p.4

needs of the populace.\textsuperscript{137} Many of these early adult schools did not survive for long and possibly one reason for this was their dependence upon economic circumstances. Thomas Cooper, a well-known Chartist who had set up an adult school in Leicester in 1841, reported that when the school closed in 1842 he urged the adult students to keep attending but they replied ‘What the hell do we care for reading, when we cannot get enough to eat?’\textsuperscript{138} The Mechanical Institutes were more popular as they tended to avoid religion and taught skills related to trades,\textsuperscript{139} useful when growing industrialisation required a more skilled workforce. Mechanics’ Institutes provided lectures on technical subjects such as mathematics, science and drawing, subjects that were of benefit to many working-class people.\textsuperscript{140}

Apart from these early adult schools, in which interest waned during the early decades of the nineteenth century, it was not until 1845 that the adult school movement really gained momentum. Leading the charge was the Quaker Joseph Sturge and a group of Friends in Birmingham who were concerned with idle youths in their area, especially on the Sabbath. They saw these youths as ‘unwashed laziness lounging in narrow streets and courts, troops of boys making mischief with trees, hedgerows and fences, or playing at “pitch and toss” in the suburbs.’\textsuperscript{141} In October 1845 a school was opened in Severn Street, Birmingham.\textsuperscript{142} This school was originally intended for young men but as more older men began to attend it was necessary to open a school specifically for adult males in 1852. In 1848, after a meeting at Edmund Sturge’s home, it was agreed that a First-day school for women and girls would also be formed. The Friends’ First-day School

\textsuperscript{137} Rowntree and Binns, \textit{A History of the Adult School Movement}, p.14
\textsuperscript{138} Thomas Cooper, cited in Sowden, \textit{Learning for Life}, p.13
\textsuperscript{139} Lawson and Silver, \textit{A Social History}, p.261
\textsuperscript{140} H.C. Barnard, \textit{A History of English Education from 1760}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., London, University of London Press Ltd (1961), p.91
\textsuperscript{141} Rowntree and Binns, \textit{A History of the Adult School Movement}, p.15
\textsuperscript{142} Edgar F. Hobley and Thomas W. Mercer, \textit{The Adult School Movement: What it is and What it may Become}, London, Headley Brothers, 1910: p.12
Association (FFDSA) was formed in 1847 to oversee these education institutions. To be eligible for inclusion in the FFDSA, schools needed to be either a Bible Class taught by a Friend, a Friends’ Adult or Children’s School, or an Adult or Children’s school operating on premises owned by Quakers, or under their control. While the Association’s primary concern had been establishing Sunday Schools for children and youths, by 1873 adult education had become the largest part of the Association’s endeavours. Quakers began to realise that when students left First-day schools there was no provision for their further education. This was acknowledged at the FFDSA annual meeting in 1850 which passed the following minute:

The subject of the importance of Adult Schools and their claim upon Friends, has been brought before this meeting, and it desires to press upon the attention of Friends, particularly in those places in which no Friends First-day Schools exist, the valuable service which they are capable of rendering to a neglected class, and to encourage them to direct their earnest attention to this subject.

By the end of the nineteenth century 20,000 men, women and children attended schools throughout England belonging to the Association, with 91 schools being for children and 197 for adults. Classes usually lasted between one and a half, and two hours.

Along with a major focus on religious education, Quaker First-day schools also provided lending libraries, a savings fund for attendees, and temperance meetings. Temperance meetings for children were also instigated in some schools. Schools for women and girls also had similar services provided, along with the inevitable sewing

---

143 Rowntree and Binns, A History of the Adult School Movement, p.20
144 Hobley and Mercer, The Adult School Movement, p.14
145 Friends’ First-day School Association, Report of the Third Annual Meeting of Friends’ First-day School Association, Friends’ First-day School Association, Bristol (1850), p.12
147 Friends’ First-day School Association, Report of the Second Annual Meeting of Friends’ First-day School Association, Friends’ First-day School Association, Bristol (1849), p.13
These activities point to the focus of the Association; that of teaching religion and morality, along with practical skills for employment opportunities.

A conference of FFDSA’s teachers in 1859 provides evidence of a debate concerning what was being taught in First-day schools. William White, a Birmingham Quaker who was considered one of the leading promoters of the Adult School Movement, declared that he agreed with Robert Watson from Newcastle school that ‘Reading must be taught, in order that the Bible might be read; but the same could not be said of writing.’ This was part of a general discussion on whether writing should be taught – it often was not. Lothersdale School in Yorkshire was one school that did teach writing, stating in their 1847 Annual report ‘that the object of their institution is not merely to cultivate the understanding, but to regulate the conduct of the scholars, and to impress on them the importance of public worship; not merely for “instruction and improvement in useful learning, but also to encourage them in their duty to their Creator”. Writing is taught in this school’. A minute was eventually passed at the meeting, in respect to the teaching of writing in schools, noting the ‘deep importance of making it subservient to the higher objects for which our First-day schools are established’. This indicated that whilst the first concern of Friends’ First-day Schools was to ensure that the Bible could be read, as this was seen as the blueprint for a moral society, learning to write was permissible providing it was part of a secondary curriculum. It also needs to be remembered that First-day Schools were the equivalent of Anglican Sunday Schools and therefore their major purpose was the learning and reading of the Bible.

148 Sanders, ‘Friends and Early Adult Schools’, pp.284-289
149 Friends’ First-day School Association, Report of the Proceedings of a Conference of Teachers in Friends’ First-day Schools, held in Liverpool, on the 24th, 25th and 26th of first month, 1859, with an appendix, containing papers read at the conference, London (1859), p.7
150 Friends’ First-day School Association, An Account of the First-day Schools, conducted by Friends, in England, to the end of the Year 1847, Bristol, Friends’ First-day School Association (1848), p.9
151 Friends’ First-day School Association, Report of the Proceedings of a Conference of Teachers in Friends’ First-day Schools, London (1859), p.10
The development of educational institutions for men and women was the special mission of Quakers, according to the Quaker William White. In a paper to the Manchester Conference of Friends’ First-day School teachers in 1849, White drew to the attention of Friends that in relation to providing adult education ‘they had a peculiar opportunity in this field of work, which had not been occupied by any other religious denomination, and for which their genius was especially suited.’ This was because, as White noted in his paper, they were easy to set up, could be self-supporting, and not subject to clerical meddling. William White devoted fifty years to adult education and was considered by many as one of the driving forces behind the movement. Rowntree considers that it was William White who was responsible for the success of the Adult School Movement, as numbers increased from around five hundred when he first became involved, to approximately fifty thousand when he died.

William White might have seen adult education as the special domain of Quakers because they were one of the few groups willing to devote time to educate adults as well as children. Most religious groups at this time were ‘most attracted to the juvenile Sunday Schools,’ and even Joseph Sturge’s initial interest was in young people. By targeting young people, groups involved in the provision of education deemed this their best chance to effect change. William Allen, writing in 1811 concerning the education of the young, wrote that ‘above one million of these, grow up to an adult state, without any instruction at all, in the grossest ignorance, and without any useful impression of religion or morality.’ He quoted the magistrate Patrick Colquhoun who in 1806 had

152 Hobley and Mercer, The Adult School Movement, p.13
153 William White, cited in Rowntree and Binns, A History of the Adult School Movement, p.18
154 William White, cited in Rowntree and Binns, A History of the Adult School Movement, p.18
156 Rowntree and Binns, A History of the Adult School Movement, p.19
157 Rowntree and Binns, A History of the Adult School Movement, p.19
158 Allen, ‘On the General Education of the Poor’, p.80
written that if nothing was undertaken to address this, every generation another several million people will be 'without any fixed principles of rectitude, and with very little knowledge either of religion or morality.' Allen’s position was that ‘The strength of early impressions have often a most influential effect upon the future life of an individual, and this sentiment no doubt gave rise to that benevolent and useful association, called the Sunday School Society, which, since its first institution in 1785, has assisted schools in the education of above 270,000 children.’

There was an understanding that by educating children as early as possible in religion and morality, they would become decent and upstanding adults and contribute to a civil and moral society. If children were not provided with an education, the odds were they would be prone to a life of crime and immorality with no chance of becoming respectable and hardworking citizens. An article in *The Friend* in 1843 lamented the fact that many young children turned to begging and stealing through ‘the want of education’ and often had ‘poor, ignorant, and probably vicious parents.’ Quakers were involved in providing education to children so they could be set on a righteous path, before they had the chance of being corrupted by the uneducated masses. This approach was about the internal regulation of society and attempting to ensure that the right values were instilled at an early age.

Along with involvement in associations such as the British School Society and Friends’ First-day Schools, Quaker involvement became more institutionalised when it set up the Bedford Institute Association (BIA) in the mid nineteenth century. The institute was named after Peter Bedford (1780-1864), a Quaker who was very involved in committees and organisations that worked with the poor. His interests were many and varied,

---

160 Allen, ‘On the General Education of the Poor’, p.80
161 *The Friend*, (1843), p.217
including Spitalfields Soup Society, Spitalfields Lancastrian School committee, Society for Lessening the Causes of Juvenile Delinquency in the Metropolis, and Association for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents.\textsuperscript{162} The Bedford Institute began as a Friends’ First-day School and was opened in Quaker Street, London in April 1849 by some Friends from the Devonshire House Meeting. In 1865 the Bedford Institute was formally opened to provide the ‘labours of a religious, social and benevolent character among the poor and ignorant of...Spitalfields and Bethnal Green.’\textsuperscript{163} Preference was given to children who had received no previous education, and reading and writing were the subjects taught.\textsuperscript{164} Along with the opportunity for education, the BIA also provided meetings for Band of Hope, Sewing and Mothers’ Meetings, Bible classes and Temperance meetings.\textsuperscript{165} It also provided funds for the payment of rent arrears, provision of meals, and provision of clothing after confirmation by district visitors that relief was needed. Again a focus on moral reformation is evident in the provision of education to the poorer classes, but the Bedford Institute also incorporated philanthropic endeavours, along with the teaching of practical skills.

Another example of Quaker interest in education, with more of an intellectual basis, can be seen in the formation of the Friends’ Educational Society (1837-1856) which was initially set up by Samuel Tuke and Joseph Rowntree. A Conference of Friends on the subject of Education, held at Ackworth School in 1836, agreed to form a society for Friends interested in education in order to share information regarding their observations and experiences.\textsuperscript{166} The Society aimed to collect information on ‘the best

\begin{enumerate}
\item See Tallack, Peter Bedford
\item [John Hoare], \textit{One Hundred Years of Friends’ Service in East London}, (reprinted from The Friends’ Quarterly,) London, (1950), p.5
\item Alexander, \textit{Fifty Years’ Story}, pp.12-13
\item ‘First Annual Report of the Friends’ Educational Society. 1837’ in \textit{Reports and Essays, Published by The Friends’ Educational Society, from 1837 to 1845}, York, John L. Linney (1846), p.9
\end{enumerate}
means of conducting the religious, moral, literary, and physical education of youth in our society; with a particular reference to the state of our public and private schools.\textsuperscript{167} A concern with morality is very evident when in 1840 the Society requested a Report on Moral Discipline be provided to the Committee. This report provided information obtained from teachers, with one teacher stating that ‘The foundation of all my plans of Moral Discipline... was to endeavour to inculcate a feeling of integrity and uprightness of purpose: a straightforwardness and decision in all the actions of my pupils.’\textsuperscript{168} Another reported that they ‘endeavour to bring the precepts of Scripture to bear upon daily conduct: thus, when instances occur of violation of the law of love, in matters of forbearance, mutual kindness, courtesy, meekness, the absence of revenge.’\textsuperscript{169} Yet another reported that they perceived their object in teaching was to ‘form character; to model the man; to excite proper motives; to establish good habits, and to instil right principles’.\textsuperscript{170} The following excerpt from the report again indicates that a major focus of Quakers was related to the provision of moral and religious education, which was the cornerstone of their educational philosophy:

To those who are conscientiously engaged in the arduous work of Christian Education, few subjects are felt to be more pressingly important than the right maintenance of a system of sound Moral Discipline. In their estimation it is second only to Religious Instruction, if indeed it does not constitute a branch of it; for so closely are they interwoven, that it is not easy to draw a well-defined line of separation between them. Any course of religious instruction, the great purpose of which is not to influence the heart and affections, and which is not sought to be carried out into life and conduct, is worthless indeed: - and no system of discipline deserves the name of moral, which is not based upon Christian Principles, and does not draw its authority, its sanctions, and its restraints, from the Divine Law.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{167} ‘Second Annual Report of the Friends’ Educational Society. 1838’ in \textit{Reports and Essays}, p.3
\textsuperscript{169} ‘Report on Moral Discipline’, p.11
\textsuperscript{170} ‘Report on Moral Discipline’, p.16
\textsuperscript{171} ‘Report on Moral Discipline’, p.5
A brief investigation of the Quaker journals *The Friend* and *The British Friend* also indicate that there was broad interest by Quakers in education. That being said, the evangelical journal *The Friend* published many more articles on education than did its conservative cousin, *The British Friend*, no doubt indicative of the influence of Quietist principles among conservative Quakers. Quaker concern with moral reform is evident in an article by William Thistlethwaite in 1843 when he wrote about ‘The training of mind, the formation of right habits, and the inculcation, so far as practicable, of those principles of moral action which operate powerfully in the formation of the religious character’.\(^{172}\) Moral reform is the focus of another article in 1844, which also gives us an insight into the Quaker belief that society was divinely ordered and everyone needed to act according to their place. Taken from a conference held at Ackworth School in 1842, it states that the purpose of education was to:

\[
\text{Inculcate the sinfulness of all sin; in the authority of divine love, to enforce purity of conversation and conduct; to maintain good discipline in the school and in the family; to induce habits of industry, lowliness of heart, and contentment in that station of life in which Divine Providence has placed them; to induce also self-control and the right subjection of the will, prompt and willing obedience, with mutual condescension, and straightforwardness in speaking the truth on all occasions.}\(^{173}\)
\]

Quaker belief that education needed to begin at an early age was also discussed at some length. Friends involved with the Quaker school at Croydon presented a minute to the London Quarterly Meeting dealing with the subject of infant boarding schools in order to ensure ‘a right beginning in the work of education’, which was reprinted in *The Friend* in 1845.\(^{174}\) This same minute also reported on the ‘defective condition, both as to moral and literary training, in which children are sometimes sent to the Institution,’\(^{175}\)

\(^{172}\) *The Friend*, (1843), p.128  
\(^{173}\) *The Friend*, (1844), p.59  
\(^{174}\) *The Friend*, (1845), p.109  
\(^{175}\) *The Friend*, (1845), p.109
and an appeal was made to parents to ensure their children were instructed in religious and moral training prior to being sent to be educated. From very early in their involvement in popular education, Quakers followed the principle of Proverbs 22:6 which said to ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.’ William Allen quoted this proverb in his 1811 article *On the General Education of the Poor* and it still informed Quaker thought towards the middle of the century. Early education was considered one of the most important principles in education, and one that had the ‘most influential effect upon the future life of an individual’. Educating children at a young age was seen as the best means of cultivating a virtuous and moral citizen. Unlike some other areas of reform in which Quakers were involved, there appeared to be a high level of unity amongst Quakers as to the reasons why education needed to be provided to the lower classes, at least from the beginning of the nineteenth century. There is no evidence to suggest any major dissension within Quaker society, despite Quakers being evangelical, conservative, or taking a middle-ground position. It would appear that this was one area where there was general agreement on the best means of educating the working classes to become moral and worthwhile citizens.

Acknowledgement needs to be made that Quakers were not the only group heavily involved in the provision of education to the poorer classes. As we have already noted, the SPCK was involved in setting up charity schools for poor children from the beginning of the eighteenth century. The London Hibernian Society, a Protestant missionary society, was another organisation that worked predominantly in Ireland to win the souls of new generations away from the Catholic Church. This society had

176 *The Friend*, (1845), p.110
178 Allen, ‘On the General Education of the Poor’, p.30
179 Allen, ‘On the General Education of the Poor’, p.30
formed in 1806 and by 1830 had 1373 schools under its control with over 80,000 students.\textsuperscript{180} Within England the concern to teach religious education also crystallised in the formation of the Ragged School Union in 1844, headed by Lord Shaftesbury, an evangelical. While there had been some ‘ragged schools’ previously set up by local churches, there had been no organised movement, but by the 1840s the commitment of Ragged School supporters to ‘bring neglected and ignorant children within the reach of the doctrine of Christ’ was formally instituted.\textsuperscript{181} These societies indicate the overriding concern of many reformers to provide an education based first and foremost on religious dogma, which differed from the approach taken by Quakers by this time. For many Anglican reformers, the concern to keep children within the confines of the established Church was paramount, whereas Quakers offered a broader education that encompassed Christian beliefs but did not require conversion to Quakerism.

The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comfort of the Poor was another evangelical organisation, founded in 1796 by Thomas Bernard and William Wilberforce, with the aim of setting up schools of industry for working-class children. This Society differed from the previous examples in that these schools of industry taught skills relevant to a future working life in the factory system, and included spinning, sewing, cobblering, knitting and straw plaiting.\textsuperscript{182} The Society operated under a broader agenda than other societies which considered religious education as their major focus, with concerns for the working classes and ‘his industry, his welfare, and his happiness.’\textsuperscript{183} The moral reformation of the working classes was still very much to the fore, however, and noted in the Society’s aims. These were to increase ‘the energy, the virtue, and the hopes of the poor; so as to attach them to their situation in life, and to

\textsuperscript{180} Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism*, p.176
\textsuperscript{181} Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism*, p.177
\textsuperscript{182} Barnard, *A History of English Education*, p.8
\textsuperscript{183} The Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor, Vol. 1, London, W. Bulmer and Co (1798), p.9
give stability and principle to the moral and religious character of so large and so valuable a part of the community.\textsuperscript{184}

Education was seen by most groups involved in its provision as the best means of inculcating the working-classes with the values deemed necessary to contribute to the good of society as a whole. Quakers did not differ greatly from other groups in this regard, with the exception of the nature of the religious education provided. Quaker involvement in education concerned a desire to educate the poorer classes in religion, morality, literacy and numeracy. They placed a great amount of emphasis on teaching Christian beliefs and moral values, which they surmised would eliminate vice and immorality from society. The teaching of literacy and numeracy was aimed at providing an educated workforce to meet the needs of a growing industrialised society. Good workers needed to be able to read, as well as to be educated in moral values, and these two approaches worked hand-in-hand to ensure an educated and well-behaved workforce. This type of education was a shift from Quaker notions of appropriate education evident in the seventeenth and much of the eighteenth century, when the teaching of religious doctrine to Quaker members only was their major focus. Quakers did provide an industry focused education prior to the nineteenth century, but again it was exclusive to Quakers.

The focus of education was very much aimed at the moral reformation of the lower classes and there is very little to indicate that Quakers saw education as a right. Quakers became involved in education firstly because they wanted to ensure that Quaker children were inculcated with Quaker beliefs and not contaminated by the beliefs of the outside world. This approach continued until the end of the eighteenth century when other factors began to come into play that resulted in Quakers beginning

\textsuperscript{184} \textit{The Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor}, p.10
to participate in the broader community. A concern with social harmony began to underpin Quaker efforts in the provision of education at the end of the eighteenth century, and they came to see that education was paramount in ensuring a civilised society. Increasing industrialisation had also caused the demand for a skilled and trained workforce, which if not provided, could threaten economic expansion and the stability of society.\footnote{Taylor, \textit{Joseph Lancaster}, p.33} As a result, opposition to educating the poor began to diminish,\footnote{Taylor, \textit{Joseph Lancaster}, p.33} and the focus of education changed to incorporate more industrial training.

The Quaker William Allen’s concern with social harmony can be seen in his 1811 article \textit{On the Importance of Promoting the General Education of the Poor}.\footnote{William B. Allen, ‘On the Importance of Promoting the General Education of the Poor’ in \textit{The Philanthropist}, Vol. 1 (1811)} In this article, Allen acknowledges that:

\begin{quote}
If the poorer class, which always constitute the largest portion, and physical strength of a people, become depraved for want of knowledge, there is great danger that evil will preponderate, and social harmony be destroyed; the power of the enlightened part of the community may become too feeble to check the torrent of crime, and the most noble of human institutions may thus be subverted; the blessings of a free constitution in our highly favoured land, can only be continued as long as there is a preponderance of virtue; but when, through the increase of riches, luxury, dissipation, and neglect of the morals of the poor, the balance inclines to the side of vice, from that moment our ruin approaches, and we shall descend from our proud prominence as a nation.\footnote{Allen, ‘On the Importance of Promoting the General Education of the Poor’, p.79}
\end{quote}

This quotation best sums up the moral reform agenda taken up by Quakers in their quest to provide the poor with an education. The approach taken by Quakers is indicative of a belief that education, especially religious instruction, was the best means of reforming the morals of society. Moral reform was the main motive for teaching poor children to read because reading the Bible could show children the importance of living a moral
This was also evident in the Adult School movement when reformers understood that the path to salvation required people being able to read the Bible. There is no real evidence, however, that Quakers and other providers of education considered education a basic right of individuals; it was utilised as a means of moral reformation only, at least up until the later decades of the nineteenth century. By the provision of education to the poorer classes, both children and adults, Quakers were endeavouring to ensure that the poor would take up and emulate their world view of the need for sobriety, industriousness, thrift and virtue, which they saw as being the keys to a better society. It was believed by many that education lessened the chances of social disorder, which was a real fear of the middle and upper classes, especially in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Quaker reformers understood the need for both a religious and practical education and devoted themselves to both the spiritual and material needs of the poor. A Quaker presence was evident in many areas of education; the teaching of numeracy and literacy, industrial training, Sunday schools, Adult schools, as well as collecting and disseminating information relating to education. They were very active in the provision of popular education, indicating the importance they placed upon it. The motive behind Quaker involvement in education, however, was the moral reformation of society. In this regard, they can be categorised as moral reformers because their focus was aimed almost totally in this area. They did not see education as anything other than a tool to reform morals and provide a compliant and educated workforce.

The fear of a subversive working class rising up against the existing social order not only played out in the provision of education, but also began to have ramifications in the legal statutes. This fear resulted in a proliferation of new punishments, known as

---

189 Taylor, *Joseph Lancaster*, p.36
the Bloody Code, being introduced from the middle decades of the eighteenth century.

The next chapter investigates the issue of capital punishment and prison reform, and looks at Quaker involvement in the movement to abolish capital punishment and reform the prisons. It investigates the motives underpinning their involvement and whether Quakers considered that the rights of an individual took precedence over the needs of the State and the need to punish criminals.
5. Capital Punishment

The movement to abolish capital punishment began to gain momentum towards the end of the eighteenth century. This was a time when shifts in understanding saw capital punishment increasingly portrayed as a barbarous and inhumane act by many middle-class groups and an act not befitting a moral and civilised nation. For Quakers in particular, capital punishment was seen as state-sanctioned murder and an act they considered to be spiritually, morally and legally wrong. To the Quaker William Allen, and many of his contemporaries, capital punishment was not seen as the answer to righting society’s wrongs; instead, the priority should be the education and rehabilitation of the criminal element. Quakers considered that educating the working classes would teach them morality and virtue, which in turn would ensure they became useful and productive members of society. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, many reformers argued that by providing the poor with an education, the result would be a drastically reduced crime rate, and social disorder would be progressively eliminated. This is the mindset discussed in the previous chapter, where it was argued that moral reform was the major focus of education. The premise was that if the working classes were educated, and taught to behave according to middle-class ideals such as virtue, thrift, industry and diligence, then the pre-ordained social structure would function at its optimum. The need for capital punishment, and harsh prison penalties, therefore, would be eliminated. The question this chapter will investigate is whether Quaker involvement in the abolition of capital punishment and prison reform was due only to their ongoing concerns with the moral reformation of society, as we saw with their involvement in education, or did notions of the rights of the individual also come to the fore. A brief historical overview of the criminal justice system in England is initially provided, and the shifts in understanding concerning capital
punishment and prison reform will then be explored. Quaker activism will be investigated with the aim of ascertaining the motives that drove their involvement in both these areas.

Early Quaker beliefs concerning capital punishment were articulated as early as 1659 when George Fox petitioned Parliament with 59 ‘particulars’ to stop oppression. Number 12 of this petition read:

Let no man be put to death for chattel, for money or any outward thing. Let them restore, and minde the Law of God which is equity and measurable, agreeable to the offence, and minde the Judges of Old, and Moses, and their judgement (let the thief live to restore for his theft), and minde the Apostles’ doctrine; let him that stole, steale no more, but work with his hands the thing that is good. So that neither Moses nor the Apostles’ faith, hang him.¹

This petition provides an early insight into the Quaker position regarding capital punishment. Quakers considered that the death sentence often did not fit the crimes for which it was handed down. From the earliest years of the Quakers, they viewed the rehabilitation of prisoners as the answer to a rising crime rate, rather than putting prisoners to death, especially for crimes against property.

The Quaker John Bellers was another who argued late in the seventeenth century against capital punishment. In 1699 he wrote an essay titled Some Reasons Against Putting of Felons to Death in which he argued that capital punishment is ‘a stain to religion’ and that putting criminals to death served no useful purpose.² Bellers considered that punishments were often excessive for crimes committed, and also appealed for more humane prison conditions.³ Quakers such as George Fox and John

³ Bernstein, Cromwell & communism, p.275
Bellers were ahead of their contemporaries when they called for the abolition of capital punishment and prison reform. It was not until 1764 that the first stirrings of criminal justice reform were heard in England, over one hundred years after George Fox petitioned to end the hanging of criminals for most property offences. A more widespread re-assessment of capital punishment and its functions began around the mid eighteenth century and resulted in growing concerns with the English criminal law system. From 1688 until the early decades of the nineteenth century, crimes punishable by death rose dramatically, numbering around 50 in 1688 to over 200 in 1815. This time period saw the law statutes evolve into what came to be known as the Bloody Code. Capital punishment in the late seventeenth century had only been handed down for crimes of murder, rape, arson and treason, but by the nineteenth century over two-thirds of executions were for crimes against property. These crimes included burglary, robbery, forgery and stealing cattle, horses and sheep. According to historian Frank McLynn, the dramatic rise in capital offences was attributable to the growth of wealth and the need of the wealthy to protect their property. Fear of rising crime and social disorder was prevalent amongst the ruling classes and the Bloody Code was seen as necessary to control the lower classes, and especially the criminal classes. The population in England and Wales, as previously discussed, had doubled to almost 14 million between 1770 and 1830, and in London had risen by two-thirds to 1.7 million during the period 1801 to 1831. The resulting urbanisation, lack of infrastructure and the effects from industrialisation brought about a perceived rise in the crime rate, at least in the view of the middle and upper classes.

5 Gatrell, The Hanging Tree, p.7
6 McLynn, Crime and Punishment, pp.xi-xii
7 McLynn, Crime and Punishment, p.xii
Nineteenth-century contemporaries often noted an increase in the crime rate, but historians since have suggested that there was more of an increased anxiety about the crime rate, rather than an actual increase. Historian V.A.C. Gatrell argues that this was because increased publicity given to the crime rate, plus higher prosecution rates, gave the impression that the crime rate was climbing. There was a perception that society was becoming more sinful and that more draconian measures needed to be put in place to combat this threat. The end result was that more capital statute laws were introduced that saw around 35,000 criminals being sentenced to death between 1780 and 1830. Only one-fifth of these were actually executed, with the rest sent to overcrowded prisons and prison hulks, or, from 1788, the Australian colonies. By 1837, however, most of the capital statute laws were repealed, with only eight people executed in England that year and six the next. This was primarily a consequence of the Whigs coming to power when the 1832 Reform Act allowed many independent MPs into parliament with their reformist agendas. A brief look at how understandings concerning capital punishment came to change from the mid eighteenth century, and how these understandings began to inform public opinion, will provide an insight into how and why Quakers publicly took up the mantle to abolish the death penalty. This thesis will argue that Quakers were one of the driving forces behind changes to the capital statutes.

The impetus to reform the criminal justice system was influenced by the Italian philosopher Cesare Bonesana Beccaria (1738-1794) with his book *Dei Delitti e delle Pene* (On Crime and Punishment) published in 1764. Beccaria was one of the first to

---

9 Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree*, p.18
10 McLynn, *Crime and Punishment*, p.xii
11 Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree*, p.7
12 Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree*, p.9
critically examine the criminal justice system, and English penal reformers such as Blackstone, Bentham and Romilly acknowledged the influence his theory had on their own theories of criminal justice.13 Beccaria argued that ‘Crimes are more effectually prevented by, the certainty, than the severity of punishment.’14 He wrote that the certainty of a minor punishment would make a stronger impression on criminals than that of a more severe punishment that they had a good chance of avoiding.15 Beccaria also raised questions regarding who had the right to take the life of another16 and stated that it was ‘absurd, that the laws, which detest and punish homicide, should, in order to prevent murder, publicly commit murder themselves?’17 Beccaria’s humane approach to justice abhorred the cruelty of capital punishment and concluded that punishment should be ‘the least possible in the case given [and] proportioned to the crime’.18 His rejection of the belief that capital punishment was the supreme punishment and the greatest deterrent to crime was a position taken up by many reformers throughout the movement to abolish capital punishment.

English reformers took up Beccaria’s principles because they also considered the uncertainty of punishment as evidence that the capital statutes were too harsh, and the application of severe punishment as a game of chance.19 The issue was not so much the severity of the punishment, although this certainly came into contention, but the lack of a fitting punishment for the alleged crime. Judges and juries were often unwilling to find people guilty because they would be sentenced to death for what was often considered a minor crime. The accused, therefore, were often released back into society

15 An Essay on Crimes, p.62
16 An Essay on Crimes, p.64
17 An Essay on Crimes, p.68
18 An Essay on Crimes, p.99
19 Follett, Evangelicalism, p.28
without punishment, a situation that was seen as the antithesis to law and order, and the reformation of society.

The Whig MP Sir Samuel Romilly is credited with driving the reform of the English criminal justice system in the early nineteenth century. Romilly had earlier questioned whether the existing capital code could ‘be deemed any longer essential to the well-being of the State’ and also queried the morality of placing jurors in a position where they ignored their oath rather than pass a judgement of death. While Romilly failed in having the majority of his reforms carried by Parliament, as they were usually vetoed in the House of Lords, he paved the way for later reformers who were more successful in having many capital laws erased from the statute books. Romilly, in 1786, had written *Observations on a late publication entitled Thoughts on Executive Justice: to which is added a letter containing remarks on the same work* in response to Martin Madan’s 1785 published work on the criminal justice system. Madan’s *Thoughts on Executive Justice, with respect to our Criminal Laws, particularly on the Circuits*, advocated that capital punishment sentences should be carried out to the letter of the law. Madan was a Methodist minister who considered that crime was increasing because of the reluctance of juries to hand down the death sentence, and the injudicious use of pardons which created uncertainty in punishments. Madan argued that capital punishments must be carried out once handed down so that ‘the whole country feels a lasting benefit, in the

22 Between 1810 and 1820 the House of Commons passed Bills to abolish capital punishment for crimes such as shop-lifting and stealing from bleaching-grounds in Ireland, but each time the House of Lords threw the Bills out. Cooper, *The Lesson of the Scaffold*, p.33
23 Cooper, *The Lesson of the Scaffold*, p.32
24 Sir Samuel Romilly, *Observations on a late publication entitled Thoughts on executive Justice: to which is added a letter containing remarks on the same work*, London (1786), pp22-25, an Appendix in Martin Madan, *Thoughts on Executive Justice, with respect to our Criminal Laws, particularly on the Circuits. Dedicated to the Judges of Assize; and recommended to the Perusal of All Magistrates; and to all Persons who are Liable to serve on Crown Juries*, London, (1785)
25 Madan, *Thoughts on Executive Justice*, p.3
security and protection which such an example of punitive justice has procured them.'

Madan considered that the rise in crime was due to only one reason; ‘that punishment has been rendered so uncertain, or rather the suspension of it so certain, as to prevent the operation of the laws.’ He argued that judges violated their oaths of office when they arbitrarily pardoned prisoners condemned to death and that to do so made ‘void the law; - its terror, and therefore its best use…the innocent public suffers, the guilty invader of its property triumphs.’

Samuel Romilly spoke out against Madan’s position on capital punishment, and on what Romilly considered the absurdity of some capital statutes, and the severity of the punishment of death in many cases, that might only involve, for instance, the invasion of property. Romilly wrote that ‘Whenever the legislature therefore appoints for any crime a punishment more severe than is requisite to prevent the commission of it, it is the author of unnecessary evil.’ He considered that ‘Though the end of punishment be to deter men from offending, it never can follow from thence, that it is lawful to deter them at any rate, and by any means.’ Enlightened thought such as this had also influenced other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century criminal law reformers, who saw existing criminal laws as not only ineffectual in combating crime, but also as laws that influenced the morality of society. Romilly and other like-minded reformers argued against the traditional belief that the threat of the scaffold lessened criminal activity by instilling terror in the minds of criminals. They argued that terror of the punishment influenced prosecutors and juries more than it did criminals, because of the reluctance

---

26 Madan, *Thoughts on Executive Justice*, p.30
27 Madan, *Thoughts on Executive Justice*, p.34
28 Madan, *Thoughts on Executive Justice*, pp.51-52
29 Romilly, *Observations*, pp.22-25
30 Romilly, *Observations*, p.27
31 Romilly, *Observations*, p.33
of juries to pass the death sentence. The debate that drove the capital punishment agenda, therefore, was whether the death penalty was effective in dealing with the crime rate, and whether it contributed to the improvement of morality and the social order. Underpinning this were different ways of thinking about individual responsibility, and the impact that the capital statutes had upon individuals. It was a debate which ultimately resulted in a transition from the scaffold, as a deterrent of the judiciary, to a penal system that offered, except in cases of murder, reformation and rehabilitation of the offender rather than death.

Historians have presented various reasons for changes in the criminal justice system, with one of the reasons being the need to preserve the body politic. Historian Randall McGowen, in ‘The Body and Punishment in Eighteenth-Century England’, discusses this need when he investigates the transformation from the gallows to prison. McGowen explains how French philosopher Michel Foucault’s discourses provide a new way of understanding the shift that occurred in the capital punishment debate. Foucault did not look to understand the intent of anti-reformers and progressives, but instead looked at how power was deployed within a complex field of forces. Foucault examined changes to the punishment-body relation, and how the ‘body as the major target of penal repression disappeared’ when physical pain was no longer the central aim of punishment. Instead, the body began to be used as an instrument to deprive individuals of wealth and liberties and punishment became ‘an economy of suspended rights.’ McGowen uses Foucault’s theories to investigate the ways in which the metaphorical body was constructed by proponents of capital punishment to send

32 Follett, Evangelicalism, p.40
35 Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p.11
36 Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p.11
messages to the general population. These proponents argued that, to combat disorder, severe punishment was required to instil fear in the general populace, which would ensure obedience and preserve social order. The character of justice was important in conveying majesty, decisiveness and authority and had to be seen as working for the general good. In order to convey this, justice needed to be seen and therefore ritual public executions served to maintain the body politic by reinforcing notions of justice, hierarchy, duty and obedience, ideas that had been in play in earlier centuries. McGowen argues that reformers pushed for changes to the capital statutes because they considered the death penalty had lost its meaning. To many nineteenth-century reformers, the power of sympathy, and a new sensibility, led to moral progress, which eradicated the need to instil terror in the populace via the gallows.

Frank McLynn provides another reason for changes to the criminal justice system through his investigation of the fundamental intention of the Bloody Code. McLynn argues that the English criminal justice system was concerned more with credibility and power than actually punishing every crime. He states that the elite used capital statutes for social control and for ideological purposes that pretended to be for the good of all, but really only benefitted the ruling class. Legal historian Douglas Hay concurs with this notion by noting that Parliament was conservative about reforms to capital statutes because of self interest. Hay argues that criminal law ‘was critically important in maintaining bonds of obedience and deference, in legitimizing the status quo, in

39 McGowen, ‘A Powerful Sympathy’, p.315
41 McGowen, ‘A Powerful Sympathy’, p.320
42 McGowen, ‘A Powerful Sympathy’, p.314
43 McLynn, Crime and Punishment, p.xvi
44 McLynn, Crime and Punishment, p.xvii
constantly recreating the structure of authority which arose from property, and in turn protected its interest.\textsuperscript{46} Hay declares that the ruling class used ideologies of majesty, justice and mercy to legitimize their power and upheld their authority by the judicious use of the gallows.\textsuperscript{47} What is evident from these interpretations is that the notion that capital punishment was a deterrent against crime was not the primary reason for the ruling classes continuing to resist reform of the criminal justice system. The Bloody Code emerged out of the need of the elite to preserve existing power structures, and of threats felt to the body politic. It was used as a tool to maintain the power of the ruling class over the masses, with the aim of ensuring social cohesion, deference, obedience and maintaining the status quo of the propertied over the poorer classes. Changes to the criminal justice system therefore represent fundamental alterations in the power structure of society.

In response to the rise in capital punishment laws, reformers began to take up Enlightenment ideas to argue against what was seen as a barbaric Bloody Code. The individual became more important than the body politic in working for the social good, and reformers began to demand punishments that did not result in the death of the individual. New notions of the individual, and understandings of the autonomy and welfare of others, had created a new capacity for empathy in many nineteenth-century individuals. Ideals such as compassion and benevolence resulted in the capital code being construed as barbarous and unjust and in need of reform. According to McGowen, nineteenth-century humanitarians came to see themselves as sympathetic to the feelings of others and this new concern centred around a common humanity.\textsuperscript{48} Reformers envisaged a new social order that would respond to sympathy, and that social

\textsuperscript{46} Hay, ‘Property’, p.25
\textsuperscript{47} Hay, ‘Property’, pp.62-63
\textsuperscript{48} McGowen, ‘A Powerful Sympathy’, p.314
harmony would prevail without the need for a state-based reliance on terror to control the masses.  

V.A.C. Gatrell also discusses this growing humanitarianism in his 1996 study *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People, 1770 – 1868*. Gatrell argues that the emergent middle classes mostly agreed that sympathy was the nexus of societal and personal inter-connectedness, and that it was ‘a mark of cultivation to empathize with suffering and strive to relieve it through benevolent works.’ Capital punishment reformers envisaged that a common humanity and concern for the well-being of others would remove the need for the cruel punishment of hanging. This vision of a morally progressive society did not include execution as being the best means of keeping social order and providing justice, a punishment that had been integral to criminal justice until this point and, to many conservatives, was still the best option.

