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## Quaker Testimony Against Slavery and Racial Discrimination

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# Quaker Testimony against Slavery and Racial Discrimination

AN ANTHOLOGY

compiled by

STELLA ALEXANDER

Two Shillings



50

QUAKER TESTIMONY  
AGAINST SLAVERY  
AND  
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

*An Anthology compiled by*  
STELLA ALEXANDER

*Published for the Race Relations Committee by*  
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QUAKER TESTIMONY  
AGAINST SLAVERY  
AND  
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

THE TESTIMONY OF THE  
QUAKER TESTIMONY

Made and printed in Great Britain by  
The Priory Press, Malvern, Worcestershire

## P R E F A C E

**T**HIS anthology has been compiled at the suggestion of the Race Relations Committee of the (British) Society of Friends, who wanted to record the development of Friends' testimony against slavery and racial discrimination. The extracts have been grouped under two headings "Individual Witness" and "Corporate Witness". An effort has been made under the second heading to trace the growth of the testimony, but in general the passages have been chosen for their intrinsic interest and to illustrate the depth and strength of the witness.

Quaker testimony against racial discrimination grew gradually and sometimes hesitatingly out of the witness against slavery, but slavery itself was accepted by many Friends during the 17th century. It was the cruelties of the slave-trade which first disturbed the consciences of Friends and drove them to work for its abolition. By the end of the century it was generally accepted throughout the Society that Friends must have no part in the trade, although many Friends in the American colonies continued to keep the slaves they already had, and even to buy and sell those already in the colonies.

A group of German pietists who founded Germantown in Pennsylvania became Friends. In 1688 they drew up a protest against slavery which was considered successively by their Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly Meetings. It was almost a hundred years, however, before all the American Yearly Meetings of Friends found themselves able to condemn slave-holding without reservations and to prohibit it among their members.

But a clear perception of the root of the whole matter, "We are all coheirs with Adam", "Christ died for us all", came from the beginning to a handful, to George Fox who was troubled by the exclusion of slaves from the Christian fold, to saintly John Woolman who, after he had seen the light in this matter never compromised his witness by one word, but was nevertheless always tender of his hearers, and to two troublesome, but dedicated men, Ralph Sandiford and the eccentric little hunchback Benjamin Lay. The revelation of the wickedness of slavery came to both of them with such stunning force that they cried out against it unceasingly; their unmeasured denunciations gave deep offence to worthy Friends in good standing in the Society, some of whom were still slave-owners. Benjamin Lay called them "rusty old candlesticks, who have disowned many less nocents than themselves". Both he and Sandiford were finally disowned by the Society. But the shaking they gave to Friends' consciences prepared the way for John Woolman's gentle and relentless witness, and by the end of the 18th century, Friends in America were free of the reproach of slave-holding. Indeed, many Friends took the spectacular step of compensating their freed slaves for the work they had done in bondage.

In the 19th century, many American Friends found that they could not stand aside from the struggle against slavery being carried on by a wide range of societies and individuals. Some Meetings were unhappy at the contact with the "world" which the agitation against slavery involved. On the other hand there were those Friends who campaigned actively for the abolition of slavery such as Benjamin Lundy, Lucretia Mott and the poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, Joseph Sturge in England, and the thousands of brave and anonymous men and women in America who

helped to operate the "underground railroad" which smuggled escaped slaves across the border from the United States to Canada.

With the abolition of slavery in the United States in 1865, most slave-owning and trading in the Western World came to an end, although some Friends continued to occupy themselves with the slavery which still existed in Arabia and in Africa. Friends were awakening to the evils of racial discrimination in any form; the logic of the original testimony, "We are all coheirs with Adam", was inescapable when all round them Friends could see the results of the denial of this testimony.

At the present time the most immediate challenge has come to American Friends who live with the problem on their own doorsteps and who have met it in a characteristically Quaker way by trying to solve it as a community rather than as a racial problem. The American Friends Service Committee have taken a number of practical, neighbourly steps to bring people of all races together in an everyday environment and have worked especially to ease tensions where Negroes and white people live in the same neighbourhood.

British Quakers are meeting the problem at home, with the influx of West Indian and other immigrants into England. In the colonial territories, a number of Friends have gone to live among Africans "that they might feel and understand their life and the spirit they live in."

The example of John Woolman continues to point the way and to illuminate the best of Friends' work, making it not a gift from a superior to an inferior race, but the loving exchange between the sons of one Father.





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. . .

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. . .

The author, publisher and date of publication are given at the foot of all extracts. For convenience, 'Drake' has been used to signify extracts from *Quakers*

*and Slavery in America* by Thomas E. Drake, Associate Professor of History and Curator of the Quaker Collection, Haverford College (Yale University Press, 1950); and 'Jones' to signify extracts from *Later Periods of Quakerism* by Rufus Jones, Professor of Philosophy, Haverford College (MacMillan & Co., 1921).