These various interpretations offer valid explanations of the reasons behind the push to reform the capital punishment statutes. A growth in humanitarian principles and concern for the rights of the individual began to challenge the existing power structures set up to instil fear, and maintain order, amongst the lower orders.

The Quaker William Allen provided a good example of these new understandings concerning punishment and the individual when he wrote about an illiterate twenty-two year old man whose only crime was to steal a few shillings, without violence, and who was sentenced to death:

> The crime is doubtless one of considerable magnitude, and should be visited with adequate punishment; but the punishment assigned to it, in this case, is so shockingly disproportionate, that the mind recoils from the consideration of it with horror. Shall a person, to whom, be it remembered, society has failed in its duty by suffering him to grow

---

49 McGowen, ‘A Powerful Sympathy’, p.314
50 Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree*, p.226
Quakers were lauded in Parliament for their belief system which posited that ‘a spirit of benevolence’ resulted in ‘an adequate security to mankind.’ This statement is indicative of the position taken by reformers in that if criminals were treated humanely, they would not need to undertake a life of crime and the social order would not be threatened. The idea that the individual could be moulded began to gain a foothold and informed the attitudes and activism of penal reformers, as well as reformers working in other areas of reform.

If we now turn to consider reformers and their activism, we can see these new understandings concerning the individual, and a growing belief in reforming criminals rather than executing them, being put into practice. Reformers were often involved in more than one reform movement, as will be seen throughout this thesis when we see the same Quakers involved in multiple organisations. Penal reform also overlapped with some of these movements and as Gatrell points out, the anti-slavery model was utilised by the penal reform movement. Images of a ‘suffering slave’ could easily be juxtaposed with that of a ‘suffering felon.’ Many slavery abolitionists were also involved in the reform of capital punishment, including Sir Samuel Romilly and the Quakers William Allen and William Forster. In 1808 these slavery abolitionists met to form the Society for Diffusing Information respecting the Punishment of Death and the Improvement of

---

52 British Parliamentary Debates, 1819, Vol. 39, cols. 799-800
53 See Appendix A for some examples of the multiple reform societies Quakers were involved in.
54 Gatrell, The Hanging Tree, p.399
55 See Appendix A for examples of this overlap.
Prison Discipline (Punishment Society). They referred to the efforts of abolitionists in ending the slave trade and stated ‘Remember what by perseverance has been done on the Slave Trade’\(^{56}\) when setting up their new society. As the penal reform movement gained momentum it used similar language and imagery to that which slavery abolitionists had utilised in an attempt to influence public opinion. For instance, the famous diagram of the slave ship *Brookes*, which showed slaves lying packed together with no room to move,\(^{57}\) was repeated in a report of the Punishment Society, published in 1816. The report also showed a diagram, with dimensions, of a dungeon in which felons were packed, stating ‘In the year 1797 this dungeon existed in Warwick Gaol when every heart beat with anguish at the sad spectacle of the never-to-be forgotten slave ship!’\(^{58}\) Penal reformers appealed to the same humanitarian ideals that were driving the abolition of slavery in their attempt to end the use of the death penalty for crimes against property, and to improve prison conditions.

The Punishment Society also modelled itself on The Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons (known as the Philadelphia Prison Society), which had succeeded in 1794 in having passed by the United States legislature an ‘Act for the better preventing of crimes, and for abolishing the punishment of death in certain cases.’\(^{59}\) The Act read in part:

```
Whereas the design of all punishment is to prevent the commission of crimes, and to repair the injury that hath been done thereby to society, or the individual, and it hath been found by experience that these objects are better obtained by moderate but certain penalties, than by severe and excessive punishments: And whereas it is the duty of every
```


\(^{57}\) Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, p.324

\(^{58}\) Third Report of the Society for the Diffusion of Information upon the Punishment of Death and the Improvement of Prison Discipline, London, Printed by Richard and Arthur Taylor (1816), pp.4-6

\(^{59}\) *An Account of the Origin and Object of the Society*, p.6
government to endeavour to reform rather than exterminate offenders and the punishment of death ought never to be inflicted where it is not absolutely necessary for the public safety.  

American Quakers made up approximately half the membership of the Philadelphia Prison Society (PPS) in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the Quaker view on prison and rehabilitation became the dominant view in this Society.  

The American Quakers Caleb Lownes and Roberts Vaux were instrumental in the reform process in Pennsylvania and were key players in ensuring a more humane system was implemented. Trans-Atlantic connections between English and American Quakers ensured that reform ideologies and agendas were able to be shared.

The aims of the PPS were also the aims for which the Punishment Society in England lobbied throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century. The Punishment Society boasted many Quaker members by 1817, most of whom were committed to the abolition of slavery as well. William Allen's journal *The Philanthropist* was a mouthpiece for both topics and he published many articles dealing with both issues. While slavery and prison reform were a major focus of articles, education and the welfare of the poorer classes also received attention. It seems clear that concepts such as empathy, benevolence and the rights of the individual were the foundation of new discourses within the overall reform movement; ideals that were at the core of Quaker theology and practice, as already discussed in Chapter Three.

The Punishment Society was the driving force behind the gathering of information on capital punishment, often utilising existing Quaker meeting structures to disseminate

---

60 *An Account of the Origin and Object of the Society*, p.10  
62 Thomas, *Eastern State Penitentiary*  
63 Thomas, *Eastern State Penitentiary*  
64 Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree*, p.399
their propaganda. In 1811 Quakers were the instigators of a petition that stated that capital punishments were ‘by the common opinion of mankind considered as disproportioned to the offence’, and resulted in many prosecutors and juries not handing down the ultimate punishment. Another Quaker-influenced petition was instigated in 1818 when the Meeting for Sufferings was requested by the Yearly Meeting to prepare a petition to be presented to the House of Commons. The petition followed a declaration at London Yearly Meeting in 1818 which stated that:

This meeting, having solidly considered the awful subject of the Punishment of Death, as now practised in this Empire; and being deeply impressed with the inconsistency of that punishment with the benign spirit and genuine principles of the Christian religion, directs the Meeting for Sufferings to address the Legislature, in order to express the sentiments of the Society on the subject, at such time as in the judgement of that Meeting may appear best.

The petition was presented to Parliament by William Wilberforce and in part stated ‘that the frequency of this punishment, extended, as it is to crimes of very different degrees of guilt, is repugnant to the mild and benevolent principles of the Christian religion’. It further stated that if Christian principles were followed it would result in ‘the abolition of this practice in all cases.’ The petition helped to bring about a Parliamentary Select Committee on the Criminal Law as relates to Capital Punishment in 1819 to investigate the criminal law. Evidence to the select committee was provided by many of the Society’s members, including prominent Quaker banking families, and utilised the public relations skills of the Punishment Society. According to Gatrell, the evidence provided to the Committee about juries’ reluctance to pass the

65 Gatrell, The Hanging Tree, p.400
66 Cited in Gatrell, The Hanging Tree, p.401
68 LYM, 25th of 5th month (1818), p.49
70 HC, ‘Criminal Laws’, 9 February 1819, Vol. 39, cc 396-400
death sentence was so well put together, and convincing, that he considers it is still the best evidence of how the public’s opinion on the issue was changing.\footnote{Gatrell, The Hanging Tree, p.401}

During the 1820s there was a lull in the activities of the Punishment Society and it was not overly active in promoting its cause, although it is difficult to ascertain exactly why this hiatus occurred. One reason could be that the push to abolish slavery took up reformers’ time and energies to the extent that there was little time left over for other reform issues during this decade. Sixty petitions calling for the abolition of capital punishment had been presented to Parliament in the first half of 1819, but petitioning on this subject fell away soon after.\footnote{Gatrell, The Hanging Tree, p.402} Petitioning picked up again at the end of the decade with almost 200 petitions presented in 1830 when Peel’s Forgery Consolidation Bill was introduced. Peel’s bill aimed to retain the death penalty for all principal forgery offences but as legal historian Phil Handler has noted, the reformers were able to show evidence that public opinion was strongly against keeping the death penalty for forgery.\footnote{Phil Handler, ‘Forgery and the end of the “Bloody Code” in Nineteenth-century England’, in The Historical Journal, Vol. 48; 3 (2005), p.697} Most significant was a petition signed by 735 bankers from over 200 towns throughout England, significant because the banks had been the target of massive forgery throughout the 1820s and yet were supporters of ending capital punishment for forgery offences.\footnote{Handler, ‘Forgery and the end of the “Bloody Code”’, p.698} This is not surprising, however, if we remember that many banks were Quaker owned and they had spoken out against capital punishment almost from the Society’s inception.

It was concern regarding Peel’s Bill that prompted the Punishment Society to re-establish itself in 1829 as the Society for the Diffusion of Information on the Subject of Capital Punishments (Capital Punishment Society). Quakers made up over one-third of
the London Committee, with William Allen the Chairman of the restored society.\textsuperscript{76} Other Quaker members included Peter Bedford, Josiah Forster, Richard Barrett and John Thomas Barry, all Quakers associated with reform movements during this time. Quaker Alfred Dymond recalled that this re-establishment occurred because the execution of a forger, Joseph Hunton, undertaking a crime that was performed by hundreds every day,\textsuperscript{77} had ‘struck a reeling blow at the capital forgery laws’ and had ‘very forcibly drawn public attention’ to the question of reform.\textsuperscript{78} Gatrell argues that Quakers only took up the cause again because Hunton was wealthy, and a former Quaker who still maintained Quaker connections.\textsuperscript{79} While this case might have been the impetus for Quakers again re-establishing the society, this position totally ignores Quaker involvement in the fight to abolish capital punishment since 1808. The Punishment Society was the main organisation that drove the movement to abolish capital punishment and is an example of a reform movement that was heavily influenced, and driven, by Quaker involvement.\textsuperscript{80} The level of Quaker involvement in the Punishment Society also possibly explains why Quakers did not organise their own committee to deal with this issue as they did with some of the other reform issues they were involved with outside their society.

In their efforts to mount a challenge against existing criminal justice laws, reformers such as the Quakers called upon Enlightenment ideals of reason and natural rights to reinforce their position. They put forth the argument, in petitions and printed articles, that capital punishment was a barbarous and cruel act that had no place in an enlightened

\textsuperscript{77} National Archives, HO 1788 Ln 5, cited in Gatrell, \textit{The Hanging Tree}, p.410
\textsuperscript{78} Alfred H. Dymond, \textit{The law on its trial: or personal recollections of the death penalty and its opponents}, London, Alfred W. Bennett, (1865), pp.26-27
\textsuperscript{79} Gatrell, \textit{The Hanging Tree}, p.409
society which embraced ideals of empathy, compassion and humane reasoning. One of the major arguments raised throughout the capital punishment debate was that it was an uncivilised act, and the concepts of civilised and uncivilised were key to Britain’s notions of its place in the world.  

In 1831, William Allen, writing an introduction to the reprinting of a 1777 speech by Sir William Meredith to Parliament, in which Meredith opposed the creation of a new capital felony, stated that:

> It is an admitted fact that the penal code of Great Britain is, at the present moment, by far the most sanguinary of any in Europe, and a reproach to her civilisation in the eyes of surrounding countries. Is this reproach ever to be wiped away?...an effort – united and extensive, must be made to remove this national disgrace.

The English people, in general, saw themselves as members of an enlightened and morally superior country to most, and opponents of capital punishment decried the capital statutes as being primitive, uncivilised and brutal. The Capital Punishment Society published a series of short articles under the banner of ‘Punishment of Death’, some of which raised concerns with the issue of Britain’s uncivilised laws. In one 1831 article, J. Sydney Taylor, a barrister, journalist and one-time editor of the *Morning Herald*, the voice of the Anti-Slavery Society, wrote a comparison of the differences in punishment between England and the United States of America. Taylor wrote that America had improved their criminal law system to the point that it now ‘evince[d] an enlightened repugnance to that indiscriminate shedding of human blood, which has

---

81 This will be discussed more fully in Chapter Eight.
given a character of revolting barbarism to the criminal laws of England.\(^85\) In another article, he wrote that ‘sanguinary and vindictive punishments are a violence to reason – a reproach to morals – an impediment to civilisation, and ought to be abolished.’\(^86\) It needs to be noted here that this was mostly rhetoric on Taylor’s part because Michigan was the first state in America to abolish the death penalty permanently in 1846, a number of years after Taylor’s writings on the subject.\(^87\) Thomas Clarkson, in the Capital Punishment Society’s *Prospectus*, continued postulating the rhetoric of Britain’s existing criminal law system being more barbaric and uncivilised than other countries when he stated that ‘In no other country in Europe do such sanguinary enactments exist; and it is a severe reflection on her national superiority’.\(^88\) The Society also had published a selection of articles that had been printed in the *Morning Herald*, as its members wanted to provide a permanent ‘record of the warfare waged, and the triumphs gained over a system of vindictive legislation, which disgraces the name of Christian Britain, and is without any existing parallel in the civilized world.’\(^89\) One of the earliest articles published in this series sums up reformers’ concerns with how other nations perceived Britain’s barbarous laws:

Efforts have been made from time to time, by enlightened and humane men, to redeem us from this national disgrace. Those efforts have been hitherto abortive; for our legislature seems to be tenacious of the bad pre-eminence in penal legislation which our code of punishments has obtained for us in the eyes of the Christian world – nay, Pagan

\(^85\) Society for the Diffusion of Information on the Subject of Capital Punishments, *A Comparative View of the Punishments Annexed to Crime*, No. 4 (1831)


antiquity could boast a greater advancement in civilisation in this respect than England, adorned with all the moral and intellectual trophies of the nineteenth century.\(^{90}\)

To English reformers, capital punishment needed to be abolished in order for Britain to reclaim its perceived position as the most enlightened and morally progressive nation. While such barbaric laws were in place, Britain’s claims to moral superiority over other nations were extremely difficult to uphold. Like slavery, which was seen as an evil endeavour in a civilised society, capital punishment reformers saw the death penalty as a stain on the British national character, a stain which they were anxious to remove. Reformers such as Taylor used rhetoric of Britain’s perceived status as one of the most uncivilised nations in an attempt to influence people into accepting that capital punishment should be abolished. The need to consider Britain morally superior to other countries, therefore, was one of the driving forces behind the abolition of capital punishment in England.

Another reason capital punishment abolitionists put forward for the death penalty not deterring crime was that in many cases capital convicts were pardoned. This was the argument that Madan and Romilly had first publicly contested in the 1780s, and which became a major issue within the debate. Thomas Clarkson, the renowned slavery abolitionist, noted that from 1824 to 1831 in England and Wales, only 528 criminals were executed even though 7,656 had been condemned to death.\(^{91}\) An article in *The Friend* stated that ‘It must be evident that a penalty which, from whatever causes, is found impracticable in 12 cases out of thirteen, is unsuited to the general circumstances of the offence against which it is levelled.’\(^{92}\) In a 1777 parliamentary debate, it had

---


\(^{91}\) Clarkson, *Prospectus*

\(^{92}\) *The Friend*, (1865), p.215
been declared by Sir William Meredith that ‘the multiplicity of our hanging laws has produced two things; frequency of condemnation and frequent pardons...but since, as our laws are actually administered, not one in twenty is executed.’\textsuperscript{93} As can be seen from the infrequency of actual executions versus convictions, the argument that capital punishment deterred crime was considered an erroneous one by reformers because often the sentence was not carried out, and therefore could not be considered a real deterrent. This is despite the fact that offenders could still receive harsh punishments, but at least they did not receive the death penalty.

One argument reformers used to justify their anti-capital punishment stance was that in almost all cases of forgery, convicted forgers were executed, and yet forgery was among the most common crimes.\textsuperscript{94} The crime of forgery also accounted for one-fifth of all those executed in the years 1805 to 1818.\textsuperscript{95} If, as stated by proponents of capital punishment, executions served as a deterrent, the number of forgery crimes should fall as there was almost no leniency with this crime. As it was not the case that forgery crimes were falling, the argument to abolish capital punishment because it was not a deterrent, was strengthened. Crime had become a game of chance for criminals that, with the exception of forgers, they had a good chance of winning.

A better solution considered by some reformers was to sentence criminals to transportation rather than the death penalty. In a letter circulated to every newspaper and periodical in the UK, and printed in \textit{The Friend}, the writer cited a case where a man was hanged in Ireland, as was his father and grandfather before him. The writer suggested that, as the criminal had not been deterred by the previous hangings from

\textsuperscript{93} Society for the Diffusion of Information on the Subject of Capital Punishments, \textit{Speech of the Right Hon. Sir William Meredith, Bart}, p.1
\textsuperscript{94} McLynn, \textit{Crime and Punishment}, p.xiv
\textsuperscript{95} Gatrell, \textit{The Hanging Tree}, p.8
partaking in a life of crime, the following punishment would be a more suitable alternative:

How much better and more lasting would be the result, if he had been sentenced to transportation for life from the dock, to be worked in a penal gang in a distant part of the kingdom (as felons are punished in Botany Bay)...and cut off from communication with his family and society!96

Another writer voiced similar thoughts regarding a life sentence being more of a deterrent than capital punishment. ‘We are quite prepared to believe that the prospect of a life of labour and imprisonment, firmly and fully carried out, would be more formidable to a large proportion of murderers, than that of death on the gallows.’97

Death by hanging was seen as an easy option taken by some criminals and one which only shortened a criminal’s life, it did not punish the offender for his or her crimes.98

The argument raised by reformers was that secondary punishments gave a chance for offenders to turn from wickedness and find salvation, and to repent for their sins. Quakers considered ‘a secondary punishment, inflicted with certainty, would be more effectual than the greater punishment...if its infliction be rendered very doubtful.’99

The issue for reformers was not that criminals should not be punished for their crimes, but that the sentence should fit the crime, and the punishments should be certain. Criminals should not be pardoned because juries did not want to be responsible for ending the life of the accused; the guilty still needed to be punished for their crime and the punishment needed to be carried out to act as a deterrent.

Quaker opposition to capital punishment was underpinned to a very large degree by their religious beliefs. In fact, in 1820, the American Supreme Court Justice Joseph

96 The Friend, (1844), p.104
97 The Friend, (1864), p.111
98 The British Friend, (1856), pp.107-109
99 The Friend, (1862), pp.33-34
Story introduced death-qualification for juries when he began to dismiss potential Quaker jurors because their religious beliefs did not allow them to impose the death penalty for criminal offences. He wrote that ‘they will not give a verdict for a conviction where the punishment is death, unless the case be directly within the terms of the divine law.’ A minute from the Yearly Meeting in 1818 recorded that ‘We believe that where the precepts and spirit of our great Lord and Lawgiver have a complete ascendency, they will lead to the abolition of this practice.’ The Quaker John Hull, when writing a response to the query ‘Is it lawful on Christian principle to take away the life of man under any circumstances?’ listed five reasons why capital punishment should be abolished. The first reason he listed was ‘That the taking away of the life of man, by authority of the law of the land, is not agreeable to the spirit and letter of Christianity.’ The Quaker argument was that:

Scripture and religion are entirely on our side;...the Mosaic law was founded on retaliation: an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth; a life for a life: retaliation is revenge: and revenge is forbidden to the Christian. This is no strained argument; no subtle sophism prepared for the occasion...under the Gospel dispensation forgiveness and love have been substituted for revenge and hate.

This was the general view of most Quakers, with both The Friend and The British Friend containing letters and articles outlining why capital punishment should be abolished. Quaker belief in the sanctity of life and the chance for atonement was also integral to their opposition of capital punishment. A letter published in The British Friend in 1843 declared that capital punishment was:

The legalised destruction of human life at the very moment when the criminal may be utterly unfit to die: ergo, so far as man is concerned,
condemnation for eternity as well as time – a remnant of darker days, of paganism and barbarism, as a punishment cruel and ineffectual; which civilisation and the spirit of Christianity will annihilate.\textsuperscript{104}

Evangelical belief required conversion of the sinner in which their sinfulness was recognised and reparation for wrong or injury was made, prior to death. Atonement required active repentance and capital punishment took away this opportunity. This theological position was also important to many Quakers reformers who had taken up evangelical beliefs in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Capital punishment advocates also called upon religious texts and doctrines to justify their stance on capital punishment, and to support their position that capital punishment was divinely ordained. Interestingly, we can see how both capital punishment advocates and abolitionists used a piece of text from \textit{Exodus} to support their very different positions. \textit{Exodus} was often drawn upon by advocates, especially the passage which read a ‘life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise,’\textsuperscript{105} because vengeance was seen as an element of the divine order and that pain must be meted out as a result of sin.\textsuperscript{106} Hell was the destiny of sinners who did not reform and individuals who went against God’s laws could not expect human compassion.\textsuperscript{107} These are the religious texts considered by proponents of capital punishment as vindicating their stance, whereas, as we saw previously, Quakers considered that using Mosaic law was vengeful, and therefore forbidden to Christians.

The use of these religious texts as justification for a pro-capital punishment position was questioned by William Tallack, a Quaker who in 1863 became secretary of the Society

\textsuperscript{104} The British Friend, (1843), p.180
\textsuperscript{105} Exodus 23-25, The Holy Bible, p.87
\textsuperscript{106} Gatrell, The Hanging Tree, p.373
for the Abolition of the Death Penalty. In 1866 Tallack also became the founding Secretary of the Howard Association, an association which aimed to collect and disseminate information on penal reform. To Quakers like Tallack, God was seen as the only person to judge when people met their Maker, not human beings. He considered that the use of Old Testament texts to argue for capital punishment was mis-guided and passages were often taken out of context. Tallack argued that ‘By the quotation of isolated texts, apart from the general spirit and scope of Scripture, almost any form of wrong and injustice may be apparently authorised.’\textsuperscript{108} He stated that these texts could not be ‘fairly interpreted if they appear to justify evident injustice, to legalise cruelty, or to promote (as capital punishment does) the insecurity of society and the confusion of law.’\textsuperscript{109} Tallack also used evangelical doctrine to support his position, noting that:

\begin{quote}
In common with an increasingly large number of Christians, I believe that the Bible as a whole, and the general scope and spirit of the New Testament in particular, may be appealed to as the most authoritative source of opposition to the system of capital punishment under the present Gospel dispensation.\textsuperscript{110}
\end{quote}

Tallack also draws on the concept of civilisation to argue that Mosaic dispensations regarding capital punishment cannot be used to sanction the act of taking a human life. Civil laws from the earliest times must not be the rationale for capital punishment ‘amid the generally-diffused lights of modern civilisation, and of the merciful and benign spirit of Christianity?’\textsuperscript{111} Tallack asserts that if certain Mosaic and patriarchal laws are used in the justification of capital punishment, then all of these laws should still be enforced:

\begin{quote}
Under the Mosaic dispensation some thirty offences were capital, including gathering sticks on the Sabbath-day. If that dispensation is still binding on one point it is so on all. Slavery and polygamy were
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
108 \textit{The Friend}, (1866), p.176  \\
109 \textit{The Friend}, (1866), p.176  \\
110 \textit{The Friend}, (1866), p.175  \\
111 \textit{The Friend}, (1866), p.176
\end{flushright}
then permitted. Does the Canon argue for these now? Surely not. In his sermon he appears to relinquish the Mosaic laws, and falls back on those of the patriarchal age, as being universal and permanent. The teachings of the New Testament were integral to Quaker reformers who were opposed to Old Testament teachings of vengeance and retribution. The spirit of Christianity was evoked by Quakers throughout the campaign to abolish capital punishment, with one meeting organised by a Quaker concluding that ‘Capital Punishments were in direct opposition to the requirings of Christianity.’ A Quaker wrote in *The Friend* that ‘it has ever been the recognised duty and true honour of the Christian Quaker, to oppose earnestly and calmly, and if need be, in the spirit of self-sacrifice, such laws as are opposed to God’s law’. Another asked ‘is it not the whole tenor of the Christian dispensation opposed to capital punishments? – its principles being, long-suffering, forgiveness and charity – reformation, and not vengeance.’

The position taken up by Quakers by the nineteenth century had altered slightly from early articulations of Quaker thinking on capital punishment. George Fox had opposed it for crimes against property, whereas by the nineteenth century many Quaker activists were totally opposed to the punishment for all crimes.

These oppositional doctrines of the Christian idea of vengeance versus the Christian idea of reformation are investigated in Randall McGowen’s 1988 article ‘The Changing Face of God’s Justice: The Debates over Divine and Human Punishment in Eighteenth-Century England’. McGowen looks at how theologians began to question, and discard, the doctrine of eternal punishment because of concern that its harshness and brutality were creating disbelievers. With the development of science and reason this severe

---

112 *The Friend*, (1866), p.176. This quotation is in relation to a sermon delivered in Gloucester Cathedral by Canon Kennaway regarding the text from *Genesis* ix.
113 *The Friend*, (1845), p.135
114 *The Friend*, (1856), p.126
115 *The Friend*, (1859), p.70
punishment was seen to be incompatible with a rational God. The role of religion had altered from divine retribution to divine benevolence and according to McGowen, ‘benevolent intentions rather than terror [now] supported the state.’\textsuperscript{116} Both sides had utilised their version of God’s justice to justify their position on human punishment\textsuperscript{117} but punishment ultimately was replaced with reformation. This shift was integral to the evangelical tradition which had moved away from the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, which deemed that a person’s destiny was decided by God and nothing could be done to change it, to one in which nature could be shaped, and therefore reformed.

While the main arguments against capital punishment appeared to be based on the deterrence factor and theological assumptions, other reasons were also offered up by Quaker activists. A writer to The Friend acknowledged the varied reasons that abolitionists called upon in their activism, including ‘the grounds of its inefficiency in deterring from the commission of the crime [and] its prevention, when carried out, of the reformation of the criminal,’\textsuperscript{118} as already discussed. Other reasons stated were ‘its irreparable nature when mistakenly inflicted, and the debasing effect of public executions on the beholders.’\textsuperscript{119} In relation to a wrongful conviction, human judgement was seen as fallible and erroneous judgements could be handed down. Owing to the irreversible nature of execution it was considered an unacceptable method of punishment. The Quaker John Hull declared ‘That the impossibility of compensation to the individuals, as well as their near connexions, renders the punishment of death cruel and unjust.’\textsuperscript{120} Quaker activists also took the fallibility of human judgement one step further and argued that the right to take a human life did not reside in human beings.

\textsuperscript{116} McGowen, ‘The Changing Face of God’s Justice’, p.93
\textsuperscript{117} McGowen, ‘The Changing Face of God’s Justice’, p.66
\textsuperscript{118} The Friend, (1864), p.110
\textsuperscript{119} The Friend, (1864), p.110
\textsuperscript{120} The Friend, (1845), p.87
One writer claimed ‘that in no human tribunal resides the authority to deprive a rational
being of that life which it is unable to restore.’ Another wrote that ‘It has long been a
leading principle of our anti-capital punishment friends that “an irremediable sentence
demands an infallible tribunal.”’ Capital punishment law ‘invades the prerogative of
the Almighty;’ and the right to give and take life was seen as resting only with the
Almighty. Only God had the power to decide one’s fate, not a human tribunal. The
Quaker Yearly Meeting in 1847 recorded, in relation to the subject of executions, that
apart from the non-deterrent factor of capital punishment, ‘a far more serious objection
to it is, that man thus undertakes to determine the period at which his fellow men shall
cease to exist in this world; when all opportunity for repentance terminates’.

Quaker concern with who had the right to decide the timing of a person’s death was
based on the acknowledgement of the veracity of these arguments. Quakers were also
possibly influenced in the early days of the movement by Thomas Gisborne, an
evangelical Anglican and a member of the Clapham Sect. In 1789 Gisborne wrote
Principles of Moral Philosophy investigated, and briefly applied to the constitution of
civil society, arguing that depriving a person of divinely-ordained rights, without divine
authority, was a sin. He declared that harsh punishments were not necessary if
restitution was made. Gisborne considered that ‘inflicting vengeance for crimes
already perpetrated, is to usurp the prerogative of the Almighty’ and a method that did
not deter offenders from criminal activity. Appropriateness of punishment was
central to Gisborne’s position, with indemnification being the most natural and

---

1121 The Friend, (1844), p.111
1122 The Friend, (1865), p.89
1123 The Friend, (1864), p.289
1126 Gisborne, The Principles of Moral Philosophy, p.92
equitable solution to correcting a wrong. Gisborne’s evangelical statement was used as the framework for the activists’ platform against capital punishment, and his ideas are evident throughout the movement to abolish the capital statutes. Quakers utilised Gisborne’s arguments to expound their position that only the Almighty could take a life; it was not the prerogative of human beings. Quaker activism concerning capital punishment, as is clearly evident, was not only based on arguments concerning the deterrence factor, or the need for civilised behaviour, but was also inextricably linked to their religious beliefs.

The debasing effect that carrying out of the death penalty had on the public was also mooted as a reason against the punishment by some abolitionists. As discussed earlier in the chapter, it was feared by many in the upper and middle classes that public hangings ‘weakened the moral taste or sensibility of the people.’ The gallows were supposed to inspire fear and obedience in the masses, which in turn would ensure social cohesion and respect for authority. Reformers feared that public executions had the opposite effect on the lower orders and that ‘scenes of bloodshed harden the human heart, engender a disregard for life, and steel those who become habituated to them, against the cries for mercy.’ An address by a clergyman after an execution, which was printed in The Friend because it was ‘so just and forcible, that we make no apology for giving an extract from it’, likened English executions to that of the Roman Amphitheatre. The article stated that executions ‘steel the heart against the purer emotions of humanity; they influence the brutal appetites, and give to the lower an ascendancy over the higher qualities of human nature.’

---

128 British Parliamentary Debates, 9 May 1820, Vol. 1, cc 236
130 *The Friend*, (1844), p.225
131 *The Friend*, (1844), p.225
moral influence on the crowd gathered to watch executions. To reformers, an enjoyment of the event was the antithesis of the message that the crowd should have been receiving, and what the authorities purported was the purpose of capital punishment. The Quaker Joseph J Gurney wrote in 1816 that he was appalled at the behaviour of the crowd at the execution of three men. He recorded that they appeared to have ‘feelings of a pleasurable nature’, with the end result being ‘a most stupid indifference to the suffering of others’.

Gurney felt that a ‘hard heart, which is the source of every crime, becomes harder and harder still’ and that the example supposedly set by capital punishments ‘is seldom felt by obdurate sinners.’

Compassion and sympathy had come to be seen as the hallmarks of civilisation and the audience needed to be reformed to what the middle-classes saw as acceptable standards of behaviour, as exemplified by reformers. Capital punishment was considered to have the opposite effect on the lower orders than the ruling class envisaged. As already discussed, one reason held by the ruling elite for capital punishment was that the lesson of the scaffold was to remind the general population of the consequences of an immoral life. It was also to be a lesson that would deter criminals. Reform activists considered, however, that the death penalty contributed to the crime rate by ‘hardening the heart’ of many who watched the public spectacle, and the lesson was now being disregarded. Quaker abolitionists considered that there were better methods of tackling the crime rate than executing criminals for offences, which were mostly crimes against property. They wanted to see less severe, but more certain, secondary punishments, which allowed for the redemption and rehabilitation of the prisoner. Quakers did not consider the taking of a life as a lesson that was being heeded, even ignoring their repudiation of the act on religious grounds, and therefore new ways of dealing with criminals needed to be found.

The Quaker position on capital punishment can best be summed up by an article published in *The Friend* in 1849. The writer declares that ‘…after giving to this subject our best attention, we feel more firmly persuaded than ever that it is neither scriptural, nor moral, nor beneficial to society, that the law should possess the power to deprive a human being of life.’ Quakers considered capital punishment to be contrary to gospel teachings, of no benefit to the moral reformation of society in general, and not a deterrent to crime. The Quaker Charles Gilpin saw the irony in capital punishment when he expressed in Parliament that ‘This strangling of human beings for the purpose of illustrating the sacredness and value of human life is a miserable bungle.’ Quakers did not want the guilty to go unpunished, however, as they still believed offenders should be punished for their criminal activities. The difference was that they firstly wanted the punishment to fit the crime, and secondly, they believed that a life sentence was a much bigger deterrent than execution. ‘The object of enlightened justice is, that every violator of public and private rights should be punished; but in order to do that, it is necessary that his punishment bear a just proportion to his guilt.’ The existence of the death penalty, even though the penalty was often not carried out, was considered cruel, unjust, and often excessive, and also not in keeping with the divine law, and a civilised society.

What begins to become evident in the capital punishment debate are notions of the rights of individuals, combined with understandings about the potential for change. Quakers also considered it wrong for the State to pass the death sentence as they considered this right belonged to a higher power only. Moral reform, however, was again seen as a key factor in moulding society into a socially cohesive unit where

---

134 *The Friend*, (1849), p.49
135 *The Friend*, (1866), p.86
people knew how to behave and where there would be no need for criminal activity. The Quaker belief that criminals were made because of a lack of moral education drove their efforts to reform the morals of the working classes. This belief is evident in the following quotation, and it also articulates Quaker humanitarian concern for criminals and their circumstances:

Let us look a little on the victim; let us gaze, though but for a moment, on his history. True, he has murdered; but what has been the cause! A motherless child, he grew up by the side of an abandoned father. No good influences were ever shed around him; he was destitute of all education, in the common sense of the term. For him no tutor-hand was found, no voice ever poured into his ear the tale of virtue, dignity, or truth; oaths and curses were the only language he heard around him. Hence, he had sense, but not cultivated sentiments; appetites, but not refined affections; no idea of the responsibilities of human life. Thus did he advance from youth to manhood. Guideless, morally blind, he moves forward, until his blood-red hand is raised to heaven, and then society, which has hitherto been all unheeding of him, awards to him as a consequent, the pain and ignominy of the scaffold...“And now let me ask, does not such a one invoke our pity! We pity the physically, why not also the morally diseased! Can nothing be done to change him!137

The sentiments of the writer summarise the qualities of what a good, civilised man would look like if he had the benefits of a moral upbringing. It is asserted that it was only because the offender did not have the benefit of these moral lessons that he turned to a life of crime. William Tallack also acknowledged that while Christian justice had no sentimental weakness, it should take into account the deprivations and temptations incurred by the offender. He concedes that ‘their orphanage, or parental neglect, or perhaps even parental nurture in vice and crime, in squalor, ignorance, and passion’ probably contributed to their downfall.138 Quakers often argued that social and economic circumstances impacted on a criminal’s life and actions, it was not solely an

137 The Friend, (1844), p.225
138 The Friend, (1866), p.176
individual’s moral failings. To this end, prison was seen as the answer to the reformation of the criminal, not the gallows.

The question to be answered therefore, is did Quakers have any impact on capital punishment reform, and did they make a difference? The general answer would be no because capital punishment for murder, in Great Britain, was not permanently abolished until 1969,\(^{139}\) therefore Quakers could be regarded as having no real impact. What they did achieve, however, was to be part of a reformist movement that ultimately resulted in the capital statutes being reduced from over 200 in 1815, to just over 100 in 1837.\(^{140}\) While not being able to influence decision makers to end the barbaric practice of execution by hanging, Quakers were vital participants in the fight to repeal many of the capital crimes, and no doubt saved many lives in the process. One area where they did have a large impact, however, and which was as a direct result of their involvement with capital punishment reform, was prison reform. Quakers were against the taking of a life in any circumstances, therefore their solution was to reform criminals within the prison system. Prison could provide criminals with the means, and opportunity, to become moral and upstanding citizens of society. In order for this to happen, however, the existing prison system needed a major overhaul and Quakers worked diligently towards this end.

Quakers played an integral role in the development of a reformatory penal system, mostly as part of religiously diverse organisations. One of these organisations, the Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge upon the Punishment of Death and the Improvement of Prison Discipline, was formed in 1808 and worked towards ending capital punishment. As the name indicates, however, the society had a dual purpose in

\(^{139}\) Certain other crimes, such as treason, piracy and espionage, were gradually removed from the statutes until capital punishment was totally abolished in Great Britain in 1994.

being involved with the capital punishment debate as well as an interest in prison reform. Another society with Quaker involvement was the Society for Investigating the Causes of the Increase of Juvenile Delinquency, which was formed in 1815 with the aim ‘to acquire an accurate knowledge of the extent of juvenile delinquency, and the principal causes that occasioned its extraordinary and still advancing increase.’

After three years of investigative work the society widened its focus ‘to make the consideration of prison discipline a primary object of their association.’ Members of the society saw the ‘neglect of prison discipline was one great cause of crime and misery’ and in 1818 formed the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline, and for the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders (PDS). As with the Capital Punishment Society, the membership of the PDS again consisted of a core group of Quakers. For instance, in 1820 they held the positions of Chairman and Secretary, and at least one-third of the committee members were Quakers, including William Allen, Peter Bedford and Samuel Gurney. The members of this society saw that the existing brutal prison system did not provide prisoners with the necessary tools for them to re-enter society and the PDS resolved to work towards changing prison discipline policy. Prison discipline at this time was very harsh and Thomas Fowell Buxton undertook to visit numerous jails in Britain and abroad to ascertain how the prisons were functioning. Buxton had very strong Quaker affiliations, as his mother was a

Quaker and he married into the Gurney family, with Elizabeth Fry and Samuel Hoare becoming his in-laws. Buxton wrote *An inquiry, whether crime and misery are produced or prevented by our present system of prison discipline* (1818)\(^{147}\) in which he compared various prisons, and the discipline within each of them. What he found were two distinct methods of prison discipline: ‘vice and misery are produced by the one, and prevented by the other.’\(^{148}\) Buxton noted that in the prisons he considered provided the conditions necessary for the reform and rehabilitation of offenders, the prison system:

Consult[ed] the health and suitable accommodation of the prisoner, it strikes at the roots of his criminality, his ignorance, idleness, and debauchery; while it corrects his habits, it subdues his temper. By friendly admonitions and religious instruction, it awakens a consciousness of his former depravity, and of its present and eternal consequences, it shews to him the value of a fair and reputable character, and encourages him in its pursuit, by proving that it is attainable even by him; it makes reformation possible. Thus, by giving a sense of religion, habits of industry and temperance, its tendency is to prevent misery and vice.\(^{149}\)

In the prisons where the conditions and discipline were deemed to be abysmal, of which Newgate Prison, visited by the Quaker Elizabeth Fry, was one, Buxton wrote that these jails provided ‘filth, sloth, insufficiency of food, carelessness of health, and instruction in nothing but the arts of iniquity.’\(^{150}\) Buxton considered this type of prison discipline as cruel, unjust, and ‘unworthy of a great and wealthy kingdom, as it corrupts national morality, and disgraces national character.’\(^{151}\) The PDS used this essay as the basis for their reform of the prison system and wrote a list of requisites that prisons ought to include to ensure the welfare of the prisoner. The Society considered that without these conditions ‘the ends of punishment will be defeated, misery increased, vice promoted,\

\(^{147}\) Thomas Fowell Buxton, *An inquiry, whether crime and misery are produced or prevented by our present system of prison discipline*, 3rd ed., London, J & A Arch (1818)

\(^{148}\) Buxton, *An inquiry*, p.143

\(^{149}\) Buxton, *An inquiry*, p.145

\(^{150}\) Buxton, *An inquiry*, p.145

\(^{151}\) Buxton, *An inquiry*, pp.144-145
and humanity outraged.\textsuperscript{152} The list contained necessities for the physical well being of prisoners, including clothes, food, healthcare and exercise.\textsuperscript{153} It also listed the need for education and employment skills because the Society understood not only the benefits of occupying a prisoner’s time whilst incarcerated, but also that it was an opportunity for prisoners to learn skills that would enable them to earn an honest living once released back into society.\textsuperscript{154} The Society also addressed the need of some prisoners for aid in re-establishing themselves in society once they were released. To this end, they established a Temporary Refuge for Distressed Criminals which had the aim of ‘procuring them suitable employment, by furnishing them with working tools and decent clothing, by reconciling them to their friends, or, in the failure of other relief, by passing them to their legal settlements.’\textsuperscript{155} The members of the PDS understood not only that social circumstances played a large part in the causes of crime, but also that if nothing was done to help change the social circumstances of the offenders after release, there was little hope left for them but a return to crime. The PDS membership believed that ‘humane treatment, constant inspection, moral and religious instruction, judicious classification, and well-regulated labour’ were the means by which both the welfare of the criminal, and ultimately society, could be met.\textsuperscript{156}

Much of the focus of the PDS was aimed at juvenile criminals because it was perceived that once young criminals were exposed to the prison system as it stood, ‘he must soon


be corrupted, and, if guilty, hardened in iniquity'. The members considered that prisons for youthful offenders, ‘conducted on an enlightened system of discipline’ was the best means of rehabilitating offenders back into society. William Tallack, the long serving Quaker secretary of the Howard Association, which became the cornerstone organisation in the later part of the nineteenth century arguing for a reformatory and preventive treatment of the penal system, acknowledged that Quakers such as William Allen understood some of the reasons why juvenile criminals existed. In Tallack’s 1865 book on Peter Bedford, who was another Quaker heavily involved in the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline, he wrote that Bedford, William Allen and other Quakers like them understood that juvenile criminals ‘in ninety nine cases out of a hundred, [were] themselves the victims of parental neglect and vice, of utterly neglected and perverted education, of withering poverty, and of all but irresistible temptations.’ There was an understanding that criminals were made, not born, and they wanted a ‘penal code built upon the Christian principle of the reformation of the offender.’

Reformers still believed in prison as a means of deterrence, but wanted the punishment to fit the crime. The Society’s approach was in stark contrast to a system that imposed sentences of death for over 200 crimes. Members of the society acknowledged that there was some general opposition to this approach, with the detractors arguing that it ‘would prove injurious to the community, at large, by weakening the terrors of imprisonment.’ Members of the PDS re-iterated that they were not against the

159 Tallack, Peter Bedford, p.83
punishment of offenders, but they were against punishment they considered ‘vindictive or unnecessary’ and they merely wished for ‘the improvement of prison discipline, and the reformation of juvenile offenders.’ The Society’s membership endeavoured to take into consideration social inequalities and understood that more than just a term of imprisonment was needed to reform prisoners. Humanitarian concern for those incarcerated is evident in the push for prison reform, where reformers considered the needs and welfare of the prisoners, as well as the need for a just punishment.

Quaker women were also very much involved in prison reform, with Elizabeth Fry the most famous. While societies such as the PDS disseminated information with the aim of influencing penal policy, Quaker women were becoming involved in helping with the practicalities of improving prison conditions. Fry first became involved in prison reform in 1812 when a visiting Quaker from America, Stephen Grellet, approached her after becoming horrified at the condition of the women prisoners at Newgate. Fry responded by rallying women Friends to help her make baby clothes for every baby at Newgate, along with supplying clean straw for ill prisoners. In 1816 she became a regular visitor to Newgate, dispensing with religious fervour sermons to women inmates, along with Bibles, sewing materials and provisions. Elizabeth Fry set up and became leader of the Association for the Improvement of Women Prisoners in April 1817, with 11 of the 13 members being Quakers, and all but one female. In 1818 she was asked to give evidence before a parliamentary committee investigating the condition of London prisons. Fry reported to the committee her aims of setting up employment for women within the prison system, and the provision of female

---

164 Rose, Prison pioneer, p.13
166 Cooper, ‘The English Quakers’, p.7
wardens. By contemporary standards Elizabeth Fry’s involvement with the prisoners at Newgate would be considered patronising, but in the context of the time she managed to ensure that prisoners were treated as humanely and justly as was possible. Her list of Rules for Newgate prisoners were mostly focused on improving their moral behaviour and religious education, but also included employment opportunities for women prisoners in an attempt to teach them skills they could use upon their release. Fry’s methods, along with other Quaker prison reformers, were premised with the notion that punishment must be combined with moral reformation, religious instruction, and education. Quakers understood that prison, without rehabilitation, served little purpose and had little effect on the behaviour of criminals.

What is evident in Quaker involvement in the movement to abolish capital punishment, and to institute a more humane prison system, is their concern not only with the rights of individuals to a humane and just legal system, but an individual’s basic right to life. Even though the Quaker position had a spiritual base that considered that decisions regarding life and death rested only with the Almighty, their position also took in legal and moral ramifications concerning right to life issues. Quaker activism was always driven by their religious beliefs, but the rights of individuals were also integral to their discourses on capital punishment and prison reform. Also present in Quaker arguments, however, was a moral reform agenda relating to the death penalty, and the rehabilitation of prisoners. Moral reform was seen as the means of providing the working classes with the necessary tools to contribute to the well-being of society, and which would serve to ensure they lived honest and moral lives.

From this exploration of capital punishment and prison reform, we can see two philosophies working together – rights and moral reform. In regard to the prison system, Quakers held that religious instruction was the best method of reforming the morals of the prisoners and would provide them with the tools to become moral, upright citizens. Prison without reformation did not provide offenders with the necessary skills they required to be good contributors to society once they were released. The language of moral reform is also very evident in the movement to end capital punishment. Quaker activism centred around the premise that if a society was morally progressive, the need for a barbaric punishment such as hanging would be eradicated. If people were provided with education and religious instruction, they would become useful members of society and their need for criminal activity would be eliminated. The growing power of the middle-classes, who were mostly driving the prison reform movement, had come to see the reformation of prisoners as a superior method of maintaining social order, and ultimately decreasing the need for capital punishment.

Within this rhetoric relating to the criminal justice system was the Quaker position that individuals had rights that capital punishment eliminated. Most importantly to Quakers was the religious belief that no-one had the right to end someone’s life, as that role resided only with God. Quakers were beginning to articulate some basic human rights, often couched in religious ideology, that were not codified until the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Quakers’ early concerns with individual rights began to emerge well over a century before this important document came into existence. The difference in 1948, however, was that the spiritual dimension provided by Quakers was absent. The Declaration of Human Rights dealt with people’s rights and mirrors some of the concerns raised by Quakers during the nineteenth century. Quakers considered capital punishment to be inhumane and cruel, and Article 5 of the declaration states that
no person ‘shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.’ Also, a right to life is enshrined in the document with Article 3 stating that ‘Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.’ This again encapsulates the early concerns raised by Quakers. Today, capital punishment is considered by many as a fundamental abuse of a person’s human rights, although it is a punishment still practised in some countries. This chapter has shown that Quakers in the nineteenth century were early proponents of a human rights philosophy that was eventually given a legal framework in 1948. They instigated petitions calling for the abolition of the death penalty in 1811 and again in 1818, and they were very active participants in the Capital Punishment Society, and societies aimed at prison reform. Within what often looked like, and often was, a moral reform agenda, Quakers worked diligently to ensure that people’s right to life was protected from state-sanctioned murder. Even though it was often framed in religious terms, the basic tenet of no-one having the right to take an individual’s life, except for God, was paramount to Quakers. They fought for the rights of individuals, considering that the needs of the State were secondary to God’s law, and people’s right to life. While this was a major focus of Quaker abolitionists, there were other reasons offered as to why the practice should be abolished. These included wanting the punishment to fit the crime; capital punishment being uncivilised and barbaric in an enlightened society; the death sentence was inefficient in stopping crime; and it debased the public instead of instilling fear and deference in the masses. What these different arguments also provide is further evidence of the non-homogenous nature of Quakers. While similar religious beliefs drove their activism, with the abolition of capital punishment the ultimate aim of all Quakers, there was not necessarily a unified approach to the abolition of capital

punishment, and different agendas are sometimes evident within the movement. In the next chapter, this thesis considers whether another modern concept of human rights, that of people's right to the basic necessities of life for survival, was also taken up by Quakers.
6. Poor Relief

The rise of the industrial age, and the introduction of the factory system, had a major impact on the working classes in England. For many people from these classes, the transformation from a rural to a more urbanised society often resulted in the loss of their livelihood, and decreased employment prospects, leading to abject poverty. Because of the lack of state involvement in the provision of charity, except that provided by the Poor Law, charitable undertakings by private organisations were often the only means by which the poorer classes could have their basic needs met. Charitable works were provided mainly by the middle-classes, especially groups such as the Quakers and Evangelicals. These groups saw the often desperate circumstances of the poor that existed at this time, and were very active in providing aid, both fiscal and practical, to those in need. The charitable aid provided, however, was often delivered with a moralising agenda. This chapter will first investigate the provision of charity by non-Quakers to the poor, focusing mostly on evangelical groups, and then explore Quaker contributions in this area. As was often the case from the end of the eighteenth century, Quakers worked alongside other non-conformist groups, as well as evangelicals, in providing charity. This chapter aims to ascertain whether Quakers differed in their approach to providing charity from other groups, and if so, in what ways. It will also consider how much emphasis Quakers put on the moral reformation of the working classes, and how much was given over to ensuring the basic necessities of life were provided to those suffering extreme hardship and poverty. Before continuing, it should be acknowledged that the terms charity, philanthropy, and humanitarianism were often used interchangeably by nineteenth-century reformers to denote the giving of aid to those considered in need. This thesis will also use the terms interchangeably when relating to concern for the welfare of others.
Towards the end of the eighteenth century, poverty had started to become a pressing social issue. Parishes were responsible for providing relief to their own poor, by way of rates imposed on local landowners, but many parishes struggled to meet the growing demand placed upon them. The increasing population, and rising costs to local landowners, caused many ratepayers to complain about the way their rates were administered. This resulted in the introduction of the Speenhamland System in 1795, which supplemented outdoor relief in relation to the price of bread, and the size of families.\(^1\) The cost of providing this relief almost trebled during the Napoleonic Wars and by the post-war era critics again began to attack a system they considered both a threat to the well-being of society and to the self-help philosophy advocated by many reformers.\(^2\) Events such as the Captain Swing Riots in 1830-1 in the southern and eastern areas of England, which were a result of the low wages paid to rural workers, were obvious outcomes of a Poor Law that was not working as envisaged. Social unrest was seen as a threat to the landed elite and a Royal Commission was appointed in 1832 in an attempt to address the shortcomings in the existing Poor Law, and to recommend remedial courses of action.\(^3\)

The Royal Commission proposed abolishing outdoor relief to everyone except the medically unfit, under the principle of less eligibility.\(^4\) This principle aimed to ensure that the condition of paupers should be less than the poorest labourer outside the workhouse, which was the reverse of the existing system. The Poor Law Amendment Act was adopted in 1834 and resulted in workhouses being categorised for paupers, and in which conditions were to be inferior than those faced outside the workhouses. This

---


\(^3\) Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p.45

\(^4\) Royle, *Modern Britain*, p.176
was an attempt to dissuade the poor from entering them except when they were
desperate. A Poor Law Commission oversaw the provision of relief from 1834 to
1847, with the Poor Law Board becoming the central authority in the years between
1847 and 1871. Because of the harshness of the new poor relief system, opposition to
the Poor Law Commissioners, and later the Poor Law Board, grew throughout the
course of the nineteenth century. Contemporary critics such as Charles Dickens painted
pictures of workhouses as places of horror with unhealthy and overcrowded
accommodation, woefully inadequate diets and cruel overseers. The story of Oliver
Twist and his appeal of ‘Please sir, I want some more’ has become immortalised as
being indicative of the growing desperation of children in workhouses. Many
historians now reject this scenario as not being representative of workhouses in general,
but there were obviously many instances where these conditions did occur. The poor
dreaded the workhouse and considered it shameful and humiliating to be forced into
entering one, an outcome that they tried to avoid at all costs. For many people in
poverty-stricken circumstances, their only other option to the workhouse was reliance
on charitable organisations. Turning to these organisations for aid was often the
difference between survival and starvation, and many reformers worked tirelessly to
provide for the needs of these people.

Private charity was essential because, apart from the provisions in the Poor Law,
classical political economy dictated that the State did not become involved in social
policy. Laissez-faire capitalism required minimum state intervention in the
marketplace, a theory that did not begin to be challenged until the mid nineteenth

---
5 Royle, Modern Britain, p.176
7 Dickens, The Adventures of Oliver Twist, p.12
8 Wood, Poverty and the Workhouse, p.100
p.46
century. By the 1870s it had come to be realised that the State needed to take control in all areas concerning the welfare of its citizens. Many people now believed that the problems of poverty could not be solved by individual effort, and that the causes of poverty were far more complex and deep-rooted than could be addressed by the Poor Law. Until the mid-Victorian era, the State had been mainly concerned with Poor Law administration, but the latter part of the century saw a growing intervention by the State to protect the well-being and interests of its citizens, and to protect the interests of the nation. Historian Lawrence Goldman’s 2002 study *Science, Reform, and Politics in Victorian Britain* explores how the State began to take a much more active part in social policy areas such as the provision of public health, education, and penal reform.

There was a growing awareness in the latter part of the nineteenth century that the individual could not control economic and social factors and it was necessary for the State to tackle the issue of the inequalities that existed within society. Until this time, however, it was left to private citizens and organisations to provide the assistance needed by many in the poorer classes of society. As a result philanthropic agencies, aiming to alleviate the distress and suffering of the poor, flourished. While there were secular groups involved in philanthropy, especially in the second half of the nineteenth-century, religious groups such as the Quakers and Evangelicals provided the main source of charity in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century. These groups delivered to as many of the poor as possible the means to ensure their survival, at a time when state intervention was minimal and inadequate. The major role played by charities is evident when compared to the relief provided by the Poor Law authorities.

---

10 See Bernard Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State* (2004), Chapter 1 for an overview of the historical debates concerning the growth of state intervention in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Britain.


13 Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p.63
For instance, figures obtained by Samuel Low Jr’s 1862 survey of 640 London charities, which analysed income and expenditure, indicated that private charitable relief outstripped that provided by the Poor Law authorities and is evidence of the critical role played by these organisations throughout much of the early to mid nineteenth century. Donation of money were obtained through increasing rental incomes from property owned by charities, as well as donations given by private individuals such as William Wilberforce, who donated to approximately 70 charitable organisations. Many of the poor were unable to provide the basic necessities of life for themselves and without charitable assistance, would have suffered even more severe hardship than they ultimately faced.

Before looking more specifically at the role Quakers took in the provision of poor relief, it will be useful to briefly investigate the contribution of non-Quakers. This will enable the positioning of Quaker responses against those from other groups. As previously discussed, among the most well-known evangelicals were William Wilberforce and members of the Clapham Sect who, apart from their well-documented involvement in abolition, were also involved in many areas of social reform. Their approach to social reform issues focused on individualism rather than collectivism, and on the need for both moral and religious teachings to the poor. Evangelical reformers considered that ideals such as thrift, hard work, godliness and self-reliance were the means by which the poor could improve themselves and escape poverty. These ideals were seen in terms of how to live one’s life correctly, and if this adage was followed, then the poor could better their condition and would have no need for charity. Evangelical concerns with the moral reformation of society, and the desire to inculcate these values into the working classes, drove their reform work and led to the formation of organisations such

---

14 Royle, Modern Britain, p.181  
15 Royle, Modern Britain, p.181
as the Vice Society, and the Society for the Reformation of Manners, as discussed in Chapter One. These types of societies typically sought to raise public morality and bring to an end the perceived moral breakdown of society. There were many societies formed by evangelical reformers during the late eighteenth and early to mid-nineteenth century, and a brief look at one or two specifically aimed at assisting the poor will help to ascertain the mindset that drove their charitable activities.

The Society for Bettering the Conditions and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor (the Bettering Society) was co-founded by William Wilberforce, Thomas Bernard and the Hon. Edward James Eliot in 1796. The stated aims of this society were ‘to collect information respecting the circumstances and situation of the poor, and the most effective means of meliorating their condition.’\textsuperscript{16} The society aimed to ‘supply the public with details on every subject respecting the poor, [and] to suggest the mode of active and useful charity’ which could be undertaken.\textsuperscript{17} Underpinning these objectives, however, was also the desire to ‘promote the cause of morality and virtue’\textsuperscript{18} among the labouring poor. The Bettering Society sought to ‘remove the difficulties attending parochial relief, and the discouragement of industry and economy, by the present mode of distributing it’.\textsuperscript{19} These latter objectives were seen as necessary because reliance on the poor rate by people considered ‘hostile to any permanent improvement in their condition’, along with an annual expenditure resulting in ‘no improvement in the condition of the poor’, were outcomes that were considered a growing evil by many.\textsuperscript{20} If the poor were given handouts with no expectations attached, then it was considered that this would take away their incentive for self improvement. The self-help

\textsuperscript{16} The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor, 4\textsuperscript{th} ed., Vol. 1, London, Savage and Easingwood (1805), p.393
\textsuperscript{17} The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor (1805), p.15
\textsuperscript{18} The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor (1805), p.391
\textsuperscript{19} The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor (1805), p.391
\textsuperscript{20} The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor (1805), pp.2-3
philosophy adopted by reformers was perceived as the answer to poverty, and the behaviour and attitude of the poor was considered crucial to alleviating their own distress. If industry and economy were practised by the poor, then their situation would improve and the need for reliance on charity would be non-existent. The reports of the Bettering Society contained numerous articles advising the methods that the poor could utilise to better their conditions, including practical advice on how to save money on clothes and food, and how to erect their own cottages.21 The Bettering Society was mindful of giving injudicious charity and expected that the poor, when induced to live a moral and industrious life, would become a ‘valuable part of the community’ and not reliant on assistance.22

The reports of the Bettering Society did not consist of overtly religious dogma and focused mostly on the means of improving the conditions of the poor through their own efforts. An article by an anonymous author, however, and published by the Society entitled Twelve True Old Golden Rules, is indicative that religious belief was still an integral part of reformers’ attitudes to the poor:

Sin is the greatest of all evils; the salvation of the soul our best good; and THE GRACE OF GOD our richest treasure. Let the poor man find his way to the cheapest market on Saturday, to a place of divine worship on Sunday, and, like an honest man, go to his labour on Monday. Following these plain directions, he may be twice happy; HAPPY HERE, AND HAPPY HEREAFTER TO ALL ETERNITY.23

To evangelical reformers it no doubt appeared all so simple. If the poor lived their lives in a moral and industrious manner, lived within their means no matter how scarce money and employment prospects were, and followed God’s teachings, they would be

---

21 For a full list of articles, see the indexes to the reports of The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor.
22 The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor (1805), p.10
23 ‘Twelve True Old Golden Rules’ in The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor (1805), pp.392-395
happy both in their present life, and then in their eternal life. What is not evident in this mindset is the understanding that even when the labouring classes did live their lives following middle-class values, social and economic factors beyond their control could still ensure they required assistance to survive. If employment was not available, even the most worthy could not meet their own basic needs without assistance, with the workhouse then being the only other option open to them for survival.

The Bettering Society's main objective was the dissemination of information, which was aimed at reformers undertaking charitable works. This information reinforced the values and philosophies that were considered by the middle-classes as the blueprint to reforming society. Another society also set up by evangelical reformers, which had at its heart moral reform but was also involved in providing practical relief, was The Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor at Clapham (Clapham Bettering Society). This Society was founded in 1799 by the Reverend John Venn, a member of the Clapham Sect, who had also earlier revived the Clapham Poor Society in response to the needs of a growing number of poor. The Clapham Bettering Society acknowledged the deficiencies of the Poor Laws in which relief to those in need was still often restricted, and considered that local knowledge would enable better distribution of relief as and when needed. The stated three principles of this Society were to improve the morals of the poor, distribute more complete relief to the needy, and encourage the poor in their work ethic.\(^{24}\) Again a focus on moral reformation, and a push to inculcate middle-class values onto the poorer classes, is apparent. The Society divided the local parish into eight districts and Visitors were nominated for each area.\(^{25}\) When relief was applied for, a Visitor gathered information on the applicant and a judgement was made as to the level of relief to be provided. Information gathered included the moral

\(^{24}\) Rules and Regulations of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor at Clapham, Surrey, Clapham (1829), pp.10-11

\(^{25}\) Rules and Regulations of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor at Clapham, pp.5-6
character of the applicant, whether he/she attended church, weekly wages, and why relief was needed.\textsuperscript{26} Stringent regulations governed the distribution of charity and aimed to help those classified as the deserving poor. These were people deemed to be involved in honest industry and not in fraudulent and deceptive practices.\textsuperscript{27} Money was not given to those requesting assistance, only purchases of what the Society deemed necessary were distributed. People who were unemployed, but considered deserving, were provided with items such as spinning wheels and materials to enable the manufacture of goods for sale.\textsuperscript{28} Blankets were loaned out only to ‘the most indigent and deserving amongst the poor’ and only the ‘truly industrious’ received materials to assist their employment opportunities.\textsuperscript{29} The Society considered that it was only ‘a discriminating charity, an [sic] union of judgment and charity’ that should guide the distribution of poor relief.\textsuperscript{30}

This very paternalistic approach to poor relief was indicative of contemporary thinking that saw the need to strictly control the lives of the labouring classes and inculcate particular ways of living. Advocates of a self-help philosophy considered internal regulation the answer to poverty and failed to take into account the impact of any external factors, even for those whom they classified as deserving poor.

Along with these examples of evangelical organisations concerned with the provision of charity to the poor, Quakers were also major contributors in this area. As seen in the movement to abolish capital punishment, and as will also be demonstrated in the remaining chapters of this thesis, Quakers and evangelicals often worked side by side in

\textsuperscript{26} Rules and Regulations of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor at Clapham, p.16
\textsuperscript{27} Thomas Bernard, ‘Extract from an account of a society for bettering the condition of the poor at Clapham’ in The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor, (1805), p.335
\textsuperscript{28} Rules and Regulations of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor at Clapham, p.17
\textsuperscript{29} Rules and Regulations of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor at Clapham, p.13
\textsuperscript{30} Rules and Regulations of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor at Clapham, p.26
many areas of social reform. Quakers were the instigators behind the formation of many committees and organisations to deal with issues of poor relief that were non-denominational, and often made up the majority of members, as well as holding positions of influence. Similar beliefs on ways to reform society, such as a self-help philosophy and laissez-faire economics, saw Quakers become involved with inter-denominational societies, and working closely together to achieve their aims, despite any fundamental religious differences. In instances like the provision of charity, religious ideology did not generally result in divisions amongst reformers as had happened in the provision of educational services. When the national religion was not considered under threat, humanitarian ideals were able to take precedence over religious doctrinal differences.

It was not surprising that Quakers became involved in charitable enterprises when they began to mix again with the outside world towards the end of the eighteenth century, because it was far from a new concept to them. Providing aid to their own members had always been part of the Quaker culture. The first instance of this was when the persecution of Quakers, in the very early years of their movement, had resulted in high numbers of Quakers being incarcerated and often unable to care for their families, or themselves, while in prison. Money was needed to help prisoners and their families survive and in 1675 the Yearly Meeting of Ministers sanctioned the set-up of the Meeting for Sufferings, whose initial aim was to seek redress for Quakers who had suffered as a result of imprisonment, or the confiscation of goods. Quakers contributed funds to this meeting and ‘proved themselves rich in charity…by the sacrifices which they made for the relief of their more afflicted associates’. The Meeting for Sufferings

31 See Appendix A for examples of various reform societies that included both Quaker and non-Quaker committee members.
also operated as a ‘vigilance committee on sufferings, to receive regular reports of all cases that arose’ and to re-imburse the expenses Quakers had incurred in their attempts to obtain redress from the British Government. Financial aid was also given to Quaker members who were facing bankruptcy, providing it was considered that the circumstances leading to this were beyond the individual’s control, as it was considered a serious personal failing that brought disrepute to the Quakers as a whole. Being declared bankrupt was condemned and ultimately resulted in the disownment of members. What these examples of Quaker charitable undertakings indicate is that prior to the nineteenth century, Quakers were very involved with relieving distress, but their focus was mainly within their own group and not outside it.

The Quaker historian Arnold Lloyd, in his social history of Quakers up until 1738, discusses their charitable pursuits and notes that Quakers were not heavily into philanthropy in the wider community. Quaker focus was mostly aimed inwards because of the great need within their own society, especially in the early years, but this did not mean that Quakers totally neglected charity outside their sect. Quakers saw it as their mission to relieve suffering, with George Fox’s journal indicating this concern. Fox wrote in 1657 that ‘our religion lies in that which brings to visit the poor’ and in 1660 offered the Mayor of Bristol twenty pounds a year for hire of the town hall for meetings if the money was given to the poor. Fox also wrote about how sometimes up to two hundred poor people would come and wait outside Quaker meetings, after which Quakers would ‘send to the bakers for bread, and give every one of these poor people a penny loaf, how many soever there were of them; for we were taught to “do good unto

33 LYM, Church Government, p.60
35 Barbour, The Quakers in Puritan England, p.175
37 Penney, The Journal of George Fox, pp.151-152
38 Penney, The Journal of George Fox, p.180
all; though especially to the household of faith.”  

This shows that Quakers were especially focused on providing help to Quaker members, but this did not preclude those in need not belonging to the Society. The Quaker social reformer John Bellers also noted in 1699 that ‘the ill morals and miseries of the poor, are scandalous to our religion to the last degree, charity and virtue being the greatest ornaments and excellencies of Christianity.’

Examples of Quakers providing charity outside their group throughout the eighteenth century included aid to German Pietists and French Huguenots; the provision of funds to the needy during the American Revolutionary War; relief for victims from the Napoleonic Wars; and free medical attention for the poor at the Quaker owned General Dispensary in London. From this it is clear that providing assistance to those in need was not a new concept to Quakers prior to the nineteenth century, and they did not discriminate in its provision. The majority of their charitable assistance, however, was directed towards their own members, especially during the Quietest period when Quaker interaction with the outside world was very limited. When the influence of evangelicalism and liberalism in the late eighteenth century resulted in Quakers becoming more involved in philanthropy and social reform outside the confines of the Quaker denomination, it was a relatively easy transition for them to extend their approach to charity beyond their own membership. Industrialisation by this time had begun to impact heavily on the poorer classes and Quakers responded by becoming involved, both individually and within an organisational structure, to provide charitable relief outside their own membership to those in most need.

39 Penney, The Journal of George Fox, p.184
42 This change in Quaker interactions with the outside world was discussed in Chapter Three.
The Spitalfields Soup Society is one example of an inter-denominational organisation that Quakers were involved in setting up to help relieve distress amongst the poor. This benevolent institution included both Quakers and Evangelicals as participants, as well as other Nonconformists. While the Society was non-denominational, Quakers were the driving force behind its origins and therefore influential in its ideals and purpose. The Spitalfields Soup Society was started in 1797 chiefly by Quakers William Allen and William Phillips, and was set up to address the poverty faced by hand-loom weavers who became unemployed because of advances in technology. Again, this committee was Quaker dominated, with a large number of the committee being Quakers.43 William Allen recorded in his diary in 1812 that ‘On occasions of public calamity, Friends’ post must be the care of the poor and the relief of distress,’44 indicating that he considered it the Quaker duty to alleviate suffering. Allen was ‘deeply affected with the sufferings of the poor in Spitalfields, many of whom were in a state of absolute starvation’ and resolved to devise a plan, with the aid of some of his friends, to help the worst cases.45 The aim of the Soup Society was to be able to provide meat soup to the poor at a penny a quart, a price that was around one-fifth of normal cost.46 The distress in Spitalfields was so great, however, that the Society was forced to limit soup to the same person every second day only in an attempt to help as many of the poor as possible. The Society calculated that they were able to feed 7000 people every day which would have been of great assistance to those in distress, considering that the service was provided at a loss of more than 150l. per week.47 Donations to sustain the service were received from individual contributors from all walks of life, and from various corporate organisations including the East India Company, the City of London,

44 Allen, Life of William Allen, Vol. 1, p.148
and the Royal Exchange Assurance, attesting to the collaboration of people banding together for a common cause. William Allen understood that with various religions working together ‘for the relief of suffering humanity,’ accomplishments could be made that would not be possible without inter-denominational cooperation. Allen was a very early proponent of networking and understood the value of combining resources in an attempt to ensure the most satisfactory outcomes.

Another inter-denominational society that was heavily influenced by Quakers in its formation was the Spitalfields Association for the Relief of some particular Cases of Distress among the Industrious Poor (Spitalfields Association for the Industrious Poor). Once again, the majority of members of the committee were Quakers, indicating the extent of Quaker involvement, and concern, with the issue of poverty. While the Spitalfields Soup Society’s aim was to provide life-saving nourishment to as many people in distress as possible, it was realised by the Spitalfields Association for the Industrious Poor that ‘in a district so poor, so wretched, and extensive, much remained to be done’. Setting up the Soup Society had alerted committee members to the fact that a lot more was required than providing a bowl of soup every couple of days to those in most need. Also, a wider area than the immediate Spitalfields area needed to be canvassed in an attempt to capture more of the people in dire straits. Similar to the set-up of the Clapham Bettering Society, the Spitalfields area was divided into districts, each with its own sub-committee and Visitors. The by-laws of the Spitalfields Association for the Industrious Poor were very similar to the other societies we have looked at, indicating the inter-connectedness between various religious denominations. The Spitalfields Association for the Industrious Poor stated in its by-laws in 1812 that

49 ‘Spitalfields Association for the Relief of some particular Cases of Distress among the Industrious Poor’ in The Philanthropist, Vol. II, p.239
50 ‘Spitalfields Association for the Relief of some particular Cases of Distress among the Industrious Poor’, p.239
‘they carefully avoid granting any pecuniary or other assistance where there may be reason to support it would have a tendency to encourage idleness,’\textsuperscript{51} again being indicative of the focus of many organisations not to hand out injudicious relief. Other assistance included the provision of food at reduced prices, and clothing.\textsuperscript{52} The Society was aware of the level of distress amongst the poor in Spitalfields and because not enough funds were available to totally alleviate the distress, including rent arrears, the Society resolved not to pay any monies owed by the poor. Instead, its members attempted to provide the basic necessities deemed necessary to allow the poor to ‘bear up under their present difficulties’ until such time as full employment once again became available.\textsuperscript{53} The poor were visited to ensure that they were in need of relief and anyone needing assistance was granted it within the means of the Society, although there would have been value judgements made on what level of need constituted the handing out of relief. This indicates a concern with the rights of individuals to the basic necessities for survival, which in extreme circumstances, were provided without any qualifications.

Even with this evidence that the rights of the poor to relief measures sometimes took precedence over the morality of recipients, there is no escaping the fact that the notion of moral reform was generally embedded within the provision of poor relief. Most middle-class reform activism was informed by understandings of how society should behave, especially the labouring classes. The mainstay of moral reform was self-help philosophies and charity was generally very tightly controlled to ensure that only those considered deserving individuals received help. There was great concern amongst

\textsuperscript{51} ‘Spitalfields Association for the Relief of some particular Cases of Distress among the Industrious Poor’, p.242
\textsuperscript{52} ‘Spitalfields Association for the Relief of some particular Cases of Distress among the Industrious Poor’, p.242
\textsuperscript{53} ‘Spitalfields Association for the Relief of some particular Cases of Distress among the Industrious Poor’, p.241
moral reformers that the ‘undeserving’ poor would benefit from charitable organisations when they were not considered worthy recipients. Quakers also took up this position, which was not surprising considering they were involved in setting up societies which operated under these middle-class notions. William Allen had written in 1811 that it was the duty of benefactors to ‘select the objects of our bounty; to discriminate between the idle and profligate, and the industrious and deserving, to inquire into their condition, and to see what we bestow is properly applied’. He added that without proper inspection ‘by upright and disinterested persons, many thousand pounds left for charitable purposes, are at this moment diverted from their proper channels, and instead of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and instructing the ignorant, according to the pious intentions of the donors, are become the prey of designing individuals.’ Allen further outlined this position when he stated that:

Benevolent individuals may exert themselves in the cause of the poor to the greatest advantage, by a personal inspection into their real situation, by watching over the administration of those funds which are raised by the authority of parliament, and by discriminating between the honest industrious and peaceable sufferer, and those pests of society who are eager to avail themselves of every opportunity to create disturbance.

It is obvious that for many reformers, including Quakers, inspections were required before charity could be dispensed, and the notion of deserving and undeserving poor certainly dominated the actions of many middle-class reformers. Also of concern, however, was that those in most need of poor relief were missing out because of false claims made by some members of society. To combat the perceived possible mis-use of charitable donations, the Spitalfields Soup Society, for instance, allowed its members ‘the privilege of issuing six recommendations per week, until the number of applicants

55 ‘On the Duty and Pleasure of Cultivating Benevolent Dispositions’, p.4
56 ‘Association for the Relief and Benefit of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor, established in London May 1812’ in The Philanthropist, Vol. II, p.237
exceed the means of supply.  

This stance is somewhat understandable when demand for relief far outstripped availability. Reformers were attempting to ensure that, along with those they considered deserving, recipients in real need received the benefit of what were, at times, very limited resources. What happened to those requiring assistance after the maximum number of recommendations was met is unknown, but this method of dispensing charity was ultimately reliant on the behaviour of intended recipients conforming to the expectations of reformers. Recipients were those judged by Visitors of the Society to be "the worst cases" and the Society acknowledged that "many who greatly need this assistance find it impossible to procure tickets." The actions taken by these reformers were based on the principles of political economy. As members of the middle-classes, both Quaker and non-Quaker reformers held many similar philosophical beliefs, including similar attitudes towards poverty, its causes and its remedies. As previously discussed, a belief in a self-help philosophy influenced many reformers’ actions in their charitable efforts towards the poor. Evidence of this mindset can be seen in Harriet Martineau’s 1834 nine volume publication *Illustrations of Political Economy* in which she aims to teach the working masses the principles of political economy. In one article, ‘Cousin Marshall’, Martineau highlights the social depravities suffered by the ‘deserving poor’ after being sent to workhouses, against the portrayal of a woman who retains her dignity and independence, through her own actions, despite abject poverty. Martineau’s fictionalised accounts provide us with a general understanding of the time, and the mindset of reformers. Many social reformers considered that providing assistance to the poor, in order for them to become moral, upstanding citizens without resorting to workhouses, would be beneficial to society as a whole. Many Quakers were

---

also part of this understanding, owing to their position in society. In her autobiography, Martineau reports that Elizabeth Fry told her that members of her own family, including JJ Gurney, became convinced that ‘the true way of benefiting the poor was to reform the Poor-law system’ after reading ‘Cousin Marshall’. Reform was seen as necessary because the current Poor Laws only promoted idleness and profligacy instead of hard work, individual effort, and moral behaviour.

Quakers followed this middle-class discourse on moral reform from the outset of their involvement in charitable relief, and it was still a part of their mindset in the 1840s. A statement published in The Friend in 1847 noting that charity should not be wasted on the ‘idle and dissolute, who positively refuse to work…[and who] take the bread from the mouths of those who really require its support’, indicates the attitude was still prevalent at this time. Another article in 1847, concerned with the notion of deserving and undeserving poor, stated that ‘out of ten cases of apparent distress which came before us for consideration, only one was found to be deserving of relief; and in another instance, out of 100 cases, the same proportion as before, or 90, were found to be undeserving.’ The language, and message of these articles, is indicative of many early nineteenth-century reformers and shows charity was generally directly linked with the moral behaviour of the poor. The distinction between deserving and undeserving ensured most reformers directed their philanthropic endeavours towards recipients whose morals, manners and work habits conformed most to their own ideas of moral industriousness. The laws of political economy at this time governed this mindset, with reformers considering this approach the most beneficial to society as a whole. Even though Quaker reform activism was informed by these values, there have been glimpses

62 The Friend, (1847), p.5
where concern for the poor took precedence over a moral agenda, as just seen with the Soup Society’s efforts in feeding the destitute. Further evidence of this will be seen later in this chapter when it will be obvious that Quaker provision of poor relief was sometimes very different to their rhetoric. Quakers took up the ideas of the middle-classes concerning the need to reform the lower classes, but their humanitarianism often superseded these beliefs.

The religious beliefs of both Quakers and evangelicals were integral in their reform efforts to help the poor and disadvantaged of society, and informed much of their social activism. There were, however, subtle differences between these two groups that ensured their reasons for providing poor relief differed in some ways. For evangelicals, good works were seen as a sign of conversion, a belief that transformation was possible. Evangelicals also believed that all members of society should obey scriptural laws and were forthright in spreading this message. They interpreted conditions in society as a test of their spiritual resolve and of their commitment to a moral society, and their moralising agenda is evident in the societies in which they were involved. They attempted to inculcate the lower classes with their vision of a new moral order, which included taking the gospel to everyone. Evangelicals were seeking the salvation of others; it was at the heart of their proselytising and went hand-in-hand with their good works. National salvation was at stake and the moral regeneration of the poor was the evangelical objective, and response, to social change that they saw as threatening the stability of the established order.

64 Roberts, *Making English Morals*, p.47
For the majority of Quakers, good works were also an integral undertaking of their Christian faith, but it was not a sign of their conversion. Quakers considered that good works were undertaken because the gospel required it, everyone was of value, and acts of service were a manifestation of God’s love and mission. Another difference between Quakers and evangelicals was that Quakers were not out in the field actively pursuing converts. Quakers believed that if they spread the message of the gospel, God would take care of the rest. Gaining converts to ensure their salvation was not integral to Quaker reform activism and was not an essential element with their acts of service. Henry T. Hodgkin, secretary of the Friends Foreign Mission Association, wrote that ‘Quakerism, in its essence, is not a system; it is a spirit. If we could get back to the living experience of the early days, all that would be needed would be to go out and communicate it, and leave the results with God.’67 Although written in 1916, Hodgkin encapsulates the Quaker ethos that had existed since their formation, but which found a new voice by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Quakers lived their lives according to the teachings of the gospel, but a moralising and/or proselytising agenda was not as all-embracing in their discourses as it often was with evangelicals. The concept of the Inner Light, which Quakers considered was a direct personal experience with God, needed to be experienced by individuals and could not be taught. No doubt there were evangelical Quakers who followed evangelical beliefs more closely than Quaker doctrine at times, but generally speaking, Quakers remained true to their own religious beliefs in their reform activism.

Quakers and Evangelicals were both adherents to the same self-help philosophy that permeated throughout the reform activities of the middle classes. This self-help philosophy was evident in societies such as the Bettering Society and was the mainstay

of most nineteenth-century reform organisations. What is apparent is that while Quakers utilised the rhetoric of the middle classes in relation to moral reform and poor relief, in reality they also provided humanitarian relief without a reform agenda. This position was different to many evangelical organisations where moral reform was integral to the provision of poor relief. The language of middle-class ideology, which positioned such ideals as moral integrity, industriousness, thrift and sobriety as being the cornerstones of society and the benchmark for poor relief, was espoused by Quakers in theory, but often not in reality. Intellectually Quakers adhered to the classical political economy of the day, but what they practised was sometimes quite different. An examination of the Irish Famine which began in the late 1840s provides a clear example of where Quaker humanitarianism, and the needs of the poor, took precedence over a moral reform agenda.

During the period 1845 to 1851 in Ireland potato blight affected the potato crop with disastrous consequences. The potato crop failure resulted in a death toll, in the most recent estimates, of about one million with approximately one million people emigrating.68 Famine relief provided by the British government was woefully inadequate for the needs of the Irish people, condemning many people to death by starvation. Irish Quakers took up the cause and formed a Central Relief Committee in November 1846 to raise funds and gather information on the best means of alleviating the distress in Ireland. At the same time, the Committee of the Society of Friends in London was founded (London Committee) to garner subscriptions and raise awareness of the issue in Great Britain.69 One English Quaker noted that ‘We rejoice to find that there is a strong inclination on the part of many Friends to come forward liberally with

their aid.\footnote{70} The input of Friends was again noted a year later when the London Committee reported that the distress caused by the famine ‘has taken so universal a hold upon the sympathies of Friends, and the members of our own Society are so extensively occupied in its relief.’\footnote{71} Between the London and Irish committees, Quakers worked tirelessly to disseminate information, raise awareness and elicit enough funds in an attempt to deal with the horrendous outcomes of the famine.

In 1847 the British government introduced the Irish Poor Law which was based on the same workhouse system that operated in England.\footnote{72} This placed the burden of famine relief solely on Irish property owners and local taxation. Unfortunately there were not enough landlords to pay for the relief needed, resulting in many deaths because of inadequate resources for the poor. Many English Quakers attempted to alleviate the distress of the starving Irish peasants by providing, along with monetary assistance, practical relief to those in need, at a time when arguments were being put forth as to why aid should not be provided. Donal A. Kerr, an Irish Professor of Ecclesiastical History, argues that to some of the English people, as well as some Irish Bishops, the famine was the result of divine providence, it was ‘a visitation from God, a punishment for sin, a humbling of pride, and a call to repentance.’\footnote{73} Charles Trevelyan, the Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, and the person responsible for relief during the Irish Famine, also believed in the theory of divine providence and saw the famine as punishment from God on the sinful and wayward Irish people.\footnote{74} The following excerpt from an article in

\footnote{70} The Friend, (1846), p.229
\footnote{71} The Friend, (1847), p.32
The Friend during the famine highlights some of the other arguments against helping the starving Irish, including their perceived lack of culture, a society seen as uncivilised, and absentee Irish landlords. The article also gives us a very clear indication that despite these arguments, the first and foremost concern of Quakers was the rights of the Irish poor. All other considerations were secondary when people were starving and Quakers did not heed these arguments when people’s lives were at risk:

In reference to some of the obstacles which have been thrown in the way of sending pecuniary help from this country, such as the peculiar character of the Irish peasantry, their insubordinate, savage conduct at the present moment, many of those who have the means supplying themselves with arms, and the ability and obligation of the landowners to support their own starving poor, we would ask, Are famishing men and women to be left to perish, because others are wicked enough to turn the calamity into an occasion of outrage, or because those who should care for them neglect them, or even because they themselves might have provided against the evil time?...But supporting those charges to be true, they furnish no sufficient ground for the people of England to leave their fellow-creatures on the other side of the channel to perish.....It must be acknowledged, that to keep the starving population alive is our first and present duty; and when the violence of suffering is abated, there will be an opportunity and peradventure an open ground to sow the seeds of future improvement.75

Irrespective of what Quakers thought of the arguments put forth as to whether aid should be provided, and by whom, their initial focus was in keeping people alive; all other questions could be decided at a later date once the immediate needs of the starving Irish people were met. Some Quakers did take up some of the arguments concerning the stereotypical Irish, but these were secondary considerations to be debated once the pressing need to stop people starving was over. An example of this mindset can be seen in articles published in The Friend in 1847 which stated that, in Ireland, ‘moral culture is wanting, where the relations of society are dislocated, and ignorance, sloth and distrust

75 The Friend, (1847), p.12
abound’, whilst another lamented the need for the ‘moral and physical improvement of Ireland.’ The above excerpt also indicates that the English stereotype of the Irish as being poor, lazy and lacking in all the social niceties existed amongst some Quakers. What did occur, however, was that even with contrasting opinions concerning the moral fibre of the Irish, there appeared to be a consistent Quaker response to the famine. It has already been discussed that Quakers were a diverse group, and that a blanket approach cannot be applied to their activism, but during the famine it seems that many English Quakers participated, by one means or another, in trying to alleviate the distress of those in the most dire of circumstances. The need to provide practical relief did not allow notions of cultural inferiority to interfere with the practicalities of what was required. Quakers understood the desperate need that existed during the famine and attempted to relieve as much misery and distress as they could. Counteracting any arguments put forward as to why relief should not be provided, the Quaker James H. Tuke, who travelled throughout Ireland with William Forster to ascertain for the London Committee the level of distress, summed up the Quaker response when he wrote ‘It is useless to talk of principles of political economy, when people are really starving.’ Quaker humanitarian concern outweighed factors such as free trade principles, and a perceived need to raise the moral standards of the Irish people. An American Quaker following the situation in Ireland provided a good summary of the Quaker position when he wrote that:

It is painful to me to read in the Irish papers, the bickering of political bodies; the repetition of old animosities; the abuse of those in power;

---

76 The Friend, (1847), p.91
77 The Friend, (1847), p.31
79 While it is not possible to prove that the majority of English Quakers participated in alleviating distress resulting from the famine, in the journals I have considered I did not come across one article that discussed not helping the poor in Ireland.
80 The Friend, (1847), p.11
in fact, every topic calculated to increase bad feeling; losing sight of the only true union – one of brotherly love and kindness.  

Quakers were able to put aside any preconceived ideas they may have held concerning the situation in Ireland and attempted to provide sustenance to the starving population, an act of great humanity. The right of the poor to sustenance, and therefore life, was their foremost concern. A common humanity over-rode understandings of cultural difference and resulted in Quakers endeavouring to ensure the survival of Irish peasants facing starvation.

Quaker humanitarian concern is very evident when Quakers put the survival of Irish peasants over and above their Peace testimony, a theological position they had held since their inception. A Declaration to Charles II in 1661 sums up the Quaker position concerning war, stating ‘All bloody principles and practices, we,...do utterly deny, with all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world’. During the famine, however, Quakers allowed a naval vessel to carry supplies of food and clothing to Ireland, an act in conflict with their total opposition to war and weapons of destruction. The use of a naval vessel was justified by one Quaker when he wrote that ‘we apprehend no uneasiness need to be felt by Friends in our thus employing for purposes of mercy a vessel built as the agent of destruction. Such an appropriation is rather cause for rejoicing; it brings to mind the saying of our Lord himself, “Is it lawful to save life or to kill?”’. Allowing the use of a naval ship to ferry supplies to Ireland indicates that to Quakers, saving lives was paramount above all else. They put the needs of the Irish poor before their own, or anyone else’s, belief systems.

81 Society of Friends, Central Relief Committee, Transactions of the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends during the famine in Ireland, in 1846 and 1847, Dublin, Hodges and Smith (1852), p.322
82 Nickalls, The Journal of George Fox, p.399
83 The Friend, (1847), p.52
An examination of the report of the London Committee concerning the famine shows that Quaker concern for the starving Irish did rest upon a concept of a basic right to life. The report noted that:

We would remind our Friends, that the present is not the case of ordinary poverty seeking relief at the hand of charity, or of an appeal for a few added comforts for those who have already a supply of the bare necessaries of life. It is practically a case of famine, and the duties which the Divine law enjoins upon those who have towards those who have not, who are destitute of daily food and ready to perish, come into direct and literal application.  

Quakers saw it as their duty to help those who were suffering, and they undertook many practical actions in this regard. One action undertaken by Quakers during the famine was funding soup kitchens, which were often the only means of sustenance for those who were starving. William Forster had experience with setting up soup kitchens in his dealings with the poor of Norwich and he saw it as his duty to assist in ensuring soup kitchens were set up to help the starving Irish. Soup kitchens were established in a number of counties in Ireland, under the care of English Quakers, and were modelled on the successful soup kitchens run by William Allen and his colleagues in Spitalfields. Appeals were also made to Quakers in America who responded with funds, and also shipments of clothing and food. Clothing was of major concern in Ireland during the famine because when people needed money in the early days of the famine they pawned clothes for food. Subsequently a lack of clothing could result in suffering and death during the freezing winters. Along with donations from American Quakers, women Quakers in London took up the cause of providing clothing to the starving Irish and the ‘Ladies Irish Clothing Society’ sent fabrics in an effort to encourage employment in

84 Address of the Committee to the Members of the Society of Friends in England, Appendix II, London (1846), cited in Society of Friends, Transactions of the Central Relief Committee, p.135
86 Goodbody, A Suitable Channel, p.17
87 The Friend, (1846), p.229
88 Goodbody, A Suitable Channel, pp.23-24
Ireland. These were all practical measures undertaken by Quakers and were attempts to ensure that the Irish poor were furnished with the necessities to ensure their survival. Quakers were at the coalface where relief was concerned, contributing in more ways than merely donating money to perhaps salvage their conscience, without a second thought for the practicalities of the situation. One Quaker relief worker in Ireland noted:

If I were merely to consult my personal ease, I would greatly prefer being a donor to being a distributor of relief. It is much easier for a man to put his hand into his purse than to labour from morning till night in giving out stirabout to crowds of half-clad, hungry people sinking with weakness or fever.90

Donations of funds were the cornerstone of private relief efforts in Ireland and without them the death toll probably would have been much greater than it was. The above quote, however, indicates that many Quakers understood the urgent need to also provide practical relief in an attempt to alleviate the distress. One English Quaker, William Bennett, travelled to Ireland at his own expense to ‘effect the planting with seed of a certain section of land belonging to the poor’.91 Bennett supplied some of the poor Irish cottiers with ‘seed, carrot, turnip and flax’ to enable the planting of crops,92 indicating an awareness that practical solutions, such as farming and industry, needed to be implemented to help the Irish economy recover. An Irish farmer told a reporter in 1849 that it was due to the Society of Friends that he was able to grow his crops successfully because ‘we worked with the Quakers last year’ who showed them how to grow green crops, relying less on potatoes.93 Quakers took this approach as a means of alleviating chronic food shortages during the worst of the famine, without any moralising on their part. They understood that Irish self-sufficiency was a key to ensuring the future

89 Goodbody, A Suitable Channel, p.43
91 The Friend, (1847), p.52
92 The Friend, (1847), p.93
93 Society of Friends, Transactions of the Central Relief Committee, p.425
survival of many of the Irish poor. Once the urgency of attempting to stop people dying from starvation had subsided, however, and the threat of death was not as imminent in areas where aid had been provided, the philosophy of self help began to re-emerge within Quaker relief efforts. This did not occur, however, until all measures were taken to stop the immediate suffering of the Irish people.

This re-emergence is evident when Quakers began to encourage industry and the development of Ireland’s resources, rather than hand out ‘gratuitous relief’, except to the sick, and young children. Quakers declared ‘that to help men most effectually, you must teach them to help themselves.’ An example of this philosophy can be seen in Quaker relief efforts in the fishing village of Claddagh, a suburb of Galway. Most inhabitants had pawned their fishing nets and tackle to purchase food, thereby losing their means of employment. Rather than merely handing out charity, the Quaker Committee in London voted 100 pounds to retrieve the nets and tackle, enabling the village fishermen to again take up their employment and earn an income, and thereby the means to support themselves. Loans were made to other fishing villages, with 300 pounds being considered sufficient to buy enough boats and tackle to give subsistence to 500-600 people. Farming communities were also aided by the provision of seed and vegetables to encourage crop growing. Quakers understood that in order for the Irish economy to develop and not be as reliant on potato crops, existing and new industries needed to be encouraged.

Even though Quakers followed a self-help philosophy in their relief work with the Irish once the threat of death by starvation had subsided, it was not reliant upon the concept

94 The Friend, (1848), p.163
95 The Friend, (1847), p.52
96 The Friend, (1847), p.88
97 The Friend, (1848), pp.49-50
98 The Friend, (1847), p.93
of a ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor. Quakers realised the need to take action to benefit whole communities and provided both direct and indirect relief to alleviate distress, and encourage long-term solutions to the problems facing the Irish. Aiding fisheries, improving land cultivation systems, and distributing crop seeds to farmers were Quaker solutions to some of the deficiencies in the Irish economic system that had been highlighted by the Irish famine. Moral reform was not high on the Quaker agenda when they were attempting to revitalise whole communities and their economic survival. Quakers also did not take up the rhetoric of Divine Providence being responsible for the horrors of the Irish famine, and then wash their hands of the problems facing Ireland. Instead of seeing the famine as a judgement against an immoral and wasted land that was sent to improve Ireland’s economic viability, many Quakers considered that a benevolent God was ‘present with those who need it the most, the destitute, crushed, and famine-stricken inhabitants.’ Quakers mostly approached the famine with humanitarian ideals and not a moral judgement.

Historian Christine Kinealy considers the Quakers were one of the two more important agencies during the Irish Famine. The other agency, the British Relief Association, was formed by wealthy London businessmen, but a number of Quakers were also involved with this agency, including Jonathan Pim from Dublin and the English Quaker Samuel Gurney. Donations were made by other religious groups but nowhere on the scale of these two agencies. As well as being major fundraisers to the cause, Quakers were also personally involved in the distribution of relief and were able to distribute aid directly to the needy, bypassing the bureaucracy of government financial

99 *The Friend*, (1848), p.164
100 *The Friend*, (1847), p.11
102 Kinealy, ‘Potatoes, providence and philanthropy’. p.156
103 Kinealy, ‘Potatoes, providence and philanthropy’. p.157
contributions. A measure of their success can be seen from the British Government asking them in 1848 and 1849 to again start up their operations, and they were commended by many for their impartiality, fairness and reliability. Whilst Quakers were not the only agency involved in attempts to alleviate distress during the Irish Famine, some historians, such as Christine Kinealy and Helen E. Hatton, consider they were the most successful.

One of the reasons for this was that they did not look to blame, only to render assistance. Another reason for their success in Ireland is that Quakers provided relief regardless of religious faith and helped whoever was in the greatest need irrespective of whether they were Catholic or Protestant. Quakers did not allow religious beliefs to interfere with their mission of providing assistance, unlike some other religious groups. English Quaker Edmund Richards wrote that one local relief committee, with a Protestant chairman and Roman Catholic secretary, did not work well together and the ‘destitute suffer from their inefficiency.’ Helen Hatton argues that ‘God disappears very quickly from the Quaker writings during the Famine’ whilst evangelical Protestants, along with helping to provide famine relief, also used Ireland to further their aims of conversion and moral reform. David Hempton and Myrtle Hill, in their 1992 study *Evangelical Protestants in Ulster society 1740-1890*, agree with Hatton’s position, declaring that evangelicals considered the Bible the only tool needed for Ireland’s moral reformation. Quakers did not practise what came to be known as souperism, which was the expectation that relief was conditional upon the recipient attending church, or

---

104 Kinealy, ‘Potatoes, providence and philanthropy’, p.143
105 Hatton, *The Largest Amount of Good*, p.251
106 Hatton, *The Largest Amount of Good*, p.252
107 Goodbody, *A Suitable Channel*, p.39
108 Society of Friends, *Transactions of the Central Relief Committee*, p.172
109 Hatton, *The Largest Amount of Good*, p.253
Protestants had been accused of offering food only to Catholics who converted to the Protestant faith, although Christine Kinealy states that while popularly believed, this was a practice that was ‘less widespread and less successful’ than claimed. The English Quaker William Foster, who toured Ireland on behalf of the London Committee to see first-hand the conditions, did note that he saw Roman Catholics and Protestants ‘uniting together in common efforts to save their poor neighbours,’ although he makes no comment on their methods. Evangelicals certainly took the famine as a sign from God to undertake a mission in Ireland, holding a belief that the famine was a judgement from God that required suffering to bring salvation, and they took their mission seriously. Political leaders also espoused the view that the famine was ordained and saw it as having a positive outcome which would lead to the reformation of Ireland.

The famine provides a good example of the difference in approach to charity relief between Quakers and Evangelicals. Whilst religion underpinned the relief work of both groups, Quakers did not combine their famine relief with a missionary purpose. While missions were a key component of evangelicalism, which would have influenced evangelical relief efforts at least to some extent, Quakers put practicality first when lives were on the line and took a non-sectarian stance. In an early report from the Quaker Central Relief Agency in Ireland, it was stated that ‘we have no private objects to serve, and no interests other than the general welfare of the community.’ This indicates that gaining converts was not the aim of Quakers during the famine, but that the rights of the

112 Hatton, *The Largest Amount of Good*, p.5
113 *Cork Examiner*, 4 September 1846, cited in Hatton, *The Largest Amount of Good*, p.146
114 Kinealy, ‘Potatoes, providence and philanthropy’, p.144
115 Society of Friends, *Transactions of the Central Relief Committee*, p.157
116 Hatton, *The Largest Amount of Good*, p.146
118 Society of Friends, *Transactions of the Central Relief Committee*, p.4
Irish people were their first and foremost concern. Other issues, such as the perceived cultural inferiority and cultural practices of the Irish people, came second behind a right to life’s basic necessities. Quaker theology, which emphasised a spirit of love and service, ensured that Quakers focused on the needs of others being met, especially those in great distress, before any secondary considerations were contemplated.

The relationship between the provision of charity and proselytizing by evangelicals was also very evident in England. The Clapham Bettering Society, for instance, interspersed their distribution of charity with conversion, openly expecting recipients of relief to attend religious services. The Society’s Visitors provided moral and religious material to the poor with whom they came in contact, and children were expected to attend Sunday school services. Advice was given by the Society to those they aided on ‘the importance of attention to the duties of religion.’

This indicates a relationship between the giving of charity and an attempt to convert the masses. According to Ian Bradley, missionary zeal was the ‘strongest single characteristic of the Evangelicals’ in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The Reverend Sydney Smith, founder of the Edinburgh Review, noted that ‘wherever they gain a footing…proselytism will be their main object; everything else is a mere instrument’. In relation to the Clapham Bettering Society, and it can be assumed many other societies that also followed evangelical ideals, it would seem that regardless of any feelings of benevolence that members might have held for the poor, members of the Society also used the opportunity to gain converts, even if only by coercion and the desperation of the labouring classes. For evangelicals, religious conversion was as much the concern as

119 Rules and Regulations of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor at Clapham, p.11
120 Bradley, Call to Seriousness, p.74
121 Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, p.5
was providing relief.\textsuperscript{122} For Quakers, however, conversion was not their focus. While they also wanted people to live moral lives according to the scriptures, and to have a personal relationship with God, a major aim was also to improve the lives of the poor. Quakers did not actively seek out members for their church; they considered ‘convincement’ to Quakerism a personal experience not driven by others. Robert Barclay had written that receiving the Inward Light occurred only when the Lord decreed it, or ‘as the Lord in his wisdom’ sees fit.\textsuperscript{123} This religious belief freed Quakers from the need to actively recruit members to their faith, and allowed the belief in their duty to help the poor to take precedence over the need for their society to gain new members. Quaker humanitarianism and religious beliefs were interconnected and could not be separated, but Quaker belief resulted in service to others being their focus, rather than gaining converts to Quakerism.

English Quakers did not only provide for the needs of the poor in Ireland during the famine, but they also endeavoured to provide the basics of life to the poor in the rest of the United Kingdom. Explaining to readers in \textit{The Friend} why they were only writing about the distress in Ireland, it was noted that ‘It must not be supposed we are indifferent to the pressure of want which is felt elsewhere; on the contrary we apprehend that many of our readers have their hearts engaged on behalf of the distressed in various parts of the Kingdom.’\textsuperscript{124} A study of articles published in the Quaker journal \textit{The Friend} during the middle decades of the nineteenth century provides evidence of the practical nature of Quaker relief wherever they deemed it warranted. Evidence of this has been seen with Quaker relief efforts in Ireland, but Quakers were also involved with relief efforts in England. For instance, with regard to the distress in the manufacturing districts, oat-

\textsuperscript{123} Barclay, \textit{An Apology for the True Christian Divinity}, Philadelphia, p.119
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{The Friend}, (1847), p.32
meal and potatoes were food staples that were distributed, along with beds, bedding and clothing. One Quaker wrote that ‘they seem to be in want of everything, food, bedding, clothing, furniture, and all the requisites of life’. Many articles appearing in *The Friend*, relating to poverty and distress, called for donations and aid to assist the poor, and many attempted to portray the reality of life for the poorer classes in order to elicit more assistance. The following passage is a good example of the type of article printed, and language used, in an attempt to garner the required response from readers:

> The extent of distress far exceeds what any person could form a conception of – many are really ashamed of the abject state of starvation and destitution to which they have gradually been reduced...their condition is truly deplorable, and I fear there is no prospect of any immediate improvement in trade, many families literally want every thing.

Articles in *The Friend* are indicative of Quaker humanitarianism and show constant concern with the living conditions of the poor, and the need for funds to provide even the most basic necessities of life. The Friends’ Relief Committee in Manchester acknowledged Quaker concern and contribution by writing of ‘their grateful sense of the prompt and continuous aid, which has been afforded by Friends all over the country, towards alleviating the distress of these districts’. While the focus of evangelicals in providing charity was generally that only the ‘deserving’ poor should receive aid, a position also taken by some Quakers, the following quotation indicates that many Quakers were willing to provide poor relief irrespective of the recipient’s circumstances:

> Sickness and accident are casualties for which none can be blamed, and which demand our fullest care and sympathy; and even those who may have been brought, by their own imprudence, into a state of want, will not then, when really infirm and destitute, be in a state to be taunted with their former weakness or even vice.

125 *The Friend*, (1843), p.15
126 *The Friend*, (1843), p.15
128 ‘The Effect on the Poor of Indiscriminate Relief’ in *The Friend*, (1847), p.5
This statement indicates that even though Quakers generally followed middle-class rhetoric concerning the need to reform the morals of society, at the heart of their concern was the need to provide the necessities of life to those in need. Regardless of the reasons behind the poor requiring assistance, Quakers often did not impose moral judgements when providing relief.

There were, however, many times when Quakers did impose moral judgements on those requiring relief. William Allen can be considered one of the great Quaker humanitarians with his work with the poor, but his writings indicate that he was also, at times, concerned first and foremost with the moral reform of the labouring classes, as was argued in Chapter Four. When the need was great though, Quaker humanitarianism often took priority over a moral reform agenda. This was no doubt due in part to an awareness by many that the causes of poverty and hardship were often not the result of individual actions, but were a result of economic and social factors outside of individual control. Many reformers began to understand as the century progressed that inequalities in society were not self-inflicted and that a self-help philosophy no longer had any real validity. The Quaker mission, however, was always the ‘great and God-honouring work of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, and preaching the Gospel to the poor and neglected classes’,\(^{129}\) than an ultimate concern with moral reformation. Quakers, like Evangelicals, also wanted everyone to have access to Scriptures, but they did not see this as their principal mission. Quaker writings continually refer to their need to help the poor, with one writer stating that ‘The poor are to be treated as brethren, their wants and necessities to be relieved, from a feeling of

\(^{129}\) *The Friend*, (1868), p.5
love, not of condescending forbearance." ¹³⁰ Another wrote that ‘Benevolence is the largest part of our business’ ¹³¹ and summed up the Quaker position when stating that:

What is more, we must do all this with patience; and be ready, in the same cause, to make an habitual sacrifice of our own tastes and wishes. Nothing short of this is the visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, which our creed requires of us. ¹³²

This position was re-iterated when a writer in The Friend stated that ‘We hold it to be the duty of every Christian church to undertake the oversight of the poor members of its own body; and this is the view that has always been held by Friends’. ¹³³ While Quakers may have appeared to often follow a moral reform agenda, it is clear that they also became very focused on practical actions, ensuring the basic needs of the poorer classes were met. As the above quotations identify, Quakers were prepared to sacrifice their ‘own tastes and wishes’ in order to meet the needs of others who were more deprived. A moralising agenda may have been present in Quaker charity, but Quaker discourses also indicate that relieving the distress of the needy was prominent in their thinking. Love and compassion, as preached in the New Testament, were the foundation of Quaker doctrine and this manifested itself in their involvement with the poorer classes. When people’s basic right to life was under threat, ideological positions were generally ignored by Quakers.

Despite their obvious concern for the rights of the poorer classes, it is interesting that Quakers did not attempt in any way to undermine the capitalist system that resulted in social injustice and poverty for many of these classes. The capitalist system, in fact, exemplified much of what middle-class reformers believed in. Middle-class ideology posited that thrift and hard work would bring its own reward through the creation of

¹³⁰ The Friend, (1859), p.68
¹³¹ The Friend, (1843), p.270
¹³² The Friend, (1843), p.270
¹³³ The Friend, (1859), pp.68-69
wealth and therefore, for reformers, their main interest was generally in reforming the manners and morals of the lower classes to an acceptable standard. Quakers, as members of the middle-classes, often reflected this middle-class rhetoric, and were influenced by the ideals of religion, class and morality. In spite of the ideological position Quaker reformers theoretically held they did endeavour to meet the needs of the poor and destitute when the situation warranted it, without judgement and without the expectation of conversion. This differed from evangelical reformers to whom proselytising was essential along with their activism, which was aimed at the moral reformation of society. Reforming the morals of society was of major concern to many of the middle-classes, but the underlying ethos of Quaker involvement in poor relief was one of humanitarianism. Quakers did not link the rights of human beings to the saving of souls. Underpinning Quaker relief work was the right of individuals without the imposition of a moral agenda. First and foremost, Quakers were concerned with providing the necessities of life to those in desperate need, and this was very evident in their activism. Quaker humanitarianism can very clearly be seen in their involvement with aiming to relieve the distress of the poor in Ireland during the famine, as well as on their home soil during the distress in the manufacturing districts, in Spitalfields, and wherever there was need. Quaker religious belief in service to others manifested itself in charitable and philanthropic activities, which often involved undertaking practical actions to relieve distress rather than moralising.

This thesis will now turn to Quaker activism undertaken outside of England. It will consider whether the same issues that Quakers had been concerned with inside of England were also taken up by them overseas. Specifically, it will look at Quaker involvement in the abolition of slavery globally, and Quaker responses to the treatment of Indigenous peoples in British colonies. Did Quakers apply notions of the rights of
the individual when the subjects were not European, or was their interest focused on moral reform? The next chapter will look at Quaker involvement with slavery after it was finally abolished in British colonies in 1838 and explore the reasons why Quakers continued the fight against slavery internationally after slaves in British colonies had already won their freedom.
7. Abolition of Slavery

William Wilberforce is renowned by many historians and the general public as the leader of the movement to abolish slavery in the British colonies. Along with members of the Clapham Sect, Wilberforce campaigned tirelessly to put an end to what was seen by many as an inhumane and unjust institution. Historical scholarship has generally placed Wilberforce and his evangelical colleagues as the architects and drivers of the movement. To oppose this position would be unwarranted as they were extremely influential members of the movement, and were largely responsible for the campaign that ultimately abolished slavery in the British Empire in 1838. This feat was not achieved on their own, however, as there were many other abolitionists who were as important, but less well-known historically. Quakers are one such group who played an integral part in the abolition of slavery but who remain less visible in historical research.

The act of slavery was repugnant to Quakers who considered ‘holding negroes in oppressive and unnatural bondage’ was extremely cruel and needed to be abolished.¹ Quakers saw slavery as ‘a traffic so unmerciful and unjust in its nature to a part of our own species made equally with ourselves’² that they worked for over a century to end the practice throughout the world. This chapter will firstly provide a brief historical background to the abolition of slavery in British colonies in 1838, placing Quakers within this movement as vital participants. It will then consider Quaker involvement with slavery throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, when they worked towards the abolition of slavery still existing in other countries. The aim of this chapter is to explore the motivation that drove Quaker activism. The thesis will look at whether motives that Quakers had utilised in their reform activism within Britain were the same they applied to their activism outside of Britain, or were there any differences in their

¹ “Epistle of Yearly Meeting, 1772”, cited in LYM, Christian faith and practice, No. 649
² “Epistle of Yearly Meeting, 1772”
discourses and actions? Once again, therefore, the relative merits of a reforming agenda, and humanitarian concerns, will be assessed in the bid by Quakers to end slavery.

The Atlantic slave trade was a brutal and inhumane commercial enterprise involving the capture of Africans and transporting them to settlements in the Americas. Britain became a major player in the trade in the early seventeenth century when it began to acquire islands in the West Indies on which to develop sugar plantations. Britain also transported slaves to North America to work on tobacco and cotton plantations. The slave trade was a highly profitable business and was not questioned by the British public in any meaningful way until 1772 when the issue of the abolition of the slave trade first began to receive extensive coverage. This concern with slavery was set in motion when Granville Sharp, a civil servant, brought a case concerning slave freedom to trial. James Somerset was a slave who had escaped from his master after being brought to England from Virginia. He was later found by his master’s agents, seized, and forcibly held whilst waiting to be sent to Jamaica for sale. Granville Sharp, who had previously successfully fought in the courts for a separated slave couple to be reunited after the forced sale of the woman,\(^3\) diligently studied law books and hired lawyers to fight successfully for James Somerset’s freedom. A previous decision in 1729 by the Attorney General, which ruled that a Negro [sic] remained a slave even when brought into England, had been the legal judgement used to justify owning slaves in England until the Somerset case. In the Somerset case, however, which was overseen by Chief Justice Mansfield, it was ruled that English law did not support slavery and that slaves could not be forcibly detained in England. Whilst this decision was taken by many to mean that slavery was unlawful, in reality it only stated that the rights of slave

masters were limited in one area, that of forced deportation. Slaves were still bought and sold, and there was evidence that slaves were still being forcibly deported even after the Mansfield decision. 

The achievement of the Somerset case was to bring to the public’s attention the property versus liberty debate. Many people in eighteenth-century British society had been strongly influenced by enlightenment thinkers such as Thomas Paine, and the liberal ideology of natural rights and the primacy of the individual. Because of this influence, there was a growing aversion to individuals owning other people as property. Paine wrote his first attack on slavery in 1774, soon after arriving in America, entitled African Slavery in America. In the article Paine wrote that he was surprised ‘that many civilized, nay, Christianized people should approve, and be concerned in the savage practice’ and that slavery was ‘contrary to the light of nature, to every principle of Justice and Humanity’.

The Christian principle of ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you’ began to underpin abolitionists’ involvement in the early abolition movement. The notion of one race of people being owned by another was becoming abhorrent to many in society, and especially to Quakers. This abhorrence saw Quakers rally against a practice which was identified at the 1772 Yearly Meeting as ‘so unmerciful and unjust in its nature to a part of our own species made equally with ourselves for immortality.’ The Quaker doctrine of everyone being equal in the eyes of God was a major reason that Quakers

---

4 Drescher, Capitalism and Antislavery, p.39
5 Midgley, Women Against Slavery, p 11. Midgley quotes an instance in Bristol in 1790 when a reward was offered for a black girl who had run away, was found and forced aboard a ship.
8 Conway, The Writings of Thomas Paine, p.4
9 ‘Epistle of Yearly Meeting, 1772’
took up the call to free slaves from their inhumane bondage. The Quaker belief in equality did not first come to light in the abolition movement, as Quaker doctrine had always been based on the equality of everyone. From their very beginnings, for instance, Quakers had allowed women ministers, a notion considered heresy by the established church. It was a notion, however, that Quaker theology sanctioned based on their belief system of equality, a belief system which encompassed all members of the human race. It was because of this theological position that Quakers fought for the freedom of slaves whose rights had been subjugated.

Quakers were one of the most active groups in the abolition movement during the late eighteenth century. As early as the 1660s George Fox had advised fellow members to act kindly towards their slaves, and individual members had questioned the morality of owning slaves at times.\footnote{A.C. Grayling, \textit{Towards the Light: The Story of Struggles for Liberty and Rights That Made the Modern West}, London, Bloomsbury Publishing (2007), p.164} In 1727 the Quaker Yearly Meeting stated that ‘It is the sense of this meeting, that the importing of negroes from their native country...is not a commendable nor allowed practice, and is therefore censured by this meeting,’\footnote{‘Epistle of Yearly Meeting, 1727’, cited in LYM, \textit{Christian faith and practice}, No. 648} but it was not until 1761 that the London Yearly Meeting banned Quakers from participating in the slave trade. In 1774 British Quakers had voted to expel members engaged in the trade, and in 1776 this was extended to members who did not free their own slaves.

One of the most influential advocates for the abolition of slavery in the public domain was the Quaker Anthony Benezet. Born in France, Benezet was educated in England, and in 1730 moved to Philadelphia aged seventeen. He became a Quaker soon after and trained to become a teacher, after which he began to give lessons to the children of slaves in his spare time. Benezet began to write influential tracts that argued against the
institution of slavery, and which made a case for the equality of the African race, which followed Quaker beliefs. In 1762 he published *A short account of that part of Africa inhabited by the Negroes* in which he stated that ‘the Negroes are equally intituled to the common privileges of mankind with the Whites, that they have the same rational powers’.

Benezet also declared that ‘Negroes are generally a sensible humane and sociable People, and that their capacity is as good, and as capable of improvement as that of the Whites.’ Benezet began to challenge his fellow Quakers to consider whether slavery was consistent with Christian principles, and one publication that inspired the abolition movement on both sides of the Atlantic was his 1771 tract *Some Historical Account of Guinea, Its Situation, Produce and the General Disposition of Its Inhabitants: An Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Slave Trade, Its Nature and Lamentable Effects*. In this tract Benezet questioned the institution of slavery ‘at a time when the liberties of mankind are become so much the subject of general attention.’ He asked how, when the British constitution was founded on principles ‘favourable to the common rights of mankind’, has it happened that:

...the laws which countenance this iniquitous traffic, have obtained the sanction of the legislature; and that the executive part of the government should so long shut their ears to continual reports of the barbarities perpetrated against this unhappy people, and leave the trading subjects at liberty to trample on the most precious rights of others.

Benezet was also one of the first writers to publish accounts of the horrors of the slave trade and slavery. Thomas Clarkson, a founding member of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (commonly known as the Abolition Committee) which was established in 1787, read Benezet’s tract *Some Historical Account of Guinea*. This


13 Benezet, *A short account of that part of Africa*, p.7


15 Benezet, *Some Historical Account*, p.126-127
tract became the principle source of his Cambridge University prize-winning essay on the topic ‘Is it lawful to make slaves of others against their will?’ In 1786 Clarkson published the essay under the title *An essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species, particularly the African, translated from a Latin Dissertation, which was honoured with the first prize in the University of Cambridge, for the year 1785*. James Phillip, a Quaker bookseller, published the essay and while Clarkson never became a Quaker, he admitted in 1815 to Tsar Alexander 1, when meeting with him to discuss the issue of slavery, that ‘I was not so in name, but I hoped in spirit, I was nine parts in ten of their way of thinking.’

In 1806 Clarkson published *A Portraiture of Quakerism* owing to ‘a desire of writing their moral history’ and a biography of the Quaker William Penn in 1813. Clarkson, along with Benezet, were two of the central figures in the beginnings of the push to end the slave trade, and slavery, and were extremely influential in the British abolition movement. Both were true to Quaker principles concerning slavery, which were premised on notions of equality and liberty.

Quakers submitted the first petition against the slave trade to Parliament in 1783 which stated that the ‘abolition of this iniquitous practice is not only required by the calls of justice and humanity, but is also consistent with sound policy.’ This initial petition did not result in the abolition of the slave trade at the time, but it did set in motion petitioning as a form of political agitation. The petition was ultimately copied hundreds of times by abolitionists and petitioning became a legitimate means of advocating reform. The Quakers were also mass distributors of propaganda against the slave trade.

---

19 *The Case of Our Fellow-Creatures, the Oppressed Africans, Respectfully Recommended to the Serious Consideration of the Legislature of Great Britain, By the PEOPLE called QUAKERS*, London, Printed by James Phillips (1783), p.5. LSF, Box 32/62
but, according to Seymour Drescher, were not a highly visible movement and their impact was not great.\textsuperscript{20} Drescher’s position may have an element of truth, possibly owing to small Quaker numbers, but a look at Quaker involvement in abolition will indicate that they in fact had a significant impact. Quaker membership numbers is perhaps one of the key issues as to why they have not featured more in the historical research concerning abolition, and other areas of social reform in the nineteenth century. This thesis aims to show, however, that their small numbers belied their input, and they are worthy of historical study in their own right. Quakers were the original instigators of the abolition movement, and the first to actively petition the British Parliament to abolish the slave trade. When the Abolition Committee was formed, nine out of the twelve founding committee members were Quakers, evidence of their early commitment to, and involvement in, the abolition movement.\textsuperscript{21}

The Act to abolish the slave trade was finally passed in the British Parliament in 1807. The abolitionists had hopes that once the slave trade was abolished the institution of slavery itself would die out. However, the slave trade still flourished in other countries, and the condition of slaves in the British colonies did not improve. West Indies’ planters were not willing to give up their slaves unless forced to do so, and conditions for many slaves remained horrendous. The profitability of the slave trade, plus the difficulty in liquidating assets in a hurry, ensured that the planters were not going to voluntarily end using slaves on their plantations.\textsuperscript{22} Conditions for many slaves remained atrocious, with floggings, brandings, and even killings regular occurrences.\textsuperscript{23}

As a consequence, in 1823 The Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of

\textsuperscript{20} Drescher, \textit{Capitalism and Antislavery}, pp.61-64
\textsuperscript{21} The nine Quakers were John Barton, William Dillwyn, George Harrison, Samuel Hoare Jr, Joseph Hooper, John Lloyd, Joseph Woods Sr, James Phillips and Richard Phillips.
\textsuperscript{23} For examples of the treatment of slaves, see \textit{The Horrors of the Negro Slavery existing in our West Indian Islands}, Abridgement, Setting 2, London, C. Whittingham (1805). LSF, Vol. 242/15
Slavery, more popularly known as the Anti-Slavery Society, was formed with the aim of ending the institution of slavery itself. At this time, popular agitation, mass demonstrations and public petitioning by the disenfranchised were the means by which the push for political reform in Britain was occurring. The abolitionists also took up these methods, particularly petitioning, to now demand the abolition of slavery.

Between 1831 and 1833 petitions for abolition outnumbered any other single-issue petitions, with 5252 being presented to Parliament in this period. The first national petition organised and submitted by women in 1833, which carried the signatures of 187,000 women, was organised by two Quaker women, Anne Knight and Marie Tothill. Another Quaker woman, Elizabeth Heyrick, was involved in the writing and distribution of a number of pamphlets concerning slavery, with her most well-known, *Immediate, not Gradual Abolition*, published in 1824. Heyrick used the rhetoric of rights in this pamphlet to argue the case for abolition, claiming immediate freedom for slaves because freedom ‘has been most unjustly and cruelly withheld from him; because it is his unalienable right, which he holds by a divine charter, which no human claims can disannul.’ This call by Heyrick for the immediate abolition of slavery is indicative of Quaker concern at the time for the rights of slaves to their freedom from bondage. Quakers considered that everyone had the right to freedom, which was premised on their belief in the equality of all human beings, as divinely ordained. Heyrick’s position on the immediate abolition of slavery, however, provides evidence of the sometimes differing values and philosophies operating amongst Quaker members in the lead up to the abolition of slavery in British colonies. The official policy of the Anti-Slavery Society at this time, a society with many male Quaker members but that

---

24 Chartists throughout the 1830s also petitioned and had mass demonstrations.
25 Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, p.59
27 Heyrick, *Immediate, Not Gradual Abolition*, p.17
women were unable to join, was for the gradual abolition of slavery. At a public meeting held by the Anti-Slavery Society, it was agreed that slaves must be indulged ‘with a few rights and privileges’ and gradually introduced to the ‘blessings of society, and of civilized government.’ This was in direct contrast to what Heyrick considered was the right of slaves, that is, their immediate freedom from human bondage. It was only in 1831 that the official policy of the Anti-Slavery Society changed to match that of Heyrick’s earlier call. The Quaker Joseph Sturge was one of the founders of the agency committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, set up to promote the immediate abolition of slavery when a younger, more radical element within the Society began to lose patience with the existing gradualist policy, mirroring what Elizabeth Heyrick had first called for in 1824. Even when the ultimate aim was the same, Quakers often had different agendas and philosophies informing their social reform activism.

The abolition of slavery in most British colonies was finally achieved when the Emancipation Act of 1833 was passed, but this is misleading because slaves were not completely freed as a result of the Act at this time. The British Parliament was fearful of immediate emancipation and devised a scheme whereby slaves came under a system of apprenticeship for twelve years. This system required slaves to work for their masters for three-quarters of their time; for the remaining time the slaves were able to transfer their labour elsewhere. Theoretically, by the end of twelve years the slaves would have earned enough money to buy their freedom. After negotiations, this period was dropped to 6 years, and planters were compensated to the sum of twenty million

---

28 Proceedings at a Public Meeting, held at the Town-Hall, Chester, on Thursday, the First of May, 1823, for the Purpose of Taking into Consideration the Present State of Slaves in our West India Colonies, and the Propriety of Petitioning Parliament for their Relief, [electronic resource], Chester, M. Monk (1823), p14. (Accessed Making of the Modern World: Goldsmiths' Kress library of economic literature [electronic resource], No. 23951)
pounds sterling. Abolitionists argued that this scheme did not abolish slavery; it just disguised the practice in another format. Led by the Quaker Joseph Sturge, abolitionists continued the campaign to eliminate the apprenticeship scheme and in 1837 Sturge formed an organisation known as the Central Negro Emancipation Committee after visiting the West Indies to assess the situation for himself. This committee oversaw a national petition campaign against the apprenticeship scheme and in March 1838 two hundred and fifty petitions were presented to Parliament. In 1838 the British Parliament finally abandoned the apprenticeship scheme and the institution of slavery in most British colonies was abolished, freeing almost 800,000 slaves. It should be noted, however, that while slavery had been abolished in the West Indies, Mauritius, Canada and the Cape of Good Hope, it still existed in a variety of formats in British possessions, especially India and Ceylon, which were exceptions to the provisions of the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery.

Quaker involvement in anti-slavery did not end with the abolition of slavery in the British colonies in 1838. Over five million Africans were still slaves in the Americas and many freed slaves were uneducated and ill-equipped for a life of freedom. Quakers continued their push for the universal abolition of slavery throughout the nineteenth century, via many and varied means, one method being their involvement with the

---

29 Slaves were expected to work for their masters part of the week, and were able to transfer their labour at the other times. The original amount of compensation was fifteen million pounds, worked out on the slaves worth and the years of apprenticeship, but the West Indian interests agreed to influence the colonial legislature to accept the legislation if the amount was raised to twenty million pounds. The years of apprenticeship were dropped to six years, but compensation remained the same. Frank Joseph Klingberg, The Anti-Slavery Movement in England: A Study in English Humanitarianism, Oxford, Oxford University Press (1926), p.300
30 Isichei, Victorian Quakers, p.228
32 Temperley, British Antislavery, p.93
33 British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, (London, England), More than half a century has elapsed since the horrors, the cruelty, and crime of the African Slave Trade awakened the sympathies of Britons [microform] : aroused to exertion they determined on its extinction., [S.l. : s.n., 1839?] (Accessed Making of the Modern World: Goldsmiths' Kress library of economic literature [electronic resource]. No. 31179)
British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, for the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave-Trade, throughout the World (BFASS). Quaker Joseph Sturge was the major instigator in the setting up of this society in 1839 which replaced the Central Negro Emancipation Committee. William Allen, the well-known Quaker philanthropist, chaired the meetings of the BFASS until his death in 1843 and the Quaker banker George W. Alexander was the Treasurer. Quakers were again dominant in this society with 14 out of 27 founding committee members being Quakers.34 Between 1839 and 1870, Quaker committee members numbered 32 out of 67.35 The society reported that ‘the horrors, the cruelty, and crime of the African Slave Trade awakened the sympathies of Britons’ and referred to this group as ‘the friends of justice and humanity.’36 The BFASS urged these abolitionists to ensure freedom for all slaves in the British Colonies using principles that were of a ‘moral, religious, and pacific character.’37 The society declared that ‘Justice and mercy are most strongly inculcated by the precepts of our blessed Lord, “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them”’ and that this principle should ‘embolden the friends of the Slave to come forward and plead the cause of their oppressed, helpless, and afflicted brethren.’38 Abolitionists wanted an end to ‘a system which, whether regarded in a political, moral, or religious point of view, is…corrupting and demoralizing to every community in which it exists, and utterly at variance with the spirit and precepts of Christianity.’39

This position indicates that Christian beliefs were central to abolitionists’ motives, especially those of Quakers. Christian doctrine was utilised in an appeal for all people to be treated equally, as dictated by God’s law, and which was a theological position

34 Isichei, Victorian Quakers, p.229
35 Temperley, British Antislavery, p.68
36 BFASS, More than half a century has elapsed, p.1
37 BFASS More than half a century has elapsed, p.2
38 BFASS More than half a century has elapsed, p.2
39 BFASS More than half a century has elapsed, p.2
held by Quakers. Christian principles provided the language for abolition, but humanitarian principles were also at its core. For Quaker abolitionists especially, the rights of slaves to freedom drove their involvement because it was underpinned by their belief in the equality of all people.

The focus of the BFASS was the dissemination of information, directed at both governments and individuals, and which covered topics concerning slavery throughout the world. Articles were printed concerning the recommendation of free-grown produce wherever practicable, and promoting monetary policies in favour of free labour. The BFASS took every opportunity to show its abhorrence of slavery and its ‘utter incompatibility with the spirit of the Christian religion.’ The society’s members realised that ‘there is no reasonable prospect of exterminating the Slave Trade but by the annihilation of Slavery itself’ and worked tirelessly towards this goal. A brief look at a BFASS report from 1843 shows that the society reported on slavery in many countries including Brazil, Portugal, South American Republics, Haiti, Spain and the United States. Copies of petitions presented to governments were reprinted, as well as memorials to people in positions of authority. Figures relating to slavery in various colonies were furnished, along with economic data relating to the slave trade. Extracts from official correspondence were also reprinted, including replies to correspondence. Whilst the BFASS was unable to interfere in the political process of slave-holding nations, its members mounted campaigns to focus attention on these nations, and on the issue of slavery, and ensured that as much information as possible was circulated to aid in furthering the cause of the abolition of slavery.

41 BFASS, More than half a century has elapsed, p.2
42 The Fourth Annual Report of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, for the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave-Trade throughout the World; Presented to the General Meeting held in Exeter Hall, on Wednesday, June 21st, 1843, London, Thomas Ward & Co (1843)
In June 1840 the BFASS organised the first World Anti-Slavery Convention, to be held in London, and abolitionists from over 35 countries were invited to attend.\textsuperscript{43} Delegates included leading British abolitionists, and abolitionists from colonies such as Jamaica, Trinidad, Demerara, Sierra Leone and Canada. Foreign delegates consisted mostly of United States abolitionists, but also represented were France, Spain, Switzerland and Haiti. The remainder of delegates were drawn from provincial abolition societies, benevolent organisations and church groups.\textsuperscript{44} Quakers totalled one-quarter to one-third of the total delegates,\textsuperscript{45} evidence of their ongoing commitment to abolition.

This convention, whilst important in the abolition movement, is sometimes known more for its dealings with the ‘woman question’ than for its antislavery focus. Prior to the Convention, the BFASS was not aware of the turmoil taking place in the American Anti-Slavery Society between moderate and radical reformers which had resulted in the formation of two separate anti-slavery societies. Followers of radical abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison combined antislavery with other radical reforms, especially those of women’s rights. Garrisonians considered the basis of reform should be premised on universal human rights, which included slaves and women. Garrison, in an article printed in the \textit{Liberator} of December 15, 1837, wrote ‘As our object is \textit{universal} emancipation, - to redeem woman as well as man from a servile to an equal condition, - we shall go for the RIGHTS OF WOMAN to their utmost extent.’\textsuperscript{46} Garrisonians agitated for the equal status of women, a position not held by most abolitionists at this time. The involvement of women was generally accepted within the abolition movement, but not in the public sphere. English Quakers had also held this view, with

\begin{footnotes}
\item[43] Halbersleben, \textit{Women’s Participation}, p.26
\item[44] Temperley, \textit{British Anti-slavery}, p.87
\item[45] Halbersleben, \textit{Women’s Participation}, p40. The exact number of Quaker delegates is probably imprecise because of some uncertainty as to the religious affiliation of some delegates.
\end{footnotes}
Quaker women’s involvement limited to auxiliary anti-slavery societies that were not autonomous; they were answerable to the Anti-Slavery Society. This is interesting in as much as it indicates that English Quaker men were still traditional in how they approached the issue of women’s equality, despite Quaker exhortations of equality for everyone, and despite the original position of Quakers in the mid seventeenth century on this point.

Apart from the controversy surrounding women delegates, the convention covered a number of subjects relating to slavery globally. Topics ranged from a Christian perspective on the sinfulness of slavery, the issue of free labour, slavery in various colonies and countries throughout the world, and the present condition of the slave trade. The Convention resolved that the BFASS should publish a paper presented to the convention ‘On the essential sinfulness of slavery’ by the Reverend Godwin, which stated that slavery was ‘contrary to the eternal and immutable principles of justice, and the spirit and precepts of Christianity; and is, therefore, a sin against God, which acquires additional enormity when committed by nations professedly Christian, and in an age when the subject has been so generally discussed, and its criminality so thoroughly exposed.’

The Quaker George W. Alexander provided information on slavery in the Danish colonies, the Dutch colonies, (especially Surinam), and his visit to Holland, and advised of visits to Amsterdam by fellow Quakers Samuel Gurney, Elizabeth Fry and William Allen. Alexander attended meetings in Holland ‘for the purpose of communicating information on the subject of our mission’ but acknowledged that there were other countries to which he was ‘disposed to look with more hopeful

47 ‘Anti-slavery convention report’, printed in the Anti-slavery Reporter, July 15, 1840, p.174
feelings, as respects the progress of the anti-slavery cause than Holland." He also reported on Sweden’s slave colony, St Bartholomew, and the neglected condition of the slaves. Alexander saw it as ‘our duty to endeavour to interest every government which is connected with slavery, in the abolition of that wicked system.’ In answer to some members of the convention, who envisaged great difficulties in achieving the universal abolition of slavery and that it would be a considerable time before this could be accomplished, Alexander replied that with Divine Blessing, the day was fast approaching when the nations would ‘no longer be tarnished by that inhuman, that cruel, and unrighteous system of slavery which for centuries has disgraced the nations of the earth.’ Although the institution of slavery was often seen as unchristian and religious principles informed many abolitionists’ motives, there is no mistaking that a language of rights was also at the forefront of abolitionist discourses, both Quaker and non-Quaker alike. The system of slavery was seen as not only sinful and against God’s law, but words such as wicked, unjust, and cruel were used to portray a system that held human beings in bondage, thereby subverting their rights to freedom.

William Forster (1784-1854), a Tottenham Quaker, reported to the convention on the slave trade in Brazil, referring to annual reports tabled in the British Parliament. British merchants and British capital had interests in Brazil that were considered indirectly contributable to the slave trade and the convention appointed a committee to consider this issue. Another major topic addressed at the convention was that of free versus slave labour, one of the major arguments promoted by abolitionists as to why slavery

---

should be abolished. Abolitionists believed that slave labour was not only more expensive than that of free labour, but that it was also less productive. The Quaker John Sturge used the rhetoric of political economists such as Adam Smith, David Hume and Henri Storch to discuss the unprofitability and unproductiveness of slave labour. Sturge used their arguments of incentives and disincentives for productive labour, quoting Storch: ‘A man who is not rewarded in proportion to the labour he performs, works as little as he can; this is an acknowledged truth which the experience of every day confirms.’ \(^{55}\) Sturge also provided practical examples and quoted an extract from a report in which a Barbados plantation owner, Joshua Steele, treated his slaves as if they were free labour and reported a three-fold increase in the estate’s profits. \(^{56}\) This argument was one of the cornerstones of the abolitionists’ position. Hundreds of West Indies plantations, however, where only non-slave labour was now used, had failed by the 1850s, indicating that the argument was ultimately flawed. \(^{57}\)

Another World Anti-Slavery Convention was held in 1843 at which the BFASS membership reported back on the outcomes that had been achieved since the last convention. One outcome reported was that a copy of resolutions agreed upon at the 1840 convention had been circulated to clergy of different denominations in Britain, British colonies, and the United States. These resolutions were aimed at clergy asking them to ‘withhold fellowship from slave-holders’ because it was contended that slavery could largely be attributed to Christian churches that ‘have not only withheld that public and emphatic testimony against the crime which it deserves, but have retained in their


communion, without censure, those by whom it is notoriously perpetrated.”^{58} An Address to the Heads of Governments was also circulated, including to the Pacha of Egypt, although some leaders declined to receive the document. The Address was circulated to the governors of slave owning states of the American Union, and also directed to the people of France, Holland and Denmark.^{59} Written statements of facts were also given to the British Government in relation to the safety of free people of colour in Upper Canada, the Amistad captives, and freed Africans in Cuba and Brazil.^{60}

The discussions of these various aspects of slavery provided the focus of the conventions, which was to share information about global slavery and gather support for the ongoing issue. The BFASS was charged with disseminating the outcomes of the conventions and promoting their ideals, an outcome that resulted in its claim of being the mouthpiece of the abolition movement generally.^{61} From the reports given to the conventions by Quakers, it can be ascertained that although their Christian beliefs were always at the core of their humanitarianism, they also focused very much on the inhumanity of slavery, as well as its sinfulness. Quaker abolition rhetoric was concerned with the rights of slaves to freedom, and this was in evidence with the Quaker push for the free labour movement where issues of personal liberty were at stake. However, once again we see this as part of the wider rhetoric of the time and not purely Quaker-specific.

The BFASS also disseminated information through the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter which they established in 1840. Published until the present day, this journal stated in its first edition that it was ‘devoted exclusively to topics connected

^{58} J.F. Johnson, (ed.), Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention, called by the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and held in London from Tuesday June 13th to Tuesday June 20th, 1843, London, John Snow (1843), p.12
^{60} Johnson, Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention, p.13
^{61} Temperley, British Antislavery, p.91
with the twin abominations yet desolating the earth – Slavery and the Slave-trade. It will also be the official organ of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society’. The journal was used to publish any articles relevant to the abolition of slavery throughout the world, and a perusal of the indexes indicates the diverse range of articles published on slavery. These articles covered such issues as information on slave-markets, proposed abolition bills, personal letters and anecdotes of abolitionists of their crusade, the free trade/labour issue, anti-slavery meeting information and minutes, and BFASS reports and submissions.

Another major objective of the BFASS was to fight for the end of slavery in the British East Indies. In 1841 the BFASS published *Slavery and the Slave Trade in British India* which was originally prepared in response to articles appearing in the *Morning Chronicle* justifying slavery in India, and to illustrate that slavery in India, even in a modified format, was ‘not only a crime against human nature, but a sin against God’. The same year the BFASS also passed a resolution that stated, in part, that a large number of the Queen’s subjects ‘are deprived of their personal liberty, and their civil rights, contrary to the principles of natural justice.’ The BFASS argued against the position that forms of slavery in India were ‘an affair of caste’ or formed ‘an essential part of the religious institutions of the people.’ They saw the sanction of slavery in India by the British Government as being against British law and that ‘the moral sense and the Christian principle of the people of England will never endure to be told that in any part of the British Empire, however remote, British law sanctions a system of gross impurity and cold-blooded cruelty.’

---

62 *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, January 15, 1840, p.4  
63 *Slavery and the Slave Trade in British India; with notices of the existence of these evils in Ceylon, Malacca, and Penang, drawn from Official Documents*, London, Thomas Ward and Co., (1841), p.iii  
64 *Slavery and the Slave Trade in British India; with notices of the existence of these evils*, p.72  
65 *Slavery and the Slave Trade in British India; with notices of the existence of these evils*, p.iii  
66 *Slavery and the Slave Trade in British India; with notices of the existence of these evils*, p.v
The face of slavery in India was very different to that which involved European owners of African slaves. The practice of slavery in India had been in existence for centuries and generally involved members of the same race and colour. It was a ‘mutually beneficial’ system in many ways and in a country where population outstripped resources it offered many people security that they otherwise would not have had.\^67 On the other hand, it also had its harsh elements which included a trade in women and girls, and parents being murdered so their children could be sold into slavery.\^68 Emasculated African negro slaves were also imported illegally into India to look after female slaves. A letter written to Thomas Fowell Buxton in 1840 reports that 63 eunuchs of African descent were living in one household, even though the importation of slaves had been banned in 1812.\^69 It was these types of atrocities which ensured that English abolitionists campaigned to end the practice of slavery in India. The BFASS noted in its 1843 report that Britain could not expect other countries to abolish slavery if it was still practised within British controlled territories.\^70 In 1833 a new Charter Bill for the East India Company had been introduced into Parliament which called for the abolition of slavery within the East India Company’s territories by April 1837, which was to be overseen by the Indian Government.\^71 As with the abolition of slavery in the West, however, the debate went back and forth as to the best means of ending slavery and it was not until India Act V of 1843 was passed in April that slavery officially ended in British India.\^72

\^67 Temperley, British Anti-slavery, p.95  
\^68 Temperley, British Anti-slavery, p.97  
\^70 The Fourth Annual Report of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, p.18  
\^71 Papers respecting the negotiation with His Majesty’s Ministers on the subject of the East-India Company’s Charter and the government of His Majesty’s Indian Territories for a further term after the 22\textsuperscript{nd} April 1834, London (1833), p.297  
\^72 British Parliamentary Papers, 1843, Vol. 58, cc 525. Slavery (East India). Copy of a legislative despatch from the Secretary to the Government of India to the Secretary at the India House, dated 15 April 1843.
Along with their heavy involvement in the BFASS, Quakers were also involved in a separate society that was also attempting to end slavery in India. Quaker Joseph Pease and his daughter Elizabeth, along with English abolitionist George Thompson, formed the British India Society in 1839. The stated aim of the society was ‘for bettering the condition of our fellow subjects – the Natives of British India.’ This society also considered, as did the BFASS, that the ‘claims of one hundred millions of British subjects’ needed to be recognised and appealed to ‘the just principles and humane feelings of the Country’ in their call to improving the lives of British subjects in India. The cultivation of produce in India by means of free labour was considered one of the most promising ways of tackling slavery in British India and the Society continued to promote this cause throughout its existence.

The BFASS also took up the issue of free trade, which had always caused a dilemma in the ranks of abolitionists. Tariffs imposed on slave-grown sugar from Brazil and Cuba after the abolition of slavery ensured that sugar from the West Indies, Mauritius and the British East Indies, whose production costs were much higher, were able to compete in the home market, thereby keeping foreign sugars out of the market. The monopoly enjoyed by West Indies planters caused friction with consumers who knew they could pay a lot less for sugar if the tariffs were lifted. The problem arose when many abolitionists supported the free trade movement which advocated the reduction of duties on foreign sugars. The downside to this was that if slave-grown sugar was allowed into British ports, it would result in an increased demand for slaves to keep up production in slave-owning countries. At the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention a resolution was passed

73 ‘Address of the Committee of the British India Society’ in Speeches, Delivered at a Public Meeting, for the Formation of a British India Society, London (1839), p.67
74 ‘Address of the Committee of the British India Society’, pp.68-69
75 For an overview of the purpose and activities of the British India Society, see John Hyslop Bell, British Folks and British India Fifty Years Ago: Joseph Pease and his Contemporaries, London, John Heywood (1891)
76 Temperley, British anti-slavery, p.139
that affirmed that ‘the British Government ought on no account allow the introduction of slave-grown sugar into the British market’. In 1841 the BFASS petitioned the British Parliament in favour of free produce and asked them ‘not to sanction the proposed reduction of the duty on sugar, in so far as it is the produce of slave-labour.’

Once the tariffs were removed in 1846 the BFASS could only resort to urging the public to refrain from slave-grown produce. This had been a tactic of British abolitionists prior to the abolition of slavery in British colonies, where the argument was put forth that if there was no market for slave produce, there would be no need for slavery. Theoretically the idea was sound, but hoping to convince the poorer classes that buying the more expensive sugar, and thereby ending slavery, was more important than feeding their families, was naïve and totally unrealistic.

Quakers were heavily involved in the boycotting of slave produce, with the Quaker abolitionist Elizabeth Heyrick in 1824 advocating abstinence from the use of West India sugar. Heyrick argued that this was the only method that would succeed in ending slavery, asking ‘Will you continue to purchase West India sugar, when told on good authority, that the refusing to purchase it is the only means now in our power, of putting an end to BRITISH SLAVERY? All other means have been tried to no purpose.’

William Allen was another Quaker who felt so strongly about not using slave-grown produce that he made the following entry in his diary on the day that the Emancipation Act of 1833, abolishing slavery in British colonies, was passed. ‘After having for more than forty years abstained from the use of sugar, on account of its being the produce of the labour of slaves, now, that they are declared free by the government, I recommenced

77 Minutes of the proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery convention called by the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, London (1840), p.27
79 Elizabeth Heyrick, No British Slavery; or, an Invitation to the People to put a Speedy End to it, London, T. Combe (1824), p.5. LSF, Vol. 14/1
taking it this day at Peter Bedford’s.” While not every Quaker would have been as dedicated to the cause as Quakers such as Heyrick and Allen, there was general support within the Quakers for boycotting slave-grown produce in an attempt to end slavery.

By 1867 slavery was still an ongoing issue in some countries and the BFASS and Spanish Abolitionist Society agreed to a joint conference in Paris. It was proposed that its immediate object is to take cognisance of the actual state of the Anti-slavery question…and to consider what further means may be adopted to promote the abolition of the Slave-trade and Slavery where these evils still exist.” After the conference, focus shifted to the slave trade which was flourishing between East Africa and the Muslim world, and which the BFASS could monitor closely because of its contact with the famous British explorer Dr Livingstone and other missionaries. Between 1870 and 1890 the BFASS concentrated mainly on negotiations and agreements to end the slave trade in East Africa, and in 1888 were the catalyst in the convening of the Brussels Conference in 1889, an international assembly whose only topic was the slave trade from Africa. The conference was described by the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, as forming an epoch in the history of the suppression of the slave-trade.” When slavery was finally ended in Brazil in 1888 the BFASS began to concentrate more on the exploitation of indigenous peoples by European colonial powers. This merging of interests with the Aborigines Protection Society (APS), founded in 1837, resulted in the two organisations becoming the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society in 1909. A closer look at the APS will be undertaken in the next chapter.

81 Anti-Slavery Conference 27, New Broad Street, E.C. London, January 1867
82 The Slave-Trade Conference at Brussels and the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, London (1890), pp.6-7
83 Sixty Years Against Slavery: a Brief Record of the Work and Aims of the British and foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1839-1899, London, BFASS (1900), p.6
84 The Aborigines Protection Society is discussed in Chapter 8.
While the main role of the BFASS was the dissemination of information on slavery and the slave trade, it is clear that this type of activity was of very little value in changing political opinions in slave-holding countries. During the lead-up to the abolition of slavery in British colonies, British abolitionists had held some political leverage with the ability to affect the outcome of elections, but persuasive arguments were now the only real tool the BFASS held in the fight to end slavery globally. Despite this lack of influence in slave-holding nations, the BFASS’s concern with the rights of slaves to freedom saw them continue their crusade until slavery was eventually abolished. Doing nothing was not an option for BFASS members when issues of liberty were at stake, and when the human rights of others could not be ignored.

The movement to abolish slavery globally is one more example where Quakers worked both within and outside their own society in their efforts to ensure the rights of others were not suppressed. As well as working with non-Quakers in associations such as the BFASS, often helping to form associations and working in key positions within them, Quakers also undertook measures solely under the auspices of their Meeting for Sufferings. In 1838 the Yearly Meeting raised concerns regarding the ‘African Race’, stating:

This meeting has been deeply interested with some information now communicated respecting the circumstances of the African race both in their native land and in the colonies of this country; and understanding that much pecuniary assistance will be required to promote their welfare, as respects their education in our colonies and otherwise, this meeting thinks it is right to encourage a very liberal subscription amongst our members throughout the country to be applied under the direction and at the discretion of the Meeting for Sufferings in connexion with the objects above mentioned.  

The meeting agreed to the setting up of an African Fund Committee to report to the Meeting for Sufferings any information they deemed appropriate, and endorsed a fund to raise monies for the benefit of the “African Race.”86 The committee consisted of many important Quakers including William Allen, Samuel Sturge and William Forster, who were also involved with the BFASS. The committee’s focus was on providing funds for the education of freed slaves in the West Indies, based on the principles of the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS),87 and they donated money to schools established by the BFSS. This was the same approach to education that Quakers took within Britain, which indicates there was no differential made between internal and external British subjects, as freed slaves were provided with a similar education to those living within Britain. In November 1839 two Friends, John Candler and his wife, were granted permission to visit the British colonies to see for themselves the best methods of utilising the funds granted. The committee reported that the visit was undertaken “with a simple desire to promote the present and future welfare of their fellow men of the African race” and was successful in “promoting education and the circulation of religious and instructive reading”.88 John Candler reported on all the schools in the areas they visited, stating that attendance was so good that it might have been “a larger proportion than would be found in many of our English towns.”89 Candler did see a need for a school of industry for girls because “girls, especially brown girls, are subject to many disadvantages” and asked the Committee to seriously consider whether a school could be funded.90 Candler’s understanding of the disadvantages faced by African girls shows a level of awareness of gender issues that was not generally present in the general population at this time.

86 Meeting for Sufferings Minutes, 4th June, 1838, p.532
87 Meeting for Sufferings Minutes, 7th September, 1838, p.539
88 Meeting for Sufferings Minutes, 11th May, 1840, pp.172-173
90 Candler, Extracts, p.11
The Meeting for Sufferings in 1838 reported that ‘there is still great need of much further provision of the like kind’\(^\text{91}\) and an investigation of the Minutes of the African Fund Committee indicate that the committee also received a number of requests for funds from non-BFSS schools in towns in the West Indies. Despite this being a Quaker-only committee, there was never a stipulation that Quaker doctrine must be taught in the schools. The only stipulation was that schools should follow the principles of the BFSS, that is, with the focus being on providing a ‘sound education, based on Christian principles, amongst the newly enfranchised population of these colonies.’\(^\text{92}\) At a Meeting for Sufferings in 1845 the African Fund Committee submitted that money should be donated to non-Quaker schools with the following condition: ‘That the religious instruction in all schools which may be aided out of this fund be from the Holy Scriptures alone, or from lessons selected from the Holy Scriptures alone, and that no Catechism or similar book be used in such schools; and that no denominational or sectarian views be taught as such in those schools’.\(^\text{93}\) Schools not under the immediate care of Quakers were required to provide satisfactory information that this principle was being met in order that assistance be continued.\(^\text{94}\) Friends’ books and Tracts were distributed\(^\text{95}\) but Quakers did not attempt to force their religious beliefs on the freed slaves, only to ensure that religious instruction followed a Protestant ideology. We see with this approach similarities with Quaker involvement in the provision of education within Britain. Quakers had become involved with the British School System because they believed religious education should be taught but only if it followed a non-sectarian and non-denominational curriculum. The African Fund Committee granted

\(^{91}\) *Meeting for Sufferings Minutes*, 2\textsuperscript{nd} November, 1838, p.550

\(^{92}\) *Meeting for Sufferings Minutes*, 2\textsuperscript{nd} November, 1838, p.550

\(^{93}\) LYM, Negro and Aborigines Fund Report submitted to the Meeting for Sufferings and presented at Yearly Meeting, 1846

\(^{94}\) LYM, Negro and Aborigines Fund Report

\(^{95}\) Report of African Fund Committee, *Meeting for Sufferings Minutes*, 5\textsuperscript{th} June 1840 mentions that along with school books and materials worth £600, a considerable supply of Quaker material was also supplied by the Committee to be taken to Jamaica.
money to schools only if they were assured that any religious education provided to freed slaves focused solely on the Bible and not on creeds.

Education was the major focus of Quaker funding to help emancipated slaves, mainly in the West Indies, but Quakers also understood the importance of providing training and goods to enable freed slaves to earn an income and support themselves, as well as providing for practical needs such as clothing. Quakers were pragmatic and, along with their petitions to leaders and those in positions of authority, undertook practical steps to try and improve the living condition of the freed slaves. The Negro and Aborigines Fund,\(^{96}\) in its various reports to the Meeting for Sufferings, listed amounts such as £30 ‘for clothing materials in aid of efforts for the improvement of the Caffres’;\(^ {97}\) grants for agricultural seeds and implements,\(^ {98}\) and money for the benefit of needy students.\(^ {99}\) Twenty pounds was donated towards a reformatory school at Kingston Prison and money was granted for travel and maintenance expenses of teachers.\(^ {100}\) While the BFASS’s main function was as a lobby group engaging in public debate, Quaker committees once again provided support on the ground to those in need. In this case, it was emancipated slaves. The Quaker focus appeared to be much more on the practicalities of providing for the needs of slaves rather than merely disseminating information on the topic. Quakers were always ready to provide practical action where they saw a need and not wait for political outcomes to address the issue, which often took too long to relieve any immediate distress. Again, we see Quaker theology driving Quaker humanitarianism, where acts of service were a means of spreading the spirit of

---

\(^{96}\) There were various committees concerned with Negroes [sic] and Aborigines conducted under the auspices of the Meeting for Sufferings, sometimes referred to in minutes with slight variations on the name. They had an Aborigines Committee, an African Fund Committee, and Committee on the Negro Fund of 1838. In 1847 the Yearly Meeting recommended the establishment of a Negro & Aborigines Fund which ran from 1847 – 1863. It was renamed the Negro Education Fund in 1863.

\(^{97}\) Negro and Aborigines Fund report, *Meeting for Sufferings Minutes*, 4\(^{th}\) January, 1850

\(^{98}\) Negro and Aborigines Fund report, *Meeting for Sufferings Minutes*, 4\(^{th}\) January, 1850


\(^{100}\) Negro Education Fund Report, *Meeting for Sufferings Minutes*, 6\(^{th}\) February 1846
love, and serving others, in the manner of Jesus. Quakers provided for the practical needs of freed slaves, attempting to ensure that their basic rights were met. This willingness to act was no different to Quaker involvement with providing relief to the poor in Ireland during the famine, or to any other people in need. Quakers were concerned with alleviating the sufferings of the newly-freed slaves and providing them with the basic necessities of life, which Quakers saw as a right and not merely a compassionate act.

An example of this mindset can be seen by examining a colony of ex-slaves living in New Brunswick. The British military authorities had offered slaves who had joined the British in the War of 1812 passage to a British colony. Between 1813 and 1816 a British ship took approximately 2000 slaves from Virginia and re-settled them in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where they were left to fend for themselves without education, money or expertise. The majority of the colony lived a miserable life until Edmund Hillier Duval arrived in 1845 and began to provide practical assistance to enable the colony to become more productive. He set up a school with funds provided by the Bristol Quakers and a two year grant to run the school was obtained from a Quaker fund to aid African education. Other funds provided seed, and incentives, for the colony to raise agricultural crops and move towards self-sufficiency. Prior to this assistance, these ex-slaves were considered, according to the Quaker Joseph Eaton who wrote a historical narrative on the population, 'little better than a race of despised beggars.'

---

102 Edmund Hillier Duval eventually became a school inspector in the province of New Brunswick, but he was not a Quaker.
Quakers understood that along with educating the public about the evils of slavery, and educating the emancipated slaves themselves, there was also a great need to provide practical assistance to enable the slaves to become productive members of society, and to be able to take up their rights as citizens.

When slaves in the United States began to become refugees in the early years of the 1860s, Quakers recognised that the act of freeing some of the slaves had left many of them ‘in an appalling state of destitution’. During 1865 and early 1866 a Central Committee of the Society of Friends, for the Relief of the Emancipated Negroes of the United States was formed. This committee sent funds to American Freedmen associations, with grants totalling £4000 reported in 1865. Pamphlets written by Quakers were also distributed by the Committee within Britain, with 15,000 copies of John Hodgkin’s *Case and Claims of the Emancipated Slaves* and 10,000 copies of F. Seebohm’s *The Crisis of Emancipation* being disseminated. The Central Committee declared that ‘the *test of colour* alone ought never again to be allowed to become the dividing line between those who are invested with the full rights of freemen, and those who are not,’ and that much work still needed to be accomplished on the basis of ‘humanity [and] justice’.

---

105 *The Case of the Birmingham and Midland Freed Men’s Aid Association briefly stated, comprising important information, recently received [signed October 25th 1864, Edward Gemf], (No. 5)*, Birmingham and Midland Freed Men’s Aid Association, 25th October, 1864. LSF, Box L9/07f
106 *Report of the Central Committee of the Society of Friends, for the Relief of the Emancipated Negroes of the United States, for the Three Months Ending 6th Month 1st, 1865*. LSF, Box 339/5
107 *Report of the Central Committee of the Society of Friends*
108 *Report of the Central Committee of the Society of Friends*
109 *Report of the Central Committee of the Society of Friends*
famine, sickness, and utter destitution, in which those so suddenly set free are
involved.'

Ending slavery was a major achievement for all those concerned on both sides of the
Atlantic, but resources were far too scarce to ensure the well-being of many of the freed
slaves. The Quakers realised quite quickly, however, that the task of providing aid to
freed slaves was too substantial for them to handle on their own and ‘it was felt that an
earnest effort must be made to enlist others in a work far too mighty for us.’ John
Hodgkin proposed that whilst Quakers could form a good nucleus of a larger
movement, he desired ‘that others than Friends should be the leading public men in this
effort, as was the case in that for the West India emancipation.’ To this end, the
Quaker committee amalgamated with the Freedmen’s Aid Society of London,
Birmingham and Midland to form the National Freedmen’s Aid Union of Great Britain
and Ireland in 1866. This national body was concerned with providing escaped
American slaves and freed slaves with clothing, food, shelter and medicines, activities
that closely followed the Central Committee’s focus. Quakers were still influential
within the national body of this new committee, with Samuel Gurney, W.E. Foster and
B. Cadbury as Vice Presidents and GW Alexander as Treasurer. Involvement in non-
sectarian societies, as we have seen with organisations such as the BFASS, ensured
Quakers were able to become influential players in various reform movements that
would have been impossible from within the confines of their own society, owing to

110 John Hodgkin, Case and Claims of the emancipated slaves of the United States; being the Address of
the Central Committee of the Society of Friends in Great Britain and Ireland, to the British Public,
111 The Friend, (1865), p.77
112 The Friend, (1865), p.77
113 National Freedmen’s-Aid Union of Great Britain and Ireland, The Final Report of the National
Freedmen’s-Aid Union of Great Britain and Ireland; with the names of the newly-elected Committee of
Correspondence with American Freedmen’s-Aid Associations; and reports of proceedings on the
presentation of addresses to their excellencies the Hon. C.F. Adams and the Hon. R. Johnson, the late
and present United States ministers to Great Britain, London, R. Barrett & Sons (1868), p.3
their small numbers. It also shows their willingness, and ongoing commitment, to ensure that the rights of those in need were met.

One of the differences between non-denominational organisations like the BFASS, and Quaker-only committees under the auspices of the Society of Friends, is in the focus of the action undertaken by the various groups and committees. Like the BFASS, the Meeting for Sufferings also agreed to petitions being issued to heads of government, with one narrative stating:

We believe it to be a duty laid upon us to plead the cause of these our fellow-men. We submit to the consideration of all those in authority in the nations which take upon them the name of Christ, the utter incompatibility of Slavery with the Divine law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'; 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them'; these were the precepts of our Lord.\textsuperscript{114}

Quakers also wrote to Napoleon III objecting to the shipping of natives of Africa to French colonies in the West Indies.\textsuperscript{115} Where Quaker committees sometimes differed from organisations such as the BFASS was in the language and focus of the petitions. The BFASS \textit{Address to the Heads of Governments} argued that slavery violated the 'personal and civil liberty' of the slaves,\textsuperscript{116} a position obviously also vehemently argued by Quakers. The economics of slavery was also taken up by many abolitionists, with one petition asking the Parliament 'not to sanction the proposed reduction of the duty on sugar, in so far as it is the produce of slave-labour.'\textsuperscript{117} Another petition requested 'to give \textit{bona fide} tropical produce by free labour, whether in the British possessions, or

\textsuperscript{114} LYM, \textit{To Sovereigns and those in Authority in the Nations of Europe, and in other parts of the world where the Christian Religion is Professed. From the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends of Great Britain and Ireland, held in London, 1849.}, London, London Yearly Meeting (1849). \textit{LSF}, Vol. F/100a
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Meeting for Suffering Minutes, 5\textsuperscript{th} February, 1858}
\textsuperscript{116} 'Address to the Heads of Governments'; annexed to \textit{The Second Annual Report of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, for the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave-Trade, throughout the World May 14\textsuperscript{th}, 1841}, London (1841)
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{The Second Annual Report of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society} (1841), p.88
any other country, the preference in the home markets.\footnote{118} Quakers, on the other hand, while also putting forth economic and libertarian arguments against slavery, also often used religious discourse to appeal for the abolition of slavery. As has been discussed in previous chapters, Quakers could not separate their religion from their humanitarianism. Quaker religious beliefs drove their social activism, but their belief in the equality of everyone ensured that their focus was always on the rights of others to be treated equally, and have access to the rights accorded to all British citizens. The Quaker religion, based on the premise of love, service, and a self-giving spirit, meant that Quakers worked to ensure that everyone had access to the same opportunities, as their religion decreed. Quakers knew what kind of world they wanted, and they laboured to try and bring it about. Quakers saw it as their duty to declare their Christian testimony against the slave-trade and slavery whenever the opportunity arose, and were willing to converse with leaders of nations that sanctioned slavery in order to spread their message. Quakers ‘believed it to be our Christian duty to represent the wrongs inflicted upon the people of Africa’\footnote{119} and to declare their ‘Christian testimony against the Slave-trade and Slavery.’\footnote{120} The following Address adopted by the Yearly Meeting in 1822 indicates how Quaker religious belief was not separated from their political discourse:

The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is a system of peace, of love, of mercy, and of good-will. The slave trade is a system of fraud and rapine, of violence and cruelty...That which is morally wrong cannot be politically right.\footnote{121}

Quaker spiritual belief that all people were equal in the eyes of God ensured their work in abolition was premised with the notion of equal rights for all, and the concept of one human family:

\footnote{118}{The Second Annual Report of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (1841), p.96} \footnote{119}{LYM, To Sovereigns and those in Authority} \footnote{120}{Narrative of the Presentation to Sovereigns and those in Authority of the Address of the Yearly Meeting on the Slave-Trade and Slavery, London, Edward Newman (1854), p.5} \footnote{121}{Yearly Meeting, 1822: ‘An address to the inhabitants of Europe on the iniquities of the slave trade, issued by the Religious Society of Friends’, cited in LYM, Christian faith and practice, No. 651}
The families of the earth are all of one blood...all are alike subject to infirmity, disease and death, and all amenable to the same judgment after death...it brings him to regard every man as a brother, and to look upon the nations of the earth as all of one family...122

It was this belief in the equality of humankind that informed Quaker rights activism. As can be seen, Quakers combined the language of politics, religion, and humanity when addressing the issue of slaves’ rights.

Quaker belief in equality also led them to reject claims that the Africans were an inferior race to the white population, both in culture and genetics. Anthony Benezet’s 1766 article refuted the notion of African inferiority, a notion he argued was founded on ignorance and prejudice. To many people, and especially those interested in upholding the slave system, Africans were morally and intellectually inferior to the white population and designed only for a servile condition. Quakers repudiated such assertions, disseminating information in various forums to rebut these claims of prejudice and misinformation. In 1848 a Leeds Quaker Wilson Armistead wrote A Tribute for the Negro123 which is still used extensively today as a research text in US universities.124 Armistead used his book to reiterate Quaker beliefs that ‘The subjugation of a large portion of mankind to the domination and arbitrary will of another is as unnatural as it is contrary to the principles of justice, and repugnant to the precepts and to the spirit of Christianity’.125 He also illustrated, by the use of around 150 biographical sketches outlining Negro achievements, that concepts of racial inferiority were erroneous. Armistead wrote that even though skin colour was different, the Negroes [sic] were ‘endowed with minds equal in dignity, equal in capacity, and

122 LYM, To Sovereigns and those in Authority
125 Armistead, A Tribute for the Negro, p.11
equal in duration of existence – men of the same social dispositions and affections’. This illustrates that, for many Quaker abolitionists, the belief in human equality was always at the heart of their activism because Armistead’s belief went against the general orthodoxy of the time, which situated black people as barbaric and unfeeling. This notion is evident in a series of lectures delivered in 1822 by the physician W. Lawrence, in which he writes about differences between black and white people, noting that the black races:

Display gross selfishness, indifference to the pains and pleasures of others, insensibility to beauty of form, order and harmony, and an almost entire want of what we comprehend altogether under the expression of elevated sentiments, manly virtues, and moral feeling.

In 1851, the Yearly Meeting again reiterated Wilson Armistead’s notions of racial equality, reporting that Quakers were obligated to educate ‘the negro population’ not only because of a duty they owed to them, but because it would be ‘proof that the negroes, when restored to their natural rights and privileges, are not that inferior race of beings which the selfishness and cruelty of man have striven to make them.’ It should be noted that this was also a position taken by many reformers, and not just Quakers. The Edinburgh Abolition Society, for instance, recognised in 1824 that slaves possessed the ‘intellectual and moral faculties which our common Creator has equally bestowed upon them and us,’ evidence of a more widespread belief in ‘the negro population’s’ intellectual capabilities and not just a belief held by Quakers.

126 Armistead, *A Tribute for the Negro*, p.ix
128 *The Friend*, (1851), p.108
To Quakers, the language of rights applied to all humankind and their involvement with abolition was based on the notion of equal rights for all members of the human race. This notion of equality underpinned the Quaker anti-slavery movement from its beginnings in the eighteenth century. Along with Quakers’ deep religious faith, and an unshakeable belief in the sinfulness of slavery, it can be seen that the rights of slaves to freedom and justice were also integral to Quakers advocating for slave freedom. The Quaker abolitionist, Elizabeth Heyrick, wrote in 1826 that ‘should we fail to bring one single slave to the profession of the truths of Christianity, or to the enjoyment of its blessings, - not one iota the less do we owe freedom to every slave we possess.’ This quotation provides an excellent example of the Quaker position concerning abolition. Ultimately, the issue at stake was the right of slaves to freedom, liberty and justice amidst a growing understanding that slavery was an unjust and evil undertaking in an enlightened society. Quaker religious belief drove their involvement in abolition, and cannot be separated from their humanitarianism, but as Heyrick noted, the right of slaves to liberty was at the heart of their anti-slavery sentiment. Christian principles shaped Quaker belief concerning the rights of others and ensured that Quakers were very vocal opponents of the slave trade, and slavery, which had resulted in the rights of a whole race of people being subjugated to another.

The language of rights Quakers used in the abolition movement was similar to the language they utilised in some of their reform activities within Britain, as highlighted in the chapters concerning capital punishment and poor relief. Quakers also pushed for the same educational system for freed slaves as they did for British subjects within England, aiming to improve the ‘Negro’ in much the same way as they aimed to improve the lower classes. There was no real difference in their approach to the

---

131 Royle, *Modern Britain*, p.298
provision of education both inside and outside of Britain, with moral reform being the priority. In relation to their humanitarianism, there was also no real difference in the practical methods they undertook to ensure the needs of the freed slaves were met. They raised funds for agricultural equipment, and tools for employment for freed slaves, similar to their actions within Britain when aiding the poor. The only difference of course was that Quakers were also fighting for the liberty of slaves, an issue they did not have to deal with in their reform efforts inside of Britain. There were accusations, by some reformers, who accused abolitionists of only concerning themselves with overseas slavery and ignoring the economic ‘slaves’ within Britain. One such reformer was Richard Oastler, well-known for his efforts in factory reform, especially the rights of children working in factories. Oastler wrote a letter in 1830 to the Leeds Mercury editors in which he reiterated his belief in the need to abolish slavery, but noted the following in relation to ‘Yorkshire Slavery’:

The pious and able champions of negro liberty and colonial rights should, if I mistake not, have gone farther than they did...before they had travelled so far as the West Indies, should, at least for a few moments, have sojourned in our own immediate neighborhood, and have directed the attention of the meeting to scenes of misery, acts of oppression, and victims of slavery, even on the threshold of our homes...Thousands of our fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects, both male and female, the miserable inhabitants of a Yorkshire town...are this very moment existing in a state of slavery, more horrid than are the victims of that hellish system ‘colonial slavery’.

It is impossible to dispute, based on the evidence, that thousands of people, and especially children, suffered terrible working conditions in the factory system in Britain. Even though there were similarities between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ slavery, British subjects living in Britain were free, whilst slaves of African descent were held in bondage by others with no real hope of freedom.

Another major rights issue that Quakers concerned themselves with outside Britain was that of the rights of the indigenous populations in Britain’s colonies. Britain’s empire expanded rapidly throughout the nineteenth century and along with these new territories came issues and concerns with the treatment indigenous populations received at the hands of many British colonisers. Many Quakers did not approve of the British usurpation of land with no legal redress to the dispossessed, the reverberations of which are still being felt today in many countries. The next chapter will explore Quaker involvement in societies such as the Aborigines Protection Society, and Quaker-only committees authorised by the Meeting for Sufferings, in order to gauge the motives of Quakers concerning indigenous populations. Again, the question of whether Quakers were more concerned with the moral reformation of new British subjects, or whether the rights of the dispossessed took precedence, is explored. The next chapter will also consider whether Quaker concern with indigenous populations, in British colonies, played out differently to other areas of reform activism.
8. Indigenous Rights

The abolition movement in Britain had resulted in groups such as the Quakers and evangelicals working together to ensure that one race of people was not subjected to the arbitrary will and domination of another. Quaker religious beliefs especially ensured they fought for the rights of others to be treated equally and justly. Their efforts were first concentrated on slaves in British colonies, and then extended to include all people globally who were enslaved. Britain’s expanding empire in the nineteenth century, however, soon gave rise to another group of people whose rights were being violated by British imperial policy. These were the Indigenous peoples of lands where Britain had set up settler colonies, and included colonies in Asia, Africa and Oceania. This chapter will first briefly look at British understandings of what the empire meant in the early nineteenth century in order to provide a contextual setting for the chapter. This aims to help position attitudes by Quakers and others to Indigenous peoples in the Empire. It will then investigate Quaker involvement with the Indigenous populations in some of Britain’s colonies, looking particularly at Australia. The chapter will consider the extent to which Quakers followed the belief in British cultural superiority, which at the time was the dominant world view held by many. The Quaker belief in equality, justice and human rights, so evident in the abolition movement, will also be investigated in their involvement with Indigenous communities colonised by Britain. Were the rights of Indigenous populations the focus of Quaker activism, or was the moral reformation of those considered ‘uncivilised’ more of a concern? This chapter also looks at how Quakers dealt with the dilemma between empire building and humanitarianism, and what impact they had, if any, on Britain’s treatment of Indigenous populations.

The British Empire is generally referred to by historians in terms of a First and Second British Empire, with the American War of Independence (1775-1783) frequently
deemed as the demarcation point between the two empires.\textsuperscript{1} During the eighteenth century the British Empire expanded as industrialisation began to impact on Britain’s economy. The first British empire had seen the growth of mercantilism throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Mercantilism required the acquisition of colonies in which new markets with exclusive trading rights could be established, providing the produce and goods required to meet the ever-growing British need.\textsuperscript{2} The growing industrialisation of Britain could not be sustained without access to raw materials and commodities, or without new markets for the export of British goods. As a result of this need, Britain added more colonies throughout the eighteenth century, including colonies in India, Australasia, Africa and the Americas. At the same time, it also lost major colonies when the American colonies gained independence from Britain during the American Revolution. The Seven Years War (1756-1763) between France and Britain had revealed to British decision makers that the empire was central to Britain, both financially and politically.\textsuperscript{3} Economically, an expanded empire provided Britain with new colonial markets with which to trade its goods, and to import new products. A major impetus, therefore, behind imperial expansion was the needs of both commercialism and consumerism.\textsuperscript{4} Another impetus was that the empire helped to cement Britain’s position as a political power, which had surpassed that of its European rivals, and established Britain’s supremacy outside of Europe.\textsuperscript{5} Also, keeping these new markets and British inhabitants safe and out of the hands of Britain’s Catholic adversaries required maritime supremacy, and Britain built up its navy to defend its

\textsuperscript{1} David Armitage, \textit{The ideological origins of the British Empire}, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (2000), p.2
\textsuperscript{4} Niall Ferguson, \textit{Empire: How Britain made the modern world}, London, Allen Lane (2003), pxxv
\textsuperscript{5} Marshall, ‘Introduction’, p.1
interests, often with military force. The Royal Navy not only protected Britain against invasion and its global commercial interests but British warships also ensured that there was no real challenge to Britain’s maritime supremacy and self-appointed police role.

This first British empire was considered part of Britain and no real differentiation was made between the colonies and Britain. After the Seven Years War it was conventional to speak of the British Empire as a single entity. The empire was considered ‘Protestant, commercial, maritime and free’ and unlike the colonies of other European powers that had been gained by conquest, British colonies were considered by many as commercial entities that were characterized by free British institutions, conventions and political customs. The first British empire was viewed by many British citizens as a homogenous entity overseen by honourable men, and one which embraced notions of rights, freedom and duty. The majority of British people supported imperial expansion because there were too many commercial interests tied up in the empire not to support it, and it was considered a symbol of Britain’s importance in the world.

The second British Empire took in the period after the American Revolution and encapsulated more focus on trade and the establishment of colonies in the Pacific region. Political pressure for economic change had resulted in the emergence of a free trade philosophy and the beginning of the end of mercantilist protectionism. By rights, this new laissez-faire ideology should have been anti-imperial because the needs of the

---

6 Webster, *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire*, p.23
8 Marshall, ‘Introduction’, pp.7-8
9 Armitage, *The ideological origins*, p.174
12 Marshall, ‘Introduction’, p.8
nation could now be delivered by free trade, thereby negating the need for colonies ruled by Britain to supply goods and materials required. A free trade philosophy, however, did not put an end to British imperialism. Colonisation came to be seen by the power brokers as integral to a better world and as a means of solving Britain’s internal problems, such as over-population and the convict issue, as well as providing new economic opportunities to the burgeoning middle classes.\textsuperscript{13} For instance, between 1788 and 1853, around 148,000 convicts were sent to New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land\textsuperscript{14} in an attempt to alleviate massive overcrowding in British prisons. England’s rapid population increase led to a desire for new settlements to deal with an ever-increasing population, and middle-class industrialists searching for new opportunities. Empire building therefore was seen as necessary to Britain’s prosperity and power base, and the issue of the rights and freedom of ‘others’ within the British empire came to be subsumed by the needs of the empire.

The growth of the British empire was not without its critics, however, both before and after the American Revolution. Political scientist Jennifer Pitts asserts in her 2005 study \textit{A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France}, that eighteenth-century radical thinkers such as David Hume, Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham challenged Britain’s imperial conquests on grounds including the rights of humanity, justice, the economics of free trade and the unjustness of foreign despotism.\textsuperscript{15} David Hume, an eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher, historian and economist, was a staunch opponent of mercantilism from the 1750s, questioning the legal foundation of

\textsuperscript{13} See Ferguson, \textit{Empire: How Britain made the Modern World} for an overview of why Britain’s empire expanded.


\textsuperscript{15} Jennifer Pitts, \textit{A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France}, Princeton, Princeton University Press (2005), p.1
Britain’s claim for territory, especially in North America. Adam Smith, also a Scottish philosopher and political economist, was another whose 1776 study *Wealth of Nations* criticised mercantilism, arguing that the American colonies did not add to the wealth of Britain. Smith argued that trading with France was a much more viable and profitable option than the poor returns available from North American colonies. Jeremy Bentham also opposed colonialism, writing letters in 1789 in an attempt to influence France’s Estates General on the subject, and writing a pamphlet titled *Emancipate your Colonies* in 1793 which sets out his arguments against colonialism.

As was evident in the abolition movement, the right to liberty, equality and justice was, for many reformers at least, at the forefront of early liberal thought in Britain in the later decades of the eighteenth century. Radical thinkers like Hume, Smith and Bentham believed in the rule of law and self government and considered that all societies were entitled to treatment that respected their cultural and social norms. Broadly speaking, these types of thinkers were biological universalists who did not impose their own cultural values on the members of another culture. For instance, Adam Smith, while believing that some cultures were in earlier stages of development than European society, still remained respectful of them and was very sceptical of the cultural superiority claimed by many Europeans. Some of Smith’s Scottish contemporaries were even more explicit than Smith, arguing that societies, such as Britain, that claimed superiority over other cultures were not impartial and their practices were often

---

16 Armitage, *The ideological origins*, pp.188-194
18 Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, p.107
20 Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, p.3
21 Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, p.26
detrimental and unfair to those cultures whom they considered inferior. Unlike British colonisers, many of whom were cultural imperialists, radical thinkers like Smith and some of his Scottish contemporaries, such as Adam Ferguson and James Dunbar, did not judge other cultures as though they were culturally inferior to European culture. They did not see difference as indicative of inferiority and did not make moral judgements on the issue of cultural superiority.

Historian Nancy Stepan agrees with Pitts’ assessment of the position taken by Adam Smith and his contemporaries, stating that it was only at the beginning of the nineteenth century that racial scientists began to discuss differences in the moral, mental and physical state of human races. Prior to this, a monogenist view was generally taken in intellectual circles, which posited that all races were a single species. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, most British people considered the European race was superior to non-European. In her 2000 study *The Complexion of Race*, Associate Professor of English Roxann Wheeler agrees that throughout the nineteenth century racial ideology in Britain became more racist, but unlike Pitts and Stepan, Wheeler argues that racial differences were emphasised throughout the eighteenth century also.

Nineteenth-century critics of the empire, such as Richard Cobden and the Quaker John Bright, were also staunch opponents of imperialism. Their opposition was based primarily on commercial grounds, but there was also a clear, moral dimension in their criticism. Cobden and Bright were British politicians and free trade supporters who advocated a non-interventionist foreign policy and an end to British imperial expansion. Cobden wrote in 1846 that he hoped ‘the desire and the motive for large and mighty

---

22 Cited in Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, p.27
23 Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, p.26
empires, for gigantic armies and navies, for those materials which are used for the destruction of life and the desolation of the rewards of labour, will die away. In 1858, the Quaker John Bright, when delivering a speech concerning principles of foreign policy, considered imperialism caused wars that resulted in the need for increased taxation and increased military expenditure and which only led to ‘merciless and disgraceful wars’ that were of no real benefit to Britain. Bright surmised that:

If any ingenious person were to prepare a large map of the world, as far as it is known, and were to mark upon it, in any colour that he liked, the spots where Englishmen have fought and English blood has been poured forth, and the treasure of England squandered, scarcely a country, scarcely a province of the vast expanse of the habitable globe would be thus undistinguished.

Even though the Quaker peace testimony would have influenced Bright’s position on war, he also questioned how, when the greatness of Britain was measured in its revenues from its colonies, there were over a million paupers in the country? Bright also asked ‘why it is that with all this trade, all this industry, and all this personal freedom, there is still so much that is unsound at the base of our social fabric?’ To critics such as Cobden and Bright, imperialism was not beneficial to Britain and did not measure up to the arguments that supported it. They could not see a lot of evidence that colonialism was of any great benefit to the majority of British subjects within Britain.

Opponents of emigration to British colonies also saw the development of overseas interests as expensive and unwarranted, arguing that there were huge tracts of land within Britain that needed to be developed first. As already noted, however, the

29 Bright, Selected Speeches, pp.207-208
30 Bright, Selected Speeches, p.217
31 Bright, Selected Speeches, p.217
32 Catherine Hall, Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830 – 1867.
majority of British people supported the expansion of the British empire. Even though liberalism espoused ideals of human equality, freedom and pluralism, many nineteenth-century liberal thinkers, such as John Stuart Mill, came to support colonial rule. Jennifer Pitts argues that nineteenth-century understandings of how societies developed and progressed, along with a concern with setting-up fully functioning liberal governments, were the two important developments in the shift from empire being seen as unjust and superior, to the endorsement of imperialist policy. The use of biological racism, which classified races into a hierarchy ranging from ‘savages’ to ‘civilised’, with Europeans at the head, allowed the British colonisers to argue that the colonised needed to be civilised before they were capable of enjoying the rights and freedoms inherent to all British subjects. John Stuart Mill adopted this position, creating a dichotomy between civilised and barbarous societies. Mill believed in a scale of progress that considered that uncivilised societies needed to be drawn up towards the level of the most civilised society, which to his mind was British society. This distinction between civilised and savage societies also worked to unify the British people as the superior race. In this way, British people could legitimise their actions and not be held legally or morally accountable for its treatment of the Indigenous people it colonised. This could also be seen as a manifestation of Enlightenment thought, in which racial inequality was legitimised. Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theories were used to position Europeans as more developed, and therefore superior to other races, and to which the uncivilised should aspire.

---

33 Pitts, A Turn to Empire, p.28
35 Pitts, A Turn to Empire, p.140
The notion that British culture was superior to that of ‘backward’ societies, and the formation of a British identity, is crucial to understanding the British imperialist mindset. The forging of a British identity throughout the eighteenth century, but particularly in the nineteenth century, resulted in other cultures coming to be seen as inferior by the general British population. The issue of British identity and national character has been the subject of a number of recent histories, with historian Linda Colley’s 1992 study *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* a very useful analysis of the formation of British identity during this period.\(^{36}\) Colley’s study investigates this issue of British identity and national character and argues that British nationalism was initiated by war, mostly the ongoing battles with Catholic France during the eighteenth century, which allowed the British to collectively define themselves against an enemy they constructed as immoral, subservient and irrational.\(^{37}\) By constructing the enemy in such a way, they were able to position themselves in opposition to this Catholic ‘Other’,\(^{38}\) thereby denoting themselves as free, prosperous, and Protestant. Colley argues that whilst war was vital to the emergence of a British nation, religion was also a major contributing factor. Protestantism ‘lay at the core of British national identity’\(^{39}\) and was the ‘foundation that made the invention of Great Britain possible.’\(^{40}\) The Protestant worldview declared that Britain was a blessed land and its people were God’s chosen. Britain was overseen by a Protestant God and its people held a very strong self-belief that they were better off, and better than, other people, Catholics in particular.\(^{41}\) Many Britons came to believe that their political structures and stability, power, wealth


\(^{38}\) Colley, *Britons*, p.6

\(^{39}\) Colley, *Britons*, p.369

\(^{40}\) Colley, *Britons*, p.54

\(^{41}\) Colley, *Britons*, p.33
and religion made them culturally superior. This viewpoint helps to explain British perceptions that other societies needed ‘civilising’ up to this superior British standard throughout the second British empire. The formation of this British identity was crucial to nineteenth-century acceptance of British imperialism by many of its subjects.

Many Britons accepted imperialist policies, owing to a belief that they were God’s chosen people to whom the empire had been consigned. God had chosen them to spread the word of the Gospel to the world and to be the beacon of Protestantism. There was, however, a growing realisation by some people that imperialism was not only inequitable to colonised British subjects, but that it was also a blot on the British national character. The loss of the American colonies had shown the British public at home that the empire was not as benevolent and virtuous as had been portrayed by many leaders, and also in the popular press. Evidence of the inequality and despotism that underpinned much of the British empire began to become apparent in the metropole. This realisation led to the growth of one group in particular that was concerned with the rights of British subjects living in British colonies. This group was the previously discussed Abolition Society, who were concerned with the rights of slaves to freedom and justice, the very basis of liberalism. The slave trade, along with issues of equality and rights that were discussed in the previous chapter, was also seen by many abolitionists as bringing the British national character into disrepute, with one British MP, when praising Wilberforce in Parliament after the abolition of the slave trade, stating that abolition ‘washes out this foul stain from the pure ermine of our national character.’ The 1825 Annual Report of the Edinburgh Society for Promoting the Mitigation and Ultimate Abolition of Negro Slavery referred to the system of slavery

42 Colley, Britons, p.369
43 Colley, Britons, p.368
44 Colley, Britons, p.369
45 Wilson, The Island Race, p.51
46 Cited in Hochschild, Bury the Chains, p.308
as ‘a blot upon the fair fame of Britain – a national disgrace.’ Quaker Elizabeth Heyrick stated that Britain had the power of ‘obliterating this foul blot, this brand of infamy from our national character’ and that while slavery remained, the British character was stamped with ‘imbecility, cruelty and hypocrisy’. The British national character was seen by many within Britain as dutiful, moral, industrious and virtuous, and the act of keeping some members of the human race in bondage went against these ideals. Slavery was one issue that highlighted the lack of moral fortitude of some slave owners. Another was the behaviour of many British colonists towards Indigenous populations, which is the focus of this chapter. British national character emphasised qualities of freedom, equality and justice for all British subjects and any deviance from these qualities showed a character flaw that was highly detrimental to the British view of themselves. For British people to position themselves as superior to others, they needed to act in a manner that epitomised what it meant to be British.

During the eighteenth century, many British colonisers were not overly respectful of other cultures; however cultural practices were usually tolerated, and, on the odd occasion even admired. This began to change in the second British Empire with the rise in missions and the growing British perception of its superiority over other cultures. Along with attempting to spread Christianity amongst the colonised, which they saw as their Christian duty, missionaries encouraged the British population to

---

48 [Elizabeth Heyrick], ‘To those who are tired of the subject of West-Indian Slavery’ in Letters on the Necessity of a Prompt Extinction of British Colonial Slavery: Chiefly Addressed to the More Influential Classes, London, Hatchard and Son (1826), p.65
50 Ferguson, Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World, p.113
51 Many missionary societies were formed in the 1790s, including The Baptist Missionary Society, the London Mission Society, the Edinburgh and Glasgow Missionary Societies, and the Church Missionary Society.
consider themselves as divinely selected to rule over a large British empire.\(^{52}\) A belief in divine providence, along with the global dominance that Britain was achieving, was proof to many Christians that British imperialism was a ‘sacred trust’ to be used to spread the word of the gospel.\(^{53}\) Missions played an integral part in popularising empire with a large part of the British population, as well as instilling notions of racial supremacy and ‘constitute [ing] themselves as colonisers’ and ‘superior to others.’\(^{54}\) Recent studies have argued that the contribution of missions helped to inculcate, to the British populace, growing British notions of superiority and their place as God’s chosen to redeem the world.\(^{55}\) The abundance of letters and reports sent back to Britain from missionaries throughout the colonies helped to reinforce the perceived cultural differences between ‘civilised’ and ‘uncivilised’ societies. These texts were the main source of information which helped shape British perceptions concerning the culture of non-European British subjects, that is, slaves, and Indigenous populations.\(^{56}\)

The expansion of the Empire to the East also enabled the British to cast themselves as superior, and this worked to maximise British cohesion. A dividing line was now being drawn by British imperialists between ‘barbarian’ and ‘civilised’ societies, a line that many eighteenth-century thinkers had not countenanced. Justification for empire now began to rest upon the notion that, generally speaking, Indigenous populations were considered backward and in need of guardianship and civilising. While eighteenth-century thought had centred on a biological universalism, nineteenth-century thinkers began to focus on biological difference and the assumption that different races had


\(^{53}\) Stanley, Brian, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant missions & British imperialism in the nineteenth & twentieth centuries*, Leicester, Apollos (1990), p.68

\(^{54}\) Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p.12

\(^{55}\) See Wilson, *The Island Race*, p82; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p.12

varying levels of capabilities and characteristics. Biological universalism was replaced by biological determinism, resulting in other cultures often being classed as less intelligent, uncivilised, and inferior to, the European population. Factors such as the abolition of slavery, and growing technologies owing to the industrial Revolution, had begun to convince even the most liberal of social critics that British culture was superior to other societies, and a culture that ‘backward’ peoples needed to adopt in order to progress. It was this worldview that many British people used to justify their attitude to Indigenous peoples in British colonies, and informed the behaviour of many policy makers, colonists, and reformers. The empire now sought not only to export British goods and personnel, but also to export British culture. Missions became civilising missions to help ‘backward’ and ‘heathen’ societies advance towards a more ‘civilised’ state. This imposition of British culture had a devastating impact on many of the Indigenous peoples in Britain’s colonies, an impact that still reverberates throughout the world today.

For many British humanitarians, the paradox between empire-building and human rights proved to be a considerable dilemma. Many liberal nineteenth-century thinkers espoused the ideals of liberty and equality for all, and yet also saw the Empire, which often trampled upon the rights of the colonised, as being crucial to the well-being and prosperity of Britain. By supporting imperialism they were generally supporting a system that dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their land, their culture, their rights, and their freedom. Many humanitarians, while not necessarily questioning imperialist policy, were however very concerned with the brutality and atrocities that were

---

57 Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, p.20
58 Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, p.15
59 Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, p.119
regularly inflicted on the colonised. Humanitarian concern for the rights and welfare of others, despite many reformers supporting British imperialism, drove their involvement in attempting to ensure that at least some rights of Indigenous populations were met. In this regard, the energy that had previously been devoted to abolishing slavery in British colonies, and which was still being called upon in a bid to end slavery world-wide, was now also turned towards Indigenous populations throughout the British empire. Social activists, who had taken up the cause of the abolition of slavery so readily, now looked to the plight of Indigenous peoples across the British Empire.

Concern for the rights of Indigenous populations began to arise because one of the major problems that the British government faced in its imperial push was that the lands they wanted to colonise were already occupied. Settler colonies required the acquisition of land, which was vital to the establishment and success of the settlement, and Britain needed to arrive at a solution that enabled them to take possession of the land legally. Prior to the eighteenth century land acquisition was steeped in theological assumptions which posited that Christians could legally take the land inhabited by non-Christians by conquest. By the beginning of the eighteenth century British politicians and intellectuals began to be influenced by natural law theory and a developing body of law that claimed it was against the laws of nature for land to remain unimproved. Land was also considered *terra nullius* if Indigenous societies had no sovereign ruler or a system of law. Merete Falck Borch provides a good overview of these legal and intellectual developments regarding land rights from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth century, in her 2004 study *Conciliation – Compulsion – Conversion*. Borch demonstrates how the issue of land ownership changed over time to one which depended on the level of

---

60 For examples, see *The Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements)*, London, William Ball (1837)
62 Borch, *Conciliation*, p.230
‘civilisation’ reached by Indigenous peoples.\textsuperscript{63} The British government began to utilise these developing legal positions to rationalise its claims to already inhabited lands that Britain was colonising. That is not to say that all acquisitions of land were taken without some sort of agreement with the original inhabitants, or at least acknowledgement that Indigenous peoples had some legal entitlement to their land. The Treaty of Waitangi is one example which endeavoured to deal with the rights of the Indigenous population in New Zealand, with Queen Victoria declaring in the treaty signed in 1840 that she was ‘anxious to protect their just Rights and Property’\textsuperscript{64}. Generally speaking though, the British Government used the law of nations to justify dispossessing Indigenous populations of their land, often without fair recompense to the original land owners, and without any concern for the rights of Indigenous populations. It was because of the actions of the British Government that concern for the rights of Indigenous populations were taken up by reformers such as the Quakers, who began to argue for the rights of Indigenous populations to be recognised.

The British Government did have its critics concerning the position it took regarding colonisation, even within the Parliament. A major document of the period which illustrates the growing concern with the rights of Indigenous populations, and the effects of colonisation, is \textit{The House of Commons’ Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements)}\textsuperscript{65}. The Select Committee sat in 1835 and issued their final report in 1837. Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, an evangelical who had taken over as antislavery leader in Parliament after Wilberforce’s retirement, was a leading instigator in the

\textsuperscript{63} Borch, \textit{Conciliation}, Chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes}
setting up of the Select Committee. Historian Kenneth Nworah reports, however, that the setting up of this committee was at the instigation of the Quaker Dr Thomas Hodgkin, after informal meetings of Quakers regarding the issue.  This suggests that Quaker concerns were represented by the Committee, especially as Buxton’s mother was a Quaker, and he married into the Quaker Gurney family. While the Committee was appointed by the British government, the Committee consisted of friends and allies of Buxton, including his son-in-law Andrew Johnston, suggesting Buxton had some input into its composition. If this was the case, and it is highly probable, it would mean that evangelicals with the same mindset as Buxton were appointed to the Committee. This would ensure that any policies advanced would reflect Evangelical concern with the consequences that colonisation was having on Indigenous populations.

The Select Committee was appointed to:

Consider what Measures ought to be adopted with regard to the NATIVE INHABITANTS of Countries where BRITISH SETTLEMENTS are made, and to the neighbouring Tribes, in order to secure to them the due observance of Justice, and the protection of their Rights; to promote the spread of Civilisation among them; and to lead them to the peaceful and voluntary reception of the Christian Religion.

Over 600 pages of evidence were collected, with much of it provided by witnesses appearing before the Select Committee. Evidence was collected with regard to colonies, towns and individuals in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and the US.

---

66 Thomas Fowell Buxton was a member of the Church of England but his mother was a Quaker and he married into the Gurney family, an extremely well known Quaker family. Elizabeth Fry was his sister-in-law and Joseph John Gurney his brother-in-law.


71 Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes, p.1
both existing and proposed, in countries including Australia, New Zealand, and ‘British North America’, although the major focus of the report was the Cape Colony in South Africa. The report found that the rights of Indigenous populations were being oppressed, noting with regard to their land and property that ‘Too often, their territory has been usurped; their property seized; their numbers diminished’. The report also found that ‘we have, it appears, succeeded in eradicating them...through our taking possession of their hunting grounds, whereby we have despoiled them of the means of existence.’ Also included was the statement that ‘the intercourse of Europeans in general....has been, unless when attended by missionary exertions, a source of many calamities to uncivilized nations.’ This first major report into the treatment of Indigenous peoples shows a high level of awareness of the injustices being suffered by the colonised. Along with a concern for rights and justice, the Committee acknowledged that Indigenous populations needed the benefits from ‘an enlightened and Christian people’ conferred upon them. This mindset is in keeping with the notions of British cultural superiority that existed amongst much of the British populace at this time. The report does not question the act of colonising lands already occupied by Indigenous peoples; the concern was mainly for the conduct of the colonisers against Aborigines. The report also showed a concern for the need to civilise and Christianise the Aborigines, which represented a general evangelical position on Christian missions, and the need to convert the ‘heathen’.

After the Select Committee issued its report in 1837 Thomas Fowell Buxton became involved in setting up the Aborigines’ Protection Society (APS). This society, as with

---

72 The other major report of this period was Lord Durham's *Report on the Affairs of British North America*, which he wrote after resigning as Governor of Canada in 1838.
73 Laidlaw, ‘Integrating metropolitan, colonial and imperial histories’, p.78
74 *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes*, p.3
75 *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes*, p.4
76 *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes*, pp.3-4
77 *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes*, pp.1-2
the Abolition Committee, included many well-known Quakers on its committee, with the Quaker Thomas Hodgkin one of the original founders and its foremost spokesperson. Samuel Gurney, nephew of Elizabeth Fry and Joseph John Gurney, was the President for more than twenty years, and the usual Quaker names such as Pease, Fry, Allen and Forster also appeared on the committee member list. In 1851 almost 60 per cent of life members and donors listed were Quakers and another 15-20 per cent were Quaker descendants. Because of the prominent positions held by Quakers in the APS we can assume that the policies and actions of the society strongly represented the values of the Quakers. Notions of equality and social justice were integral to the Quaker belief system and would have informed their policies and activities within the Society. For this reason, an investigation firstly of the APS will give us an appreciation of the Quaker position in regard to Indigenous populations in British colonies. A case study of two Quakers who visited British colonies in the first half of the nineteenth century will then be undertaken to further ascertain a Quaker perspective regarding colonised Indigenous populations.

One stated object of the APS in 1839 was ‘to assist in protecting the defenceless, and promoting the advancement of uncivilized Tribes’. This objective conformed to the existing notion of Indigenous populations needing ‘civilising’ before they would be in a position to receive the natural rights intrinsic to British citizens. The Society also reported, however, that ‘It has always been the main object of this Society to assert the rights of the Aborigines; to assert broadly and unequivocally that they have inherent rights, and to demand, loudly and firmly, that those rights be no longer withheld.’ The APS recorded that it was committed to upholding Aboriginal claims to ‘equal justice,

equal rights, political and social, equal education, and equal humanity'. The problem with this commitment was the existing assumption that Indigenous populations were uncivilised and that before they were capable of taking up these rights they needed to gain an understanding of British beliefs and values, and of Christianity. The prevailing attitude was that Aborigines were unable to understand their rights unless they were educated in British political, social and cultural norms.

The APS considered Indigenous populations to be ‘very low in the scale of knowledge and art’ and that it was essential to introduce, ‘with their concurrence, a system of civil organisation, suited to British subjects’. The cultural rights and practices of Aboriginals were considered as belonging to a ‘backwards’ race and the British culture needed to be embraced in order for them to be able to participate fully in the civil and social life of the colonies. It should be stated here that the APS never considered Indigenous populations incapable of achieving a ‘civilised’ state if they were given the means to achieve it, nor that they were ultimately a doomed race, a belief held by some in the nineteenth century. Amongst its other objectives, the Society also aimed to disseminate information in relation to Aborigines to try and break down ‘the prejudice of caste and colour...[which] still exerts the most injurious influence in preventing their admission to those rights and privileges to which they are entitled as men and brethren.’ The APS totally opposed the reasoning that the extermination of the Aborigines was a foregone conclusion and argued that there was no doubt that ‘when Christianity and civilisation shall have full play among them, they will be found

81 ‘What is the Aborigines’ Protection Society Doing?’ in The Colonial Intelligencer or, Aborigines Friend. 1847-1848, London, Aborigines’ Protection Society (1847-1848), pp.323-324
82 The Colonial Intelligencer (1849-50), p.14
83 The Colonial Intelligencer (1847-48), p.48
84 The Colonial Intelligencer (1847-48), p.3
86 Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes, p.ix
fully equal to ourselves." The APS members devoted their energies to try and halt the extermination that was occurring amongst Indigenous populations, by attempting to change public opinion that considered the extermination of Indigenous populations was inevitable. The intelligence of Aborigines was not doubted by the APS, only their perceived lack of a civilised culture.

The APS considered that one of the best means of civilising Aborigines was through education, and the Society strongly supported the establishment of schools to spread education to Aborigines. The Society also proposed ‘that a still higher degree of education should be imparted to the most talented and promising scholars.’ To this end they suggested that the most promising of these students be taken to England to advance their education, and which in turn they could then impart back to their own countrymen. While the altruism behind this provision of education cannot be questioned, bearing in mind that the education provided was only what the APS saw as valuable, there were other self-serving motives behind this proposal. In particular, ethno-logical and philo-logical research could be undertaken on the students which would allow ‘a much more correct estimate … [to] be formed of the capacity of the different races of Aborigines.’ More importantly, religious writings could be translated into native languages, ensuring that religious teachings were more readily available to Aborigines. As already seen in the reasons behind providing education to the poorer classes in Britain, similar ideas were also applied to Indigenous populations where education was seen as a ‘civilising’ tool.

---

88 The Fifteenth Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Society, p. 25
89 The Second Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Society, p. 22
90 The Second Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Society, p. 23
91 The Second Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Society, p. 23
92 The Second Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Society, p. 23
Education was not only seen as a means of promoting civilisation amongst Indigenous populations, but also as a necessary and just act owed to people who had been victims of British greed and misrule. The APS reported in 1839 that ‘Where such provision is wholly wanting, and where land has been taken, as in Australia, without any sort of payment having been contemplated, it is high time that this injustice should be remedied, and the proposed means of instruction should be regarded as one of the most essential forms of compensation.’ Providing education was not only seen as the means of civilising the Aborigines, it was also considered as part of a fair and just payment for stealing the land and livelihood of the Aborigines. This of course was premised on the assumption that the provision of a British education was a positive for Indigenous populations, a premise that could no doubt be argued very strongly against by the dispossessed.

The focus of the APS was on ‘civilising’ the Indigenous peoples, a mission that ultimately was underpinned by cultural assumptions of British superiority, but the Society was also very concerned with ensuring that Indigenous populations were able to survive. One method they undertook in an attempt to ensure their survival was the dissemination of material in an effort to change public opinion in relation to Aborigines. No doubt they hoped that if people understood that colonised populations were capable of being civilised, then more people would endeavour to ensure their survival. Another method was advocating for land rights and, at the very least, compensation for dispossessed lands. The APS acknowledged that depriving Indigenous peoples of their lands, and not compensating them fairly, was having dire consequences:

They have been treated unjustly; their country has been taken from them, and with it their means of subsistence, whilst no equivalent has been substituted. It matters but little that we attempt to establish a right

---

to take possession of their territory on the allegation that they were unable to turn it to the same productive account as we. That they derived their living from it is a fact which cannot be denied; and surely nothing can justify our taking that subsistence from them, and withholding, instead, other means of support.\textsuperscript{94}

The Aborigines were being dispossessed of their lands, and means of survival, which the APS understood could eventually only have one outcome if it continued. The Society argued that in relation to Aborigines, at no time ‘are exertions made in their behalf at all proportioned to their need.’\textsuperscript{95} The APS seemed fully aware of the injustices imposed on Aborigines by colonisation and a large part of their rhetoric, based on their views of justice and equality, was directed at providing for the needs of the Aborigines in order to ensure their ongoing survival. This was of ultimate concern to the APS and they appealed for the Aborigines’ right to the basic needs of survival.

What is evident in the reports and articles printed by the APS is that the question of the legality, and morality, of Britain’s imperialism, is never really examined. As has already been mentioned, it seems that most nineteenth-century British reformers and humanitarians did not question Britain’s right to colonise lands, only the manner in which it was undertaken. The APS recorded that ‘instead of opposing colonisation, [it] only desired to see the system on which it is now extensively carried on, so improved as to render the spread of British colonies beneficial, not ruinous, to the Aborigines.’\textsuperscript{96} The society acknowledged the need to persist and know that ‘our efforts are sustained by the conviction that in accomplishing the preservation of these defenceless people, we promote the vital interests of our country, and maintain the rights of human nature.’\textsuperscript{97}

Even though the Aborigines were considered as uncivilised by many colonisers, they were still seen as possessing human rights, including the right to an education, the right

\textsuperscript{94} The Colonial Intelligencer or, Aborigines Friend (1847-48), p.44

\textsuperscript{95} The Second Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Society, p.15

\textsuperscript{96} The Second Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Society, p.21

\textsuperscript{97} The Third Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Society, London, P. White & Son (1840), p.44
to compensation for land that was settled, and the right to fair and equitable policies. The rights of the Indigenous peoples, fought for by the APS, however, were of a restricted nature and consisted mostly of access to the British legal system, and access to a British education. This access rested upon Indigenous populations embracing the British culture whilst mostly denying their own.

There was also concern within the APS with the issue of bringing ‘the English name into disrepute’. As previously discussed, the British national character was seen as moral, courageous, benevolent and virtuous and the brutality and oppression that was dealt out to Indigenous peoples by many colonial governments and rulers was considered a discredit to the British national character. The APS declared that ‘It surely behoves a British public to insist that the colonial rule of Britain be no longer such as to stain her name with the reproach of cruelty and injustice.’ It was seen as extremely important that colonists acted in a humane and just manner in order for the perceived British national character to be upheld. To this end, the APS did succeed in bringing the cruel and inhumane treatment suffered by many Indigenous peoples to the notice of policy makers. The APS was concerned with the British government, and the colonisers, acting in a benevolent manner towards Indigenous populations. This can be seen in a resolution passed at the Annual Meeting of the Aborigines’ Protection Society in 1851 which read:

That the oppressive and exterminating system at present, with few exceptions, adopted in relation to uncivilized tribes, is a blot on the practical character of the civilisation of our age and country; and that policy, justice, honour, and above all, Christianity, demand a prompt change to a better system...

98 The Colonial Intelligencer (1847-48), pp.323-324
99 The Second Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Society, pp.28-29
100 The Colonial Intelligencer (1850-51), p.236
Again, the act of colonisation is not brought into question, only the manner in which it was undertaken.

Throughout this thesis it is clear that English Quakers were an important component of many nineteenth-century societies and organisations set up to challenge the mechanisms that resulted in social injustice and inequality for many British citizens. The APS was one of these organisations, and Quakers were integral members who worked to ensure that the rights of the Indigenous, at least the rights they considered as essential, were met. Similarly to other areas of reform discussed in previous chapters, Quakers also worked from within their own society to fight for the rights of Indigenous populations. The Meeting for Sufferings set up an Aborigines Committee in June 1837 following the concern of the Yearly Meeting for ‘the present state of the Aborigines of the British Colonial Possessions, particularly as it respects those of the Indians in Upper Canada.’

This concern later spread to Aborigines in other British Colonies. For Quakers to be as heavily involved with the APS as they were, the society would have had to act in ways that mirrored the belief system of the Quakers, with regard to Aborigines. Quakers held the balance of power in the APS and this would have heavily influenced the decision-making process. It is no surprise, therefore, that evidence of these similar beliefs can be seen in the Meeting for Sufferings minutes relating to Aborigines. If we take an example from an address by Quakers in 1840 to Lord John Russell, the newly appointed Secretary for the Colonies, it is apparent that the same concerns held by the APS were also the concerns of the Quaker committee:

> We here allude to the recognition and security of their title to some portion of the territories once wholly theirs; to the *bona fide* admission of their evidence in courts of law; - to the recognition of their right as men and citizens to a full participation in all the privileges of British subjects, so that the distinctions of colour and race may no longer

---

101 *Meeting for Sufferings, 5th of June, 1837, p.394*
operate against them, and that effectual steps may be taken both at home and in the colonies to effect their elevation in a moral, intellectual, and political point of view.\textsuperscript{102}

The Quaker Aborigines Committee raised the same issues as the APS, including land rights and compensation, the right to give evidence in court, and the rights and privileges of British subjects. The Committee questioned Aborigines being ‘deprived of their lands and means of subsistence without treaty, payment, or compensation.’\textsuperscript{103} The Committee also alluded to the ‘incalculable injury to the moral and physical condition of the native races’\textsuperscript{104} and the need ‘of raising them to the full enjoyment of their rights.’\textsuperscript{105} Interestingly, in an idea way ahead of its time, Joseph Sturge, a Birmingham Quaker, suggested in 1853 that ‘as the natives had never been heard in their own defence, some of them should have a seat in the legislature; and if they had that opportunity of pleading their own cause great good would result.’\textsuperscript{106} Unfortunately, in Australia it was 1971 before an Aboriginal was appointed to the Federal Parliament\textsuperscript{107} and 1968 in Canada,\textsuperscript{108} although New Zealand has had Indigenous representation since 1867.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{102} The Report of the Aborigines’ Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings, read at the Yearly Meeting 1840: with the Address to Lord John Russell, on his Becoming Secretary for the Colonies; that to Friends settling in New Colonies; and some particulars calculated to give information, and promote interest respecting the present state of Aboriginal Tribes. London, Harvey and Darton (1840), p.7

\textsuperscript{103} The Report of the Aborigines’ Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings, read at the Yearly Meeting 1840, p.7

\textsuperscript{104} The Report of the Aborigines’ Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings, read at the Yearly Meeting 1840, p.8

\textsuperscript{105} The Report of the Aborigines’ Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings, read at the Yearly Meeting 1840, p.8

\textsuperscript{106} The Sixteenth Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Society, London, C. Gilpin (1853), p.15


\textsuperscript{109} New Zealand has had indigenous representation since 1867 when, as a temporary measure, four seats were reserved in the House of Representatives for Maori elected on a (Maori) manhood suffrage.(4) In 1876 these seats became permanent. Georgina McGill, Reserved Seats in Parliament for Indigenous Peoples – the
Quakers were also concerned with the interactions colonists had with Indigenous populations and in 1841 the Meeting for Sufferings issued *An Address of Christian Counsel and Caution to Emigrants to Newly-Settled Colonies*.\(^{110}\) This address indicated Quaker concern and ‘lively interest in the welfare of the uncivilized and enslaved’ and ‘that their inalienable rights as a part of the great family of man might be respected, and their civilisation and religious instruction promoted.’\(^{111}\) The same concern with the behaviour of emigrants towards Indigenous populations was also raised during a Meeting for Sufferings in 1839, this time aimed solely at Quaker emigrants who were contemplating emigration to British colonies. The minutes of the meeting entreated:

> That all those under our name who may emigrate to such settlements may be careful neither directly or indirectly to inflict injury upon the natives but that they may, on the contrary, in their whole conduct exhibit the practical character of that religion which breathes “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men”. As this is their aim, they will not only exert themselves to check the evils which are but too generally inflicted by the whites upon their feeble neighbours, but will be solicitous to do their part in endeavouring to diffuse amongst them the blessings of civilisation and Christianity, which will prove the best means of preventing their extermination, and of raising them to the full enjoyment of their rights.\(^{112}\)

What can be discerned in Quaker writings regarding the treatment of Aborigines, compared to APS discourses, is that religious beliefs often figure more prominently in Quaker writings. The reason for this is possibly because the APS members saw themselves more as a lobby group trying to influence government policy and put forward intellectual arguments in their attempt to force protection of Indigenous rights. The APS, even with Quaker membership, focused mainly on the lack of humanity and

---


\(^{111}\) 'An Address of Christian Counsel', p.1

\(^{112}\) Meeting for Suffering Minutes, 1\(^{st}\) of November, 1839
justice displayed by colonisers, which was seen as a stain on the British character.\textsuperscript{113} The desire to Christianise the Aborigines was always embedded in the notion of the need to civilise them, but perhaps because the APS was more of a pressure group, and not solely Quaker, it focused more on policies than Christianity. A brief analysis of APS Annual Reports indicates concern mostly with politics and rights and if we take as an example the 1847 Annual Report we can see evidence of this. These concerns included the ability of uncivilized tribes for improvement, the importance of the APS in improving public opinion, the destruction of the Aborigines being detrimental to Britain, the need for Britain to set an example as advocates of the oppressed, and brief summaries of the state of affairs in various British colonies.\textsuperscript{114} As a lobby group, the APS needed to play down their religious ideals and focus more on the politics of imperial policy in their attempt to influence policy makers. While Quaker beliefs concerning Aborigines were inextricably linked with APS views, Quakers added more of a religious dimension to their activism. Quakers could not separate their religious testimony from their political activities as it went to the core of who they were. As a result, the language of religion was integral to their humanitarian endeavours.

Turning back now to An Address of Christian Counsel and Caution to Emigrants to Newly-Settled Colonies, it is clear that the title, along with the body of the document, reflects the Quaker religious outlook. Religious language is used within the document, with one example being when the Address asks of emigrants to remember that ‘God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth’ and to bear what happens ‘in a meek and Christian spirit.’\textsuperscript{115} A Christian focus can also be seen in correspondence from the Quaker Aborigines Committee to John Cotterell, a

\textsuperscript{113} There is a need for further research on the Aborigines Protection Society as there is only limited scholarship available at the time of writing this thesis.
\textsuperscript{114} The Tenth Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Society, London, P. White & Son (1847), pp.50-59
\textsuperscript{115} ‘An Address of Christian Counsel’, pp.2-3
Quaker surveyor living in New Zealand, when information was sought from him on the ‘civil and religious state of the natives.’\textsuperscript{116} The Committee asked Cotterell ‘Dost thou meet with many who have imbibed Christianity, and who are striving to live in the faith and hope of the Gospel, and as the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ,’ and Cotterell responded that ‘most of the natives professed Christianity, although the language barrier precluded him from knowing precisely.’\textsuperscript{117} When Quakers operated within their own society they were able to concentrate much more on their Christian mission rather than needing to use more secular language to reach their intended audience. This has been apparent in many areas of reform that Quakers were involved in throughout the nineteenth century, as religious beliefs were always an innate part of Quaker humanitarianism.

Quakers also used their Christian testimony to deplore the use of military force to conquer resistance by Aborigines. They argued that it was ‘fatal to the Aboriginal inhabitants, and injurious to Christianity’ and would ‘farewell...all expectation of colonisation on Christian principles.’\textsuperscript{118} Pacifism was one of the basic tenets of Quaker faith and military force and the use of weapons was seen as inconsistent with Christian principles. Quakers appealed to emigrants to British colonies to ‘Let no consideration whatever induce you to supply the natives with warlike weapons or ammunition’ as weapons were responsible for ‘accelerating the extinction of the Aborigines’.\textsuperscript{119} Perhaps their position is best summed up with a quotation from a brief article \textit{The Cause of Peace, and the Rights and Welfare of the Aborigines} published in \textit{The Friend} in 1843. The article states that ‘The antagonist principle of all wrong, injustice, cruelty and oppression, is the love of the gospel. This is the means appointed for the healing of

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{The Friend}, (1834), p.32
\textsuperscript{117} ‘Letter from the Late John Silvanus Cotterell’ in \textit{The Friend}, (1844), p.33
\textsuperscript{118} ‘The New Zealand Colonists and the Aborigines’ in \textit{The Friend}, (1844), p.12
\textsuperscript{119} ‘An Address of Christian Counsel’, p.3
the nations. In proportion to its prevalence will evil cease, and the bond of universal brotherhood prevail.’ Quakers saw the blessings of Christianity as being ‘the best means of preventing [aboriginal] extermination and of raising them to the full enjoyment of their rights.’ To Quakers, if the colonisers were to take up the true word of God, then the situation of Aborigines would be improved because the colonisers would be guided by the Scriptures. This position is evidence of the influence evangelicalism had on some Quakers, whereby the Bible was seen as the ultimate authority on how life should be lived.

Quaker concern with the rights of Aborigines, therefore, can be seen in their significant involvement with the Aborigines Protection Society. They also set up their own Aborigines Committee, within the Meeting for Sufferings in 1837, to appeal for the rights of Indigenous populations to be recognised. Through both these channels Quakers worked towards ensuring the rights of Aborigines were protected, even though the focus within the APS was mostly on their legal rights as British citizens. Part of the rhetoric of the rights of aborigines, however, was the need to civilise them before they could take up the rights they were entitled to, and many evangelical Quakers also adhered to this viewpoint. In relation to this idea, some Quakers also undertook missions to spread the gospel to non-Christians. Christian missions had proliferated in Britain in the nineteenth century, with most missionary enterprises aimed at converting the ‘heathen’ to Christianity. While it is extremely difficult to identify a single cause for the rise in missions, historian Brian Stanley argues that a major impetus was the Evangelical Revival which generated excitement and passion for spreading the gospel. A belief in postmillennial eschatology compelled missionaries, who expected

---

121 Meeting for Suffering Minutes, 1st of November, 1839
122 Etherington, Missions and Empire, p.15
123 Stanley, Bible and the flag, p.59
that converting ‘heathens’ to Christ on a large scale would ultimately result in the expansion of the Kingdom of God, and the second coming of Christ.\textsuperscript{124} An obligation, therefore, to spread the word of the Gospel to non-Christians drove evangelicals in all branches of the church,\textsuperscript{125} including some Quakers. The need to civilise Aborigines, in order for them to be capable of taking up the rights considered inherent to them as British citizens, was also a major focus of many Quakers influenced by evangelical ideals.

The contradictions inherent in the Quaker response to Indigenous peoples can be seen from a close examination of the responses of three Quakers who set off to work face-to-face with Indigenous peoples in the Pacific region. The three Quakers examined in this chapter are Daniel Wheeler, James Backhouse and George Washington Walker. When Quakers believed they had a call to service, or as it was often termed, ‘to travel in the love of the gospel’ they applied for permission firstly to their local meeting, with the request passing up through various levels of meetings prior to ultimately being granted or refused by the London Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders. One Quaker who requested permission from his Monthly Meeting in September 1832 to pursue his calling was Daniel Wheeler. At this meeting, Wheeler spoke of his vision ‘of visiting in the love of the gospel [the] inhabitants of some of the islands of the Pacific Ocean, New South Wales, and Van Diemen’s Land,’\textsuperscript{126} a request ultimately granted by the Committee of the Yearly Meeting a few months later. The Committee also agreed to purchase a small vessel for Wheeler’s mission and a number of Quakers contributed both to the purchase and preparation of the ‘Henry Freeling’.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{124}Stanley, Bible and the flag, p.74
\textsuperscript{125}Stanley, Bible and the flag, p.57
\textsuperscript{126}Daniel Wheeler, Memoirs of the Life and Gospel Labours of the Late Daniel Wheeler, a Minister of the Society of Friends, London, Harvey and Darton, (1842), p.203
\textsuperscript{127}Daniel Wheeler, Extracts from the Letters and Journal of Daniel Wheeler, Now Engaged in a Religious visit to the Inhabitants of Some of the Islands of the Pacific Ocean, Van Diemen’s land, and New South
As an appointed Minister of the Society of Friends, Wheeler was mostly concerned on his travels of ‘spreading the Truth’ and ministering to Indigenous populations. When asked by the Yearly Meeting what he expected to achieve in these distant lands, he replied ‘…that I should have to turn the people “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,” – and to teach them that they lived, and moved, and had their being in that God…’. Much of Wheeler’s labours throughout his journey were focused on attempts to Christianise the Indigenous peoples he came in contact with, in particular those living on the South Pacific islands such as the Friendly Islands, the Sandwich Islands and the Georgian Islands. Wheeler’s journal and memoirs are a record of his religious ministerings, as well as services he regularly held for American and British seamen anchored in the island’s bays, and white inhabitants living on the islands. Rather than a humanitarian concern for the social, political or cultural welfare of the inhabitants, Wheeler was intent on an evangelising mission. The language of equality and rights were mostly missing from his writings, owing to his focus on spreading the gospel. Wheeler was concerned with how he perceived the interaction of Europeans visiting the islands and colonies was impacting on Indigenous groups, but only from a moral perspective. Wheeler wrote that:

The majority of the people of England, and that of the most virtuous part of the community, little know at home, the ravages their own countrymen are making abroad; nor can they possibly contemplate the depth of the misery, suffering, and aggravated distress, they are inflicting upon these unhappy and helpless islanders.

From the outset of his journey, it appears Wheeler was very concerned with the behaviour of the British and other Europeans towards Aboriginals, but mostly in relation to the issue of their moral behaviour, and in particular the supply of liquor.

---

128 Wheeler, Memoirs, pp.209-210  
129 Wheeler, Memoirs, p.367  
130 Wheeler, Extracts, pp.281-282
Upon meeting his first aboriginal family in Sydney in 1834, Wheeler remarked on ‘the degraded condition of these natives of the soil. The state of these poor creatures has been rendered abundantly more miserable, since the English have taken possession of their country, and from the introduction of vices to which they were before strangers, particularly the use of spirituous liquors.’\textsuperscript{131} A focus on the vices of Europeans visited on aboriginal populations is a constant theme throughout Wheeler’s journals and writings. ‘How dreadful and appealing the consideration, that the intercourse of distant nations should have entailed upon these poor, untutored islanders, a curse unprecedented and unheard of in the annals of history.’\textsuperscript{132} Wheeler further laments that whilst spirituous liquors were allowed to be sold on the islands, ‘hopeless indeed will be every attempt to civilize, much more to Christianize the natives of these islands.’\textsuperscript{133}

Along with his evangelising mission, Wheeler was also very pre-occupied with temperance, a cause that many Quakers were involved with in Britain and which gained momentum throughout the nineteenth century. Wheeler’s interest in temperance followed that of many Quaker temperance reformers who considered that intemperance led to a life of immorality and depravity and that only abstention could lead to a moral life.

Wheeler followed the nineteenth-century notion of Aboriginal people being uncivilised and requiring the tools of civilisation to bring them up to an acceptable level of behaviour. In Wheeler’s mind, the best method of achieving this was with religion and he described himself as ‘one who desires the eternal salvation of all mankind,’\textsuperscript{134} evidence of his commitment to spreading the gospel. In one address that Wheeler wrote to the rulers of the Sandwich Islands, he stated that ‘The fear of God is the foundation-

\textsuperscript{131} Wheeler, \textit{Memoirs}, p.290
\textsuperscript{132} Wheeler, \textit{Extracts}, p.58
\textsuperscript{133} Wheeler, \textit{Memoirs}, p.366
\textsuperscript{134} ‘Address to the Rulers of the Sandwich Islands’ in Wheeler, \textit{Memoirs}, p.479
stone, upon which every Christian government ought to be erected” and it was predominantly to this cause that he devoted his time and effort. Wheeler’s almost total religious focus is understandable given that firstly he was a Quaker minister, and an evangelising one at that, and secondly that the majority of areas in which he was travelling had mostly only had contact with missionaries, or visiting traders, and were not British settler colonies. Wheeler did visit Van Diemen’s Land and New South Wales, but these visits were mostly for restocking of supplies for his trip to the South Pacific. He notes in his memoirs that even though he had been granted Certificates for New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, ‘the Society Islands have always been the primary object before my mind’ and he mainly visited Port Jackson ‘for the purpose of recruiting our stock of coals, oil, &c.’

Wheeler’s major concern was with spreading the gospel, therefore his interactions with Indigenous populations were quite different to those of both the APS and Quaker humanitarians interested in British colonies. Travelling around the South Pacific islands meant that Wheeler was not dealing with the fallout from interactions between European and Indigenous populations, at least not to any large degree. The dispossession of aboriginal lands, and as a consequence the means of subsistence of aboriginal populations, was not occurring in the South Pacific at this time. This ensured that Wheeler focused firmly on mission work and he was not faced with some of the issues playing out in British colonies at the time concerning the rights of Indigenous populations. When Wheeler’s party left the Sandwich Islands he was given a letter from ‘the general meeting of the American mission’ thanking him for his ‘earnest and repeated evangelical appeals to our people’. The letter continued with an appeal that

135 Wheeler, Memoirs, p.473
136 Wheeler, Memoirs, p.286
137 One of the signatories was Hiram Bingham (1789-1869). The American Mission was made up of Protestant missionaries.
Wheeler ‘be enabled to do much to dry the fountain of intemperance and licentiousness…and to hasten the universal diffusion of revealed truth.’ Unlike the APS and Quaker Aborigines Committee, Wheeler’s involvement with islands that were not British colonies ensured that he did not need to concern himself with issues such as equality and rights, even if he had been so inclined. Religion appeared to be the only tool that he considered really necessary in his quest to bring heathens out of their uncivilised and barbarous state. Concern for the rights of humanity was fundamental to many Quakers, but as we have seen with Wheeler, this was not the focus of his evangelising mission throughout the Pacific islands. Wheeler did not focus on humanitarian work, or the rights of others, but on the spreading of Christianity to those he considered heathens.

In this regard, Wheeler can be considered very much an evangelical Quaker in that he tended to follow the path of evangelicals for whom overseas missions were important undertakings. Non-Christian peoples had become the focus of evangelicals towards the end of the eighteenth century, culminating in many overseas mission societies such as the London Mission Society (1795), the Society for Missions to Africa and the East (1799), Church Missionary Society (1812), and the previously mentioned British and Foreign Bible Society (1804). Wheeler was possibly influenced in his evangelising fervour by accounts from Captain Cook of Indigenous Peoples from the South Seas, and the fact that overseas missions had become a permanent enterprise of evangelicalism. Wheeler, being granted permission by London Yearly Meeting to undertake this time of overseas mission work, gives a clear indication of the influence of evangelicalism within Quakers at this time, especially within the leadership. Quakers were traditionally opposed to overseas missions owing to their belief in the guidance of the Inner Light.

138 Wheeler, Memoirs, pp.538-539
139 Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, p.42
and not on human organisation. They did not form the Friends Foreign Mission Association until 1868, but Wheeler is indicative of the differences in Quaker theological outlook during the nineteenth century.

A different perspective on dealings with Indigenous peoples can be seen in the travels of the English Quakers James Backhouse and George Washington Walker. While also on an evangelising mission, they were primarily concerned with various issues affecting such groups as Aborigines, and convicts. During the 1830s Backhouse and Walker travelled throughout the British colonies of South Africa, Van Diemen’s Land and New South Wales, and, like Wheeler, were also financially and morally supported by London Yearly Meeting. Backhouse and Walker visited the Australian colonies between 1832 and 1838 and whilst it was not the sole purpose of their time there, they did manage to establish Quaker Meetings in Hobart and Sydney during their visit. James Backhouse first received a call to service in his early twenties and recorded ‘I was first impressed with the belief that it was the will of the Lord that at a future time I should go on a gospel errand to Australia.’ The certificate issued by the Yearly Meeting in 1831, which granted Backhouse permission to visit the colonies, stated:

That, for some years, an apprehension of religious duty has rested on his mind, to visit in the love of the Gospel, some of the Inhabitants of the British Colonies, of New Holland, Van Diemens Land, and South Africa.

When Backhouse published his travels to Australia in A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies he wrote that the visit was ‘undertaken, solely, for the purpose of

---

140 Wilmer A. Cooper, A Living Faith: An Historical and Comparative Study of Quaker Beliefs, 2nd ed., Richmond, Indiana, Friends United Press (1990), p.171
142 Sarah Backhouse, Memoir of James Backhouse / by his Sister, York, William Sessions, (1870), p.13
143 James Backhouse, A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian colonies, London, Hamilton, Adams and Co. (1843), Appendix A, p.iii
discharging a religious duty.”144 Walker’s certificate from his Monthly Meeting of Newcastle noted that as part of Backhouse and Walker’s religious labours, they ‘may tend to the instruction and edification of those among whom their lot may be cast; that many may be brought to the knowledge of the Truth,- may be turned from darkness unto light,- from the power of Satan unto God’.145 This indicates that Backhouse and Walker’s initial focus, like Wheeler’s, was an evangelical mission, evidence of the influence of evangelicalism within the Quakers. The difference between the two missions was that Backhouse and Walker visited British colonies that had European settlements and convict labour, thereby providing very different issues for them to engage with. The treatment of Aborigines and convicts in Australia were two issues that were of major concern to many English Quakers and Backhouse in particular recorded information ‘not only on religious subjects, but also, on such as regarded the productions of the Countries visited, the state of the Aborigines, and of the Emigrant and Prisoner Population, &c.’146 Backhouse’s interest in prison reform, and the state of the Aborigines, provides a firsthand account of Quaker perceptions of the Aborigines at this time and not just rhetoric from Quakers insulated within Britain. Backhouse’s writings indicate that even though his initial focus was to be the spread Christianity, his concern with the rights of the settlers, convicts and Indigenous populations also played a major part in his journey.

Backhouse uses the introduction of his narrative to qualify his use of the term ‘Savages’ within it by stating that he meant it to ‘designate human beings, living on the wild produce of the earth, and destitute of any traces of civilisation; and by no means, to convey the idea that these people are more cruel than the rest of the human race, or of

144 Backhouse, A Narrative of a Visit, Appendix A, p.xv
145 Backhouse, A Narrative of a Visit, Appendix A, p.iv
146 Backhouse, A Narrative of a Visit, p.xv
inferior intellect. As already discussed, many humanitarians did not consider the Aborigines lower in intelligence, only that they were lacking in civilisation, as defined by British standards. Backhouse noted in regard to Aborigines that ‘They neither exhibit the intellectual nor the physical degradation, that have been attributed to them.’ Backhouse observed that some people mistook ‘some peculiarities in their manners for stupidity, [and] set them down as lower in intellect than other human beings.’ Backhouse’s biological universalism approach accepted cultural differences and this is evident when he wrote about the methods used by Aborigines to procure game. ‘The simplicity of the weapons of these people, has been urged as a proof of their defect of intellect, but it is much more a proof of their dexterity, in being able, with such simple instruments, to procure game, &c. for food.’ Backhouse understood that the differences between the British and Aborigines were not due to intellect, only to circumstance:

After having seen something of the natives of V.D. Land, the conviction was forced upon my mind, that they exceeded Europeans in skill, in those things to which their attention had been directed from childhood, just as much as Europeans exceeded them, in the points to which the attention of the former had been turned, under the culture of civilisation. There is similar variety of talent and of temper among the Tasmanian Aborigines, to what is to be found among other branches of the human family; and it would not be more erroneous in one of these people, to look upon an English woman as defective in capacity, because she could neither dive into the deep and bring up cray-fish, nor ascend the lofty gum-trees to catch opossums for her family, than it would be for an English woman to look upon the Tasmanian as defective in capacity, because she could neither sew nor read, nor perform the duties of civil, domestic life.

Backhouse accepted that both the British people and Aborigines were equally skilled in what they knew and their cultural differences were not an indication of the inferiority of

---

147 Backhouse, A Narrative of a Visit, p.xvii
148 Backhouse, A Narrative of a Visit, pp.83-84
149 Backhouse, A Narrative of a Visit, p.79
150 Backhouse, A Narrative of a Visit, p.172
151 Backhouse, A Narrative of a Visit, pp.173-174
one race over another. What he does assume, however, is that if the roles were
reversed, ‘the untutored native of the woods would much sooner learn to obtain her
food, by acquiring the arts of civilisation, than the woman from civilized society would,
by acquiring the arts belonging to savage life.’\textsuperscript{152} Backhouse acknowledges cultural
difference but obviously believes that the British way of life is superior, and one which
the Aborigines would prefer given the chance. In his journal he records that by wearing
clothes the Aborigines ‘shew [sic] decided marks of advancing civilisation’\textsuperscript{153} and that
washing dishes and putting them away correctly indicated ‘advancement in
civilisation.’\textsuperscript{154} It would seem that even though Backhouse at times admired aboriginal
culture, it was European habits that indicated to him a civilised culture.

The inequalities that existed between the white and black populations, especially in
regard to legal rights, were of major concern to Backhouse and Walker, in particular the
gap between policy and practice. Aborigines were entitled to the full protection of
British law but often this was not the case. Backhouse cites an instance where a treaty
to buy land from the Port Phillip Aboriginal Tribes was initiated by John Batman, the
founder of Melbourne. The British Government did not sanction the treaty and took full
possession of the land without compensation to the original occupants. Even though
Alistair Campbell, in his 1987 book \textit{John Batman and the Aborigines}, claims that
Batman forged the treaty allegedly signed by the Aborigines,\textsuperscript{155} this does not alter the
fact that the British government dispossessed the original inhabitants of their land in
many instances, generally without compensation. Backhouse understood this land grab
was based upon the legal concept of \textit{terra nullius}, a concept which the British used to
take possession of land that had not been developed for agriculture, or which had no

\textsuperscript{152} Backhouse, \textit{A Narrative of a Visit}, p.174
\textsuperscript{153} Backhouse, \textit{A Narrative of a Visit}, p.172
\textsuperscript{154} Backhouse, \textit{A Narrative of a Visit}, p.170
\textsuperscript{155} Alistair Campbell, \textit{John Batman and the Aborigines}, Melbourne, Kibble Books (1987), p.3
system of law, or sovereign ruler, by European standards.\textsuperscript{156} He noted this in his narrative when he wrote that ‘There is reason to think that the state of society among the Aborigines gave no power to the chiefs to sell on behalf of the respective tribes and they certainly had none on behalf of other tribes.’\textsuperscript{157} Backhouse acknowledged the injustice in dispossessing land from those who ‘can neither assert nor defend their own rights’, and argued that the British Government was unprincipled in its behaviour towards Aborigines.\textsuperscript{158} He also wrote letters to the governors of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, and to the British Government via Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, explaining the situation as he saw it in relation to the appalling treatment of the Aborigines.\textsuperscript{159} In one letter to Buxton in 1834, Backhouse wrote that:

\begin{quote}
The system of Colonisation that has been pursued by the British Government has been upon principles that cannot be too strongly reprobated, and which want radical reformation. Aborigines have had wholesale robbery of territory committed upon them by the Government; and Settlers have become the receivers of this stolen property, and have borne the curse of it in the wrath of the Aborigines who, sooner or later have become exasperated at being driven off their rightful possessions.\textsuperscript{160}
\end{quote}

In 1837, Backhouse wrote to the Governor of New South Wales, Richard Bourke, addressing his concerns with the sale of land in the colony and the monies not being applied to the benefit of the Aborigines:

\begin{quote}
The priority of claim for the benefit of the Blacks, upon the funds arising from the sale of lands by the Government of New South Wales, to whatever extent may be required for their benefit, must, I conceive, be admitted by every person who regards equity or common justice; I therefore trust I shall not be accounted as improperly interfering in a political question, in thus plainly, yet respectfully urging it, seeing it is in the cause of humanity, and on behalf of the oppressed – of a people who require to have justice done them speedily, or the opportunity will
\end{quote}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{156} Borch, \textit{Conciliation}, pp.229-230
\textsuperscript{157} Backhouse, \textit{A Narrative of a Visit}, p.503
\textsuperscript{158} Backhouse, \textit{A Narrative of a Visit}, p.503
\textsuperscript{159} Oats, Backhouse & Walker, pp.51-52
\textsuperscript{160} James Backhouse letter to Thomas Fowell Buxton, on Colonisation and the Rights of Aborigines, 22\textsuperscript{nd} of 10\textsuperscript{th} month, 1834. LSF Letter Book No. 1, p.237. LSF, MS Vol. S.48
\end{flushleft}
be gone forever, and the unmitigated guilt before God, of their extermination, be fixed irremediably upon the British Nation and its Australian Descendants.\textsuperscript{161}

In yet another letter to Buxton in 1838, Backhouse again pleaded the cause of the Aborigines, exhorting that:

The British Government may not establish any more Colonies or Settlements in Australia, without first taking the care that common justice and humanity, both toward the European and the Native population, demand, respecting the rights and civilisation of the latter, and the neglect of which in the older Australian Colonies has occasioned much oppression, suffering and bloodshed.\textsuperscript{162}

The focus of Backhouse’s concern is on issues of justice and humanity, which he considered the British government was totally disregarding in its colonial policies.

George Washington Walker also harboured beliefs similar to those of Backhouse in relation to the treatment of the aborigines, and recorded similar sentiments from his travels throughout the Australian colonies. Unlike the opinion expressed by many colonists on the demeanour of the aborigines, Backhouse and Walker did not subscribe to the popular notion of aborigines being ferocious and savage. Walker noted on a visit to Flinders Island that the aborigines ‘looked healthy and cheerful…and their countenances exhibited none of that marked ferocity which has been ascribed to them.’\textsuperscript{163} He considered that ‘An increased acquaintance with the Aborigines only confirms us in the favourable opinion we had formed of them. They appear to be a very sociable people’.\textsuperscript{164} Walker understood that if aborigines were ‘unruly’, it was more owing to the fact that they had been dispossessed of their lands without adequate

\textsuperscript{161} James Backhouse letter to the Governor of New South Wales [Richard Bourke] respecting the Native Blacks of that Colony, 25\textsuperscript{th} of 4\textsuperscript{th} month, 1837. Letter Book No. 2, p.80. LSF, MS Vol. 57
\textsuperscript{162} James Backhouse letter to T.F. Buxton respecting the Aborigines of Australia, 16\textsuperscript{th} of 3\textsuperscript{rd} month, 1838. Letter Book No. 2, p.125. LSF, MS Vol. 57
\textsuperscript{164} Backhouse and Tylor, The life and labours, p.100
compensation, rather than their inherent nature. Walker considered that if adequate efforts had been made on their behalf to ensure they received benefits they had a right to expect when their land and livelihood was taken from them, the aborigines would not have behaved as they did. While this is open to conjecture, it is reasonable to assume that fair and just compensation to aborigines would have paved the way for more peaceable societal relationships between the two cultures.

Walker also highlighted that even when aborigines received the same rights afforded to British colonists, they were not equal even if they were couched in terms of equality. The British Government offered aboriginal women a portion of land if they entered into a marriage with an aboriginal man, but as Walker pointed out:

> Unhappily, not to say unjustly, the land thus appropriated was a piece of the worst that could have been selected. The result was inevitable. After struggling for some time, and with greater perseverance and success than could have reasonably been anticipated, the Blacks were obliged to revert to their former mode of life.  

Walker also observed the injustice in relation to payment to Aborigines for work they undertook, noting that ‘they are but indifferently paid, and in a proportion, decidedly inferior to white men; which, if it be so, is a great injustice.’

A concern for the human rights of Aborigines is evident in the writings by Backhouse and Walker, especially in regard to the legal rights of Aborigines. They argued that Aborigines had a right to expect compensation for the loss of their lands, and equal pay for equal work, both issues still affecting contemporary Australian society. Also of importance to Backhouse and Walker was the moral behaviour of the convicts and free settlers, with intemperance being seen as one of the social evils of the time.

---

165 Backhouse and Tylor, *The life and labours*, p.219
166 Backhouse and Tylor, *The life and labours*, p.283
and Walker considered the British government’s sanctioning of the sale of ‘ardent’ spirits, in particular rum, as immoral and corrupt. They wrote an article to Colonel George Arthur, Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen’s Land, entitled *Observations of James Backhouse and George Washington Walker, on the Distillation, Importation, and Sale of Ardent Spirits, as sanctioned by the Government.* In this paper they argue that the drinking of spirits is a sinful practice and the government’s actions in allowing the ‘produce, importation, and sale of Spirits’ was also sinful. Backhouse and Walker argued that the prevalence of drinking spirits ‘burdens the community with pauperism, insubordination and crime.’ Similar to Wheeler’s interest, temperance was a major focus of Backhouse and Walker, and was indicative of the general Quaker concern with drunkenness and the resultant effects on society at this time.

Backhouse and Walker, like Wheeler, were first and foremost on a proselytising mission and religion played a large part in their travels. As we saw with Wheeler’s mission, his focus was on taking Christianity to the ‘natives’ in the South Pacific. Backhouse and Walker also wanted to spread the gospel to the colonies, but added to this was their interest in Indigenous populations, and the issues affecting British settler colonies. Concern with the human rights of aborigines was high on their agenda, attested to by their reports and letters which conveyed to readers in Britain conditions as they saw them. Backhouse and Walker wrote about the injustices and deprivations suffered by the aborigines and argued that the British Government needed to drastically improve the way it related to Indigenous populations before it established any more colonies. They considered that Britain would be responsible for the extermination of the aborigines if it did not respond speedily to the issues facing them because of the

---

167 Backhouse, *A Narrative of a Visit*, Appendix H, p.lxxix
British government’s colonial policies.\textsuperscript{171} Unfortunately, the population of aborigines, both in Van Diemen’s Land, and the Australian mainland, was decimated throughout the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{172} Whether this was due to British colonial policy is a contested issue, but there were many humanitarians, like Backhouse and Wheeler, who articulated their grave concerns for the future of Australian aborigines.\textsuperscript{173} Context is very important when considering the motives and aspirations of the Quakers Wheeler, Backhouse and Walker. While they all began their journey with an evangelising mission, when Backhouse and Walker were confronted with the inequities resulting from British colonial policy, they became more involved in issues of equality.

As we have seen, some Quakers, like Wheeler and John Candler, were more interested in spreading the gospel than taking up human rights issues, but many Quakers also concerned themselves with issues of equality. Evidence of this is clearly seen in both the Quaker Aborigines Committee, and Quaker involvement with the APS. English Quakers worked both from within and outside their own society in their efforts to ensure the rights of Indigenous peoples were met. Many Quakers formed an alliance with like-minded people whose policies and ideology were very similar to their own, but whilst the APS focused their attention mainly on exporting a superior British culture to the Aborigines, Quakers also added more of a Christian focus to their involvement. This was borne out in their overarching belief in the equality of all human beings, and which drove them in their attempts to ensure that everyone was treated equally, including all colonised Indigenous populations. The Quaker belief in equality derived from the

\textsuperscript{171} James Backhouse letter to T.F. Buxton

\textsuperscript{172} For further reading on this subject, see Henry Reynolds, (ed.), *Aborigines and Settlers: The Australian Experience 1788-1939*, North Melbourne, Cassell Australia Ltd (1972); Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European invasion of Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, (2006)

Scriptures referring to ‘all men’, which they argued applied to all members of the human race, and which could not be selectively quoted as referring to ‘all kinds of men’ in order to exclude certain groups. The fact that Quakers first took up the cause of land rights, and payment of compensation to Indigenous populations who had been dispossessed of their land in British colonies, is evidence of their concern with the rights of Aboriginals, especially their legal rights. To pursue the issue of land rights at this period in the nineteenth century when the legal concept of terra nullius was predominant, places Quakers as early proponents of a human rights philosophy. Many Quakers were concerned with the legal rights of Indigenous populations, an area of very little concern to the majority of Britons at this time. Other human rights concern taken up by Quakers involved the political and cultural rights of Aborigines, although this was at a very basic level, with the focus of most activists being on civilising the Indigenous populations. Despite the concern of Quakers to civilise Aboriginal populations, we have seen that a major focus of their reform activism was on attempting to ensure that these populations received the same rights and justice that all British citizens were entitled to.

Quakers did not really question imperialist policy, instead their motivation was on ensuring that Indigenous populations were treated like any other British subject in the new colonies. They saw the injustices and inequalities that were applied to Indigenous populations when Britain set up new colonies and lobbied, mostly through the APS, to correct these wrongs. They also worked within their own meeting to disseminate information on the injustices that were occurring in British colonies. Individually, through official letters written by James Backhouse, and the dissemination of reports sent back to Britain from both Backhouse and Walker, some Quakers also strived to

174 Barclay, Apology for the True Christian Divinity, p.156
bring attention to the injustices suffered by aborigines in British colonies. Quakers were aware of the high risk of extermination of the aborigines, with Walker noting that ‘Every where the Aboriginal race is fast diminishing; and unless means are taken of an effective kind to rescue them from their present debased and wretched condition, as colonisation advances, the original habitants of the Australian wilds will be no more.’ Quakers, and societies such as the APS, had no real impact in their attempts to protect the rights of Indigenous populations in British colonies, evidenced by the fact that in Australia at least, issues relating to the equal rights of all citizens, and land rights of the Indigenous population, were not engaged with by governments and society until the 1960s. This reality does not lessen the Quaker concern, or their efforts, in attempting to correct major injustices being placed upon Indigenous populations throughout the nineteenth century. For many Quakers, concern with a basic level of human rights for Indigenous populations was of major interest to them, and their interactions in this regard were an attempt to ensure that these rights were granted to all British citizens. The fact that some Quakers undertook overseas missions with more of a focus on evangelising than rights only indicates once more the divergent beliefs, and behaviours, within Quaker society.

175 Backhouse and Tylor, The life and labours, p.259
9. CONCLUSION

English Quakers were important participants in social reform movements in the nineteenth century and provided both intellectual and practical solutions to some of the major issues affecting Britain at this time. They worked alongside other Dissenters, and evangelicals, in societies and organisations that operated as lobby groups in an attempt to institute legislative and institutional changes. Lobbying, and the dissemination of information, was a major focus of these organisations in order to educate policy makers, and the public, about the need for reform.

Quakers are usually mentioned by historians for their role in reform movements, but generally as ancillary to the main players. This thesis has demonstrated, however, that often Quakers were key participants in many nineteenth-century reform movements. Quakers were instrumental in setting up the initial Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787 which aimed to abolish slavery in British colonies, and they remained heavily involved in the abolition of slavery globally throughout the nineteenth century. Abolition historiography, however, generally ignores the valuable contribution of Quakers to this cause, while evangelical abolitionists such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson are acknowledged as the major reformers in this area. The provision of popular education was another major reform movement in which Quakers were integral participants, along with the abolition of capital punishment, prison reformation, and many other areas that focused on providing humanitarian aid to those in distress. Again, Quakers are generally missing from the historiography of these reform movements despite their overwhelming presence in many of them. This general disregard of Quakers needs to be corrected in order for Quakers to take their place as important historical players in the nineteenth century.
Quakers undertook both an intellectual and practical approach to their reform activism, generally utilising the method they considered would achieve the best outcome. The intellectual approach taken up by Quakers can be clearly seen in the reform movements they were involved in, with the movement to abolish capital punishment one example. Abolition campaigners contended that the capital statutes achieved nothing more than allowing state-sanctioned murder, and they took up new notions of the individual to fight for rehabilitation of the criminal, rather than execution. Capital punishment abolitionists formed societies to disseminate their propaganda, presented petitions to Parliament, gave evidence before Select Committees, and published articles calling for an end to what they considered a barbaric practice. This type of approach was also very evident in other reform movements such as the push to abolish slavery, both in British colonies and later globally, and when Quaker reformers informed the general populace of the harsh and unjust treatment of Indigenous peoples by many British colonists. Quakers were very vocal and active agents for reform, endeavouring to ensure that the rights they considered everyone was entitled to were not being denied. Quaker religious doctrine ensured that their reform activism was based on the belief that everyone should be treated equally, as per God’s law, and this belief resulted in human rights principles being a focal point of Quaker activism.

Along with an intellectual approach, Quakers also provided practical assistance to those most in need. This assistance included such actions as setting up and working in soup kitchens, providing clothing, and tools for employment, as well as raising funds to provide aid both inside and outside of Britain. This practical approach helped ensure the survival of many of the poorer members of society, especially in areas severely affected by the collapse of manufacturing industries, and famine as occurred in Ireland. While Quakers provided the intellectual understandings in an attempt to change public
opinion in the areas of reform they were participating in, they were also very active in providing humanitarian aid to those most in need. For Quakers, these two approaches often co-existed side by side, with each one being applied when necessary, depending on the circumstances.

One area where both an intellectual and a practical approach was utilised by Quakers was in the moral reformation of society. Quakers aimed to inculcate middle-class values into the poorer classes, which they saw as necessary to ensure a moral and civil society. The provision of popular education was seen as the best means to achieve this aim. Quakers worked alongside other reformers in societies such as the BFSS and Adult School movement to promote the advancement of education, which was seen as the key to transforming society. Perceptions of a rising crime rate, and social disharmony, resulted in education being considered crucial to reforming the manners and morality of the lower classes. Quakers set up organisations which concentrated on both an intellectual response to the need for education, as well as practical action. Quakers set up schools, both Quaker and non-denominational, to further their cause of reforming the morals of society. One Quaker, Joseph Lancaster, was instrumental in ensuring poor children had access to a universal education, where they could be taught the Scriptures, along with values such as good manners, obedience, and respect. Middle-class rhetoric, focusing on values such as these, contended that people would become moral, upstanding citizens and social disorder and anarchy could be avoided. Quakers were also at the forefront of setting up adult schools to ensure an education was provided to working-class adults, as well as providing Quaker-only schools which offered an education based on Quaker principles. Quakers continued their involvement in education throughout the nineteenth century, considering it an instrument of change. Their interest in education encompassed many areas, including Sunday Schools, Adult
Schools and industrial training; all areas where the focus was on reforming society and providing a compliant workforce to meet the needs of a rapidly industrialising society.

Education was not the only area where Quakers concentrated their energies on the moral reformation of society, but it was one of their major focuses from the late eighteenth century onwards. In areas of moral reform, Quakers generally voiced middle-class values and were closely linked with many evangelical organisations to whom the moral reformation of society was the predominant endeavour. Education was considered central to moral reform and Quakers were active participants in ensuring the poorer classes had access to it. Quakers generally took up middle-class discourses concerning the need for the moral reformation of society, which was understandable because they were members of this growing and influential class, especially by the early decades of the nineteenth century. Many Quakers believed that the moral reformation of society was the answer to a civil and ordered world and therefore worked in areas of reform which focused almost exclusively on improving morals, especially amongst the lower classes. A language of rights is not visible in the provision of education because Quakers did not consider education a right; they saw it as a necessity to ensure society functioned according to middle-class notions of the social order.

A developing human rights philosophy, however, was becoming more evident in other areas of Quaker activism, such as the abolition of slavery, capital punishment and prison reform. The rights of the individual were at the forefront of Quaker concern and their efforts to effect political and social change. While Quakers had always held a belief in the equality of everyone, it was not until they began to interact with the outside world again in the late eighteenth century that they began publicly to articulate notions of equality within the framework of social justice. This was never more evident than in Quaker activism external to Britain. While a concern with the rights of individuals was
apparent to some degree in the movement to abolish capital punishment and in Quaker poor relief efforts, as this thesis has argued, the human rights of people, especially slaves and the Indigenous populations in British colonies, were a major focus of Quakers in the nineteenth century. In these two areas the language of rights really began to proliferate within Quaker discourses. The abolition of slavery was the first public movement where Quakers began to articulate their early human rights philosophy, and to put their understandings into practice. Quakers saw slavery as not only a sin against God, but an attack on liberal ideas of justice, fairness and equality. The same conceptual thinking about the rights of others also underpinned Quaker interest in Indigenous peoples. Quakers mostly did not subscribe to the notion of British cultural superiority, owing to their belief in the equality of all, nor did they take up the assumption that Indigenous populations had no rights based on legal concepts such as terra nullius. Instead, as in most areas of reform in which they were involved, Quakers lobbied for institutional and policy changes, disseminated information to change public opinion, formed organisations to further their cause, published articles, and also worked on Quaker-only committees within their own society. Quakers responded in many different ways in their reform endeavours because their religious beliefs permitted a response based on love and mercy rather than the need to conform to institutional creeds and doctrine.

Quaker religious doctrine therefore ensured that there were fundamental differences, from other middle-class reformers, in how they approached their social activism. At times these differences were very subtle, but the Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light, which Quakers argued was available to everyone irrespective of whom or what they were, ensured that Quakers approached their reform activism from a different theological understanding. For Quakers, the Inner Light made conversion a personal
experience, thereby eliminating the need to gain converts, which was an outcome integral to other reformers such as evangelicals. Acts of service, as part of religious doctrine, were fundamental to many reformers, but Quakers could approach their reform activism without needing to target recipients for conversion. Quakers were able to focus purely on humanitarian acts rather than the need to proselytise as well. Quakers still spread the message of the gospel as they considered the gospel essential to morality, but they were not driven by any theological understandings of having to convert the heathen. The Inner Light was at the crux of Quaker social activism and influenced greatly the way they thought about and dealt with all members of society. At times this ensured a much more humanitarian and practical approach to their activism than that of other reformers, as well as more of a focus on the rights of others. What this thesis has demonstrated is that despite the concept of the Inner Light driving Quaker reform activities, we see that they generally composed their writings without reference to this theological position. This meant that many Quaker discourses did not refer specifically to the Inner Light because if they did so they may have alienated their intended audience. Instead, Quakers used the language of rights and obligations, and injustice, to pursue their reform activism.

This thesis has shown that along with Quaker involvement in early human rights discourses, they were also very involved in moral reform. Quakers were, in the main, members of the middle-classes, and were closely linked with other reformers, especially evangelicals. It is therefore impossible to position Quakers as either only moral reformers or early human rights activists, which was the question this thesis was attempting to ascertain. The reason for this is because these two concepts were often interconnected, and interchangeable, depending upon context. It is even more difficult when we take into account that the language of human rights was in its embryonic
stages in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As a result, the lines between the two concepts were often blurred and a human rights philosophy could not be articulated in terms we understand today. We can generally ascertain when moral reform was the focus of Quaker activism, but a human rights focus was often played out within a moral reform agenda. Quakers were middle-class, and generally used the rhetoric of that class with its focus on moral reform, but Quaker religious principles also led to them focusing on the human rights of others whenever they considered it warranted, despite the rhetoric. Quakers played a major role in the formation and activities of many societies aimed at moral reform, but in many instances Quakers also engaged with ensuring the rights of all members of society were being met. Quaker activism therefore incorporated differing levels of moral reform and human rights, depending on the situation, with both concepts often co-existing within a particular movement.

We have also seen how Quakers should not be considered a homogenous group in relation to reform activism in the nineteenth century. Many of the Quaker reformers this thesis has focused on were influenced by evangelical principles, but there were also conservative Quakers involved in social reform movements. The Beacon controversy in 1835 highlighted one example of diverging beliefs within Quakerism, with different theological understandings resulting in some Quaker groupings holding differing beliefs to others. Despite some diversity in religious belief, such as that between evangelical Quakers and Quietists, a belief in the equality of everyone, as designed by God, drove all Quakers in their reform endeavours. The language may have differed at times between conservative and liberal Quakers, but at the core of Quaker reform activism was an interest in ensuring the rights of others were not being denied.
This thesis has demonstrated that Quaker religious principles, especially the Inner Light, resulted in Quakers focusing on the human rights of others, a focus not generally taken up by other reformers at the time. The Quaker belief in equality realised, in a practical sense, a compatibility with human rights principles long before their modern conception in the early twentieth century. Quakers often followed the language and intellectual ideas of the middle-classes, which were aimed mostly at reforming the masses, but as this thesis has argued, Quakers can be considered very early proponents of a contemporary human rights philosophy. While their activities were often not couched in a modern concept of human rights, Quaker intellectual, and practical, approaches to reform certainly indicated that ensuring the human rights of others was high on their agenda.

Quaker reform activism was extremely important in helping to improve the legal, social and political conditions of many people, both internal and external to Britain. Quakers viewed their involvement in reform movements as vital to ensure that the rights they considered essential to all members of God’s family were being met. To this end, Quaker reform activism was very effective. Despite their small numbers, Quakers were integral players in major areas of reform in England in the nineteenth century. The abolition of slavery, especially in British colonies, is one area of reform where Quakers were committed participants, and a movement which resulted in ending a practice which until 1838 had seen the rights and freedom of approximately 800,000 African slaves being denied. Quakers were also active contributors in efforts to abolish capital punishment, an act they considered barbaric and nothing more than state-sanctioned murder. While capital punishment was not abolished in Britain until 1969, most of the capital statute laws were repealed by the middle of the nineteenth century, evidence of the impact abolition campaigners had on policy makers. The rights of Indigenous
peoples was another area in which Quakers attempted to ensure the rights of those colonised by Britain were not ignored by the British colonial power. Quakers endeavoured to ensure that Indigenous peoples in British colonies had access to the rights all British citizens were entitled to.

The Quaker focus was not always on the need for policy reform, however, and Quakers also achieved great success in other areas of reform. Quakers were very active in ensuring popular education was available to all members of society as the State was not involved in the provision of education. Quakers were responsible for setting up schools which provided an education to many of the poorer classes, and which ultimately ensured a well-educated workforce for a rapidly industrialising Britain. Quakers also involved themselves in practical actions when the need arose, as this thesis has demonstrated. Quakers did not just intellectualise on the issues facing many of the poorer classes; they undertook practical actions to ensure the survival of those most in need.

Quakers were early proponents of contemporary human rights principles and worked tirelessly in an attempt to ensure that all the political, economic and social entitlements they considered were everyone’s due, but which were being denied to many nineteenth-century British subjects, were available. For this reason, Quakers need to be considered as historical subjects in their own right and not merely as peripheral players in major nineteenth-century reform movements.
Appendix A

Some key participants in selected nineteenth-century reform movements, identified by Quaker/Non-Quaker status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>QUAKER</th>
<th>NON-QUAKER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aborigines’ Protection Society</td>
<td>William Allen</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Forster</td>
<td>LA Chamerovzow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph John Gurney</td>
<td>Rev. Francis Cunningham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Gurney</td>
<td>Stephen Lushington MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Thomas Hodgkin</td>
<td>Daniel O’Connell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Pease</td>
<td>Henry Robarts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Slavery Society</td>
<td>William Allen</td>
<td>Henry Brougham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A.R. Barclay</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Bedford</td>
<td>Thomas Clarkson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Gurney</td>
<td>James Cropper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elizabeth Heyrick</td>
<td>Stephen Lushington MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Hoare</td>
<td>Zachary Macaulay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Forster</td>
<td>Sir James Macintosh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Pease</td>
<td>Hannah More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Phillips</td>
<td>William Wilberforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George Stacey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association for the Relief and Benefit of the</td>
<td>William Allen</td>
<td>Thomas Babington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing and Labouring Poor</td>
<td>Richard Phillips</td>
<td>Henry Brougham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zachary Macaulay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>William Wilberforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANISATION</td>
<td>QUAKER</td>
<td>NON-QUAKER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society</td>
<td>G.W. Alexander</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Allen</td>
<td>LA Chamerovzow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Allen</td>
<td>Thomas Clarkson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Josiah Forster</td>
<td>Josiah Conder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Forster</td>
<td>Stephen Lushington MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Pease</td>
<td>John Scoble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Sturge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British and Foreign Bible Society</td>
<td>William Allen</td>
<td>Thomas Babington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Bedford</td>
<td>Zachary Macaulay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Josiah Forster</td>
<td>Henry Robarts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph John Gurney</td>
<td>Granville Sharp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Phillips</td>
<td>Henry Thornton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George Stacey</td>
<td>William Wilberforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British and Foreign School Society</td>
<td>William Allen</td>
<td>Jeremy Bentham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Thomas Hodgkin</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Gurney</td>
<td>Henry Dunn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Pease</td>
<td>James Mill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Rowntree</td>
<td>William Wilberforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee for promoting the Royal Lancasterian System for the Education of the Poor</td>
<td>William Allen</td>
<td>Henry Brougham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Fry</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Gurney</td>
<td>Thomas Clarkson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Phillips</td>
<td>Joseph Fox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Sturge</td>
<td>Sir Samuel Romilly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANISATION</td>
<td>QUAKER</td>
<td>NON-QUAKER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline, and for the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders</td>
<td>William Allen</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A.R. Barclay</td>
<td>Rev. Francis Cunningham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Bedford</td>
<td>Stephen Lushington MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Fry</td>
<td>Sir James Macintosh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Gurney</td>
<td>Richard Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Hoare</td>
<td>Walter Venning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Phillips</td>
<td>William Wilberforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment</td>
<td>William Allen</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Bedford</td>
<td>Sir James Macintosh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Basil Montague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade</td>
<td>William Allen</td>
<td>Thomas Clarkson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Barclay</td>
<td>Zachary Macaulay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Hoare Jr</td>
<td>Sir Samuel Romilly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Hooper</td>
<td>Granville Sharp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Lloyd</td>
<td>James Stephen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Phillips</td>
<td>Josiah Wedgwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Taylor</td>
<td>William Wilberforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Woods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spitalfields Association for the Relief of Special Cases of Distress amongst the Industrious Poor</td>
<td>William Allen</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Barclay</td>
<td>Rev. Josiah Pratt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Bedford</td>
<td>George Sewell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Gurney</td>
<td>Henry Sterry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Hoare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANISATION</td>
<td>QUAKER</td>
<td>NON-QUAKER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spitalfields Soup Society</td>
<td>William Allen</td>
<td>John Arch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Bedford</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Foster</td>
<td>Samuel Compton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Phillips</td>
<td>Sampson Hanbury</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

Library of the Society of Friends, London


Meeting for Sufferings, Minute Books, 1810 - 1865

PRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES

A Collection of the Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends in London to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings in Great-Britain, Ireland, and Elsewhere, from 1675 to 1805; being from the first establishment of that meeting to the present time, Baltimore, Cole and Hewes (1806)

Aborigines Committee (Society of Friends, London), An address of Christian counsel and caution to emigrants to newly-settled colonies / issued [by Meeting for Sufferings] on behalf of Society of Friends, London, Darton and Harvey (1841). Vol. 414/10

Ackworth School, Rules for the Government of Ackworth School, established for the Education of Children who are Members of the Society and whose parents are not in affluent circumstances, London, James Phillips (1790)


Backhouse, James, *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies*, London, Hamilton, Adams and Co. (1843)


Barclay, Robert, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity: being an Explanation and Vindication of the Principles and Doctrines of the People called Quakers [1678]*. New York, S. Wood & Sons. (1827)


Bellers, John, *Proposals for raising a Collège of Industry of all useful Trades and Husbandry, with Profit for the Rich, - a plentiful Living for the Poor, - and a good Education for Youth - which will be advantage to the Government, by the Increase of the People, and their Riches*, London, T. Sowle (1696)


Bowly, Samuel, *An Address to the Friends’ Temperance Union, Fifth Month 31st, 1865*, London, Richard Barrett (1865)

Bray, Thomas, *An Account of the Methods whereby the Charity-Schools have been Erected and Managed: and of the encouragement given to them: together with a proposal for enlarging their number, and adding some work to the childrens learning*, London, Joseph Downing (1705)


Buxton, Thomas Fowell, *An inquiry, whether crime and misery are produced or prevented by our present system of prison discipline*, London, J & A Arch (1818)


Central Committee of the Society of Friends in Great Britain and Ireland, for the relief of the Emancipated Slaves of North America, *Case and Claims of the emancipated slaves of the United States; being the Address of the Central Committee of the Society of Friends in Great Britain and Ireland, to the British Public*, London, Richard Barrett (1865)

Central Negro Emancipation Committee, *A Report of the Proceedings of the Public Meeting, Held at Exeter Hall, on Wednesday, the 23rd of November, 1837, to take into consideration the present condition of the Negro apprentices in the British Colonies*, London (1837)

Clarkson, Thomas, *An essay on the comparative efficiency of regulation or abolition, as applied to the slave trade. Shewing that the latter only can remove the evils to be found in that commerce*, London, James Phillips (1789)

Clarkson, Thomas, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African, Translated from the Latin Dissertation, which was honoured with the First Prize in the University of Cambridge for the Year 1785. With Additions*, London, James Phillips (1786)


Clarkson, Thomas, *A summary view of the slave trade*, London, (1787)


Colquhoun, Patrick, *A treatise on indigence: exhibiting a general view of the national resources for productive labour*, London, J Hatchard (1806)


Dudley, Mary, *The Life of Mary Dudley, including an account of her religious engagements and extracts from her letters*, London (1825)

Fox, George, *Some principles of the elect people of God who in scorn are called Quakers [electronic resource] : for all people throughout all Christendome to read over and thereby their own states to consider / by Geo. Fox* Printed for Robert Wilson, London (1661)  


Fry, John, *An Alphabetical Extract of all the Annual printed Epistles which have been sent to the several Quarterly-Meetings of the People call’d Quakers, in England and elsewhere, from their Yearly-Meeting held in London, for the Promotion of Peace and Love in the Society, and Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, from the Year 1682 to 1762 inclusive, being eighty-one Years*, Second Edition, London (1766). Vol. 142/1


Gisborne, Thomas, *The Principles of Moral Philosophy Investigated, and briefly applied to the Constitution of Civil Society, , together with remarks on the principle assumed by Mr Paley as the basis of all moral conclusions, and on other positions of the same author*, 3rd ed., London, B and J White (1795)

Godschall, William, *A General Plan of Parochial and Provincial Police, with instructions to overseers and constables, for better regulating their respective parishes and also his Majesty’s proclamation against vice, profaneness, and immortality, Lord Sydney’s letter to the several high sheriffs of England, and the resolutions of the quarter sessions for the county of Surrey, holden at Guildford, in July 1787*, London, William Godschall (1787)


Gurney, Priscilla Hannah, *Memoir of the Life and Religious Experience of Priscilla Hannah Gurney*, Bristol, J. Chilcott (1834)


Heyrick, Elizabeth, *No British Slavery; or, an Invitation to the People to put a Speedy End to it*, London, T. Combe (1824). Vol. 14/1


Johnson, J.F., (ed.), *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention, called by the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and held in London from Tuesday June 13th to Tuesday June 20th, 1843*, London, John Snow (1843)

Lancaster, Joseph, *Improvements in Education as it Respects the Industrious Classes of the Community, containing among other important particulars, and account of the institution for the education of one thousand poor children, Borough Road, Southwark; and of the new system of education on which it is conducted, 6th ed.*, London, Darton and Harvey (1806)

Lancaster, Joseph, *Improvements in Education as it Respects the Industrious Classes of the Community, containing among other important particulars, and account of the institution for the education of one thousand poor children, Borough Road, Southwark; and of the new system of education on which it is conducted, From the Third London Edition, with Additions, to which is prefixed A Sketch of the New York Free School*, New York, Collins & Perkins (1807)

London Yearly Meeting, (Religious Society of Friends), *A Collection of the Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends in London to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings in Great-Britain, Ireland, and Elsewhere, from 1675 to 1805; being from the first establishment of that meeting to the present time*, Baltimore, Cole and Hewes (1806)


London Yearly Meeting, Aborigines’ Committee, *The Report of the Aborigines’ Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings*, read at the Yearly Meeting 1840: with the Address to Lord John Russell, on his Becoming Secretary for the Colonies; that to Friends settling in New Colonies; and some particulars calculated to give information, and promote interest respecting the present state of Aboriginal Tribes. London, Harvey and Darton (1840)


Madan, Martin, *Thoughts on Executive Justice, with respect to our Criminal Laws, particularly on the Circuits*, London (1785)

Meeting for Sufferings, *The Case of Our Fellow-Creatures, the Oppressed Africans, Respectfully Recommended to the Serious Consideration of the Legislature of Great Britain, By the PEOPLE called QUAKERS*. London, James Phillips (1783). Box 32/62


*Narrative of the Presentation to Sovereigns and those in authority of the Address of the Yearly Meeting on the Slave-Trade and Slavery*, London, Edward Newman (1854)


Papers respecting the negotiation with His Majesty’s Ministers on the subject of the East-India Company’s Charter and the government of His Majesty’s Indian Territories for a further term after the 22nd April 1834, together with a copy of the Bill as passed by the Hon. The House of Commons and the Right Hon. The House of Lords for Effecting an Arrangement with the East-India Company, and for the better Government of His Majesty’s Indian Territories till the 30th day of April 1854, London (1833)

*Proceedings at a Public Meeting, held at the Town-Hall, Chester, on Thursday, the First of May, 1823 [microform]: for the Purpose of Taking into Consideration the Present State of Slaves in our West India Colonies, and the Propriety of Petitioning Parliament for their Relief*, Chester, Cheshire (1823)

*Report of the Central Committee of the Society of Friends, for the Relief of the Emancipated Negroes of the United States, for the Three Months Ending 6th Month 1st, 1865*. Box 339/5

Romilly, Samuel, *Observations on a late publication, intituled, Thoughts on executive justice: to which is added, a letter containing remarks on the same work*, London (1786)

Scoble, John, *Slavery and the Slave Trade in British India; with notices of the existence of these evils in Ceylon, Malacca, and Penang, drawn from Official Documents*, London, Thomas Ward and Co., (1841)

Signed on behalf of the Committee of Friends’ School and Workhouse, Clerkenwell, the 26th of the second month, 1808. John Corbyn, Clerk. Printed by W. Phillips, George Yard, Lombard Street (1808)

Society of Friends, *Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in London, to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings in Great Britain, Ireland, and elsewhere, from 1681 to 1857, inclusive: with an Historical Introduction, and a Chapter Comprising some of the Early Epistles and Records of the Yearly Meeting*, 2 Vols, London, Edward Marsh (1858)

*The Case of the Birmingham and Midland Freed Men’s Aid Association briefly stated, comprising important information, recently received [signed October 25th 1864, Edward Gem], (No. 5), Birmingham and Midland Freed Men’s Aid Association, 25th October, 1864. Box L9/07f*

*The Horrors of the Negro Slavery existing in our West Indian Islands, Abridgement, Setting 2, London, C. Whittingham (1805). Vol. 242/15*

*The Horrors of the Negro Slavery existing in our West Indian islands, irrefragably demonstrated from official documents recently presented to the House of Commons*, London, J. Hatchard (1805)

Tuke, Samuel, *Five papers on the past proceedings and experience of the Society of Friends, in connexion with the Education of Youth: read at the meetings of the Friends’ Educational Society, at Ackworth, in the years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842*, York, John L. Linney (1843)

Walker, George Washington and James Backhouse Walker, *Notes on the aborigines of Tasmania / extracted from the manuscript journals of George Washington Walker; with an introduction, and "some notes on the tribal divisions of the aborigines of Tasmania"*, Hobart, Government Printer (1898)

Walker, James Backhouse, & Royal Society of Tasmania, *Early Tasmania : papers read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899 / by James Backhouse Walker* John Vail, Govt. Pr., Hobart, Tasmania (1902)


Whittier, John Greenleaf, (ed.), *The Journal of John Woolman and a Plea for the Poor*, Massachusetts, Peter Smith (1899)


Woolman, John, *Some Considerations on the keeping of Negroes: recommended to the professors of Christianity of every denomination*, Philadelphia, James Chattin (1754)

NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS

*Anti-Slavery Reporter*. London (1825 – 1880)

*Friends’ Quarterly Examiner*. London (1867 – 1943)


*The British Friend*. Glasgow (1843 – 1890)

*The Colonial Intelligencer or, Aborigines Friend*. London (1847 – 1866)


*The Philanthropist*. London (1811 – 1819)

OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS


VOLUNTARY SOCIETIES: PRINTED REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Aborigines Protection Society, *Annual Reports* (1838- 1870)

Aborigines Protection Society, *The Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements)*, reprinted with comments, London, William Ball (1837)


British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, *More than half a century has elapsed since the horrors, the cruelty, and crime of the African Slave Trade awakened the sympathies of Britons [microform] : aroused to exertion they determined on its extinction ...,* London, British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (1839)

British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention, called by the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and held in London from Tuesday June 13th to Tuesday June 20th 1843,* London, John Snow (1843)


British and Foreign Bible Society, *The First Five Reports of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Viz. for 1805, 1806, 1807, 1808, 1809; with Extracts of Correspondence,* London, British and Foreign Bible Society (1810)


British India Society (London), *Speeches, Delivered at a Public Meeting, for the Formation of a British India Society, held in the Freemason’s Hall, Saturday, July 6th, 1839: the Right Hon. Lord Brougham, F.R.S. in the chair,* London (1839)

Edinburgh Society for Promoting the Mitigation and Ultimate Abolition of Negro Slavery, *Considerations on Negro Slavery: with a Brief View of the Proceedings Relative to it, in the British Parliament,* Edinburgh (1824)


Friends’ First-day School Association, *An Account of the First-Day Schools, conducted by Friends, in England, to the end of the Year 1847*, Bristol, Friends’ First-day School Association (1848)


Friends’ First-day School Association, *Report of the Second Annual Meeting of Friends’ First-Day School Association*, Bristol, Friends’ First-day School Association (1849)

Friends’ First-day School Association, *Report of the Third Annual Meeting of Friends’ First-day School Association*, Bristol, Friends’ First-day School Association (1850)

National Freedmen’s-Aid Union of Great Britain and Ireland, *The Final Report of the National Freedmen’s-Aid Union of Great Britain and Ireland; with the names of the newly-elected Committee of Correspondence with American Freedmen’s-Aid Associations; and reports of proceedings on the presentation of addresses to their excellencies the Hon. C.F. Adams and the Hon. R. Johnson, the late and present United States ministers to Great Britain*, London, R. Barrett & Sons (1868)

Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor, *Rules and Regulations of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor at Clapham, Surrey, Clapham* (1829)

Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor, *The Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor*. London, W. Bulmer and Co. (1798)

Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor, *The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor, 4th ed.*, Vol. 1, London, Savage and Easingwood (1805)


SECONDARY SOURCES

*A Collection of the Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends in London to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings in Great-Britain, Ireland, and Elsewhere, from 1675 to 1805; being from the first establishment of that meeting to the present time*, Baltimore, Cole and Hewes (1806)

Ackworth School, *So numerous a family: 200 years of Quaker Education at Ackworth, 1779-1979*, West Yorkshire (1979)


Allen, William Osborne Bird, and Edmund McClure, *Two Hundred Years: The History of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1698-1898*, New York, Burt Franklin (1898)


Backhouse, Sarah, *Memoir of James Backhouse / by his Sister*, York, William Sessions (1870)


Bacon, Margaret Hope, ‘Quaker Women and the Charge of Separatism,’ *Quaker History*, 69; 1 (1980): pp.23-27


Beck, William and T. Frederick Ball, *The London Friends’ Meetings: showing the rise of the Society of Friends in London; its progress, and the development of its discipline; with accounts of the various Meeting-Houses and Burial-Grounds, their history and general associations*, London, F. Bowyer Kitto (1869)

Bell, John Hyslop, *British Folks and British India Fifty Years Ago: Joseph Pease and his Contemporaries*, London, John Heywood (1891)


Dalglish, Doris, *People Called Quakers*, London, Oxford University Press (1941)


Derham, William, *Physico-Theology: or, a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from his Works of Creation*, London, W.J. Innys (1713)


Dymond, Alfred, *The law on its trial: or personal recollections of the death penalty and its opponents*, London, Alfred W. Bennett (1865)


Gillman, Frederick, *The Story of the York Adult Schools from the commencement to the year 1907*, York, Delittle, Fenswick & Co. (1907)

Gillman, Harvey, *A Light that is Shining: An Introduction to the Quakers*, London, Quaker Home Service (1997)


Hall, Catherine Hall, (ed.), *Cultures of Empire: a reader: colonisers in Britain and the Empire in nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, Manchester, Manchester University Press (2000)


Isichei, Elizabeth, ‘From Sect to Denomination in English Quakerism, with Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 15:3 (1964): pp.207-222


James, Sydney, ‘Quaker Meetings and Education in the Eighteenth Century’, *Quaker History*, 51:2 (1962): pp.87-102

Jennings, Judith, ‘The American Revolution and the Testimony of British Quakers against the Slave Trade’, *Quaker History*, 70 (1981)


Lawrence, William, *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Man*, London, Benbow (1822)


Mar, Tracey Banivanua and Julie Evans (eds.), *Writing Colonial Histories: Comparative Perspectives*, Carlton, Vic, University of Melbourne (2002)


More, Hannah, *The Life of Hannah More with selections from her correspondence*, London, Seeley, Jackson and Halliday (1856)


Mott, Richard, (ed.), *Memoir and Correspondence of Eliza P. Gurney*, Philadelphia, JB Lippincott & Co. (1884)


O’Donnell, Elizabeth A., “‘On behalf of all young women trying to be better than they are’**: Feminism and Quakerism in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Anna Deborah Richardson’, *Quaker Studies* 6:1 (2001): pp.37-58


Polanyi, Karl, *The great transformation: the political and economic origins of our time*, Boston, Beacon Press (2001)


Society of Friends, Central Relief Committee, *Transactions of the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends during the famine in Ireland, in 1846 and 1847*, Dublin, Hodges and Smith (1852)


Tallack, William, *Peter Bedford, the Spitalfields Philanthropist*, London, S.W. Partridge (1865)


*The Christian Observer, Conducted by Members of the Established Church: for the Year 1808, being the Seventh Volume*, London, John Hatchard, 1808


Williams, Eric, *Capitalism and Slavery*, London, Andre Deutsch Limited (1944)


UNPUBLISHED THESES