## INDIVIDUAL WITNESS

GEORGE FOX (1624-1691), *an Englishman, the founder of the Society of Friends. He visited both the West Indies and the American Colonies and was profoundly disturbed by what he saw of slavery.*

And so now consider, do not slight them, to wit, the Ethiopians, the blacks now, neither any man or woman upon the face of the earth in that Christ died for all, both Turks, Barbarians, Tartarians and Ethiopians; he died for the tawnys and for the blacks, as well as for you that are called whites; . . . and therefore now you should preach Christ to your Ethiopians that are in your families that so they may be free men indeed, and be tender of and to them, and walk in love, that ye may answer that of God in their hearts, being (as the Scripture affirms) all of one blood and of one mould, to dwell upon the face of the earth . . . let every master and governor of a family inform them, as well as others in his family, that so they may come to walk in the grace and in the light of Jesus Christ . . . and so in this so doing you will serve God and not yourselves.

*Gospel Family Order, 1676.*

And to close up all, let me tell you, it will doubtless be very acceptable to the Lord, if so be that masters of families here would deal so with their servants, the Negroes and blacks, whom they have bought with their money, to let them go free after a considerable term of years if they have served them faithfully; and when they are, and are made free, let them not go away empty-handed. (id.)



And if any of your Negroes desire to marry, let them take one another before witnesses, in the presence of God, and the masters of the families, in the name of Jesus, the restorer of all things to the beginning, when God made them male and female, not one man and many women, but a man and a woman, and they were to continue and comfort together as long as they lived, and not to break the covenant and law of marriage (nor defile the marriage-bed) as long as they lived. (*id.*)

Friends, all that have Negroes to your servants, let them have two or three hours of the day once in the week, that day Friends Meeting is on, or another day, to meet together, to wait upon the Lord.

*(Read at Quarterly Meeting at the house of Thomas Rous in Barbados, probably in 1673. George Fox had visited him in 1671.)*

WILLIAM EDMONDSON (1627-1712), *Irish Quaker who visited Barbados on several occasions, once in the company of George Fox, and held Meetings for Negroes.*

And it would be acceptable with God, and answer the witness in all, if you did consider their condition of perpetual slavery and make their conditions your own, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For perpetual slavery is an aggravation, and an oppression upon the mind.

*Letter of Advice to Friends in America 1676. (Drake.)*

RALPH SANDIFORD (1693-1733), *English Quaker who emigrated to Pennsylvania and struggled ceaselessly against slavery. He was ostracized and disowned by Philadelphia Friends and died heart-broken at the age of 40.*

And what greater injustice can be acted, than to rob a man of his liberty, which is more valuable than life; and especially after such a manner as this, to take a man from his native country, his parents and brethren and other natural enjoyments, and that by stealth, or by way of purchase from them that have no right to sell them, whereby thou receivest the theft, which is as bad; and to take them amongst a people of a strange language and unnatural climates, which is hard for them to bear whose constitutions are tendered by the heat of their native country: . . . shall we then undertake to remove them, wheresoever interest shall lead us, to sell them for slaves, husband from wife and children from both, like beasts, with all their increase, to the vilest of men and their offspring after them, to all eternity!

*The Mystery of Iniquity: in a brief examination of the practice of the times, 1730.*

Had Friends stood clear of this practice, that it might have been answered to the traders in slaves, that there is a people called Quakers in Pennsylvania, that will not own this practice in word or deed, then would they have been a burning and a shining light to these poor heathen, and a precedent to the nations throughout the universe, which might have brought them to have seen the evil of it themselves. (*id.*)

Also under the Gospel, there was not the least ex-

ception against the believing Ethiopian's partaking of the privilege of baptism; therefore let us not forbid or hinder them to be baptized. (*id.*)

And what hath more introduced iniquity amongst us, and hindered the divine birth from coming forth, than this trade? Therefore let every soul that regards its own good, beware that they defile not their habitations by touching therewith, and further the work for if there were no buyers, there would be no sellers; was the cause removed the effect would cease; which would directly stop the trade, and manifest to every open eye, the captivity of those that have them. (*id.*)

And some also offer, that they under such a necessity to be supported by the labour of bondslaves, that they cannot live without them. So might the masters of the galley-slaves answer; but if it is so, it is better to lose that life, that we may find a life in righteousness. (*id.*)

**BENJAMIN LAY** (1677-1759), *British Quaker who emigrated to Philadelphia. A friend of Ralph Sandiford (q.v.) he was convinced that Sandiford's early death was due to despair at his treatment by slave-owning Friends. He took up the battle against slavery in even more unmeasured terms and was publicly disowned. In 1758, shortly before his death, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting decided finally to disown all Friends who bought or sold Negroes and to encourage those who held slaves to set them free.*

What, I pray and beseech you, dear Friends, by the tender mercies of our God, to consider, can be greater hypocrisy and plainer contradiction, than for us as a



people, to refuse to bear arms, or to pay them that do, and yet purchase the plunder the captives, for slaves at a very great price, thereby justifying their selling of them, and the war, by which they were or are obtained; nor doth this satisfy, but their children also are kept in slavery, ad infinitum; is not this plainly and substantially trampling the most blessed and glorious testimony that ever was or ever will be in the world, under our feet. . . . Is this the way to convince the poor slaves, or our children or neighbours or the world?

*All Slave-keepers that keep the innocent in bondage, Apostates, 1737.*

For custom in sin, hides, covers, as it were takes away the guilt of sin. Long custom, the conveniency of slaves working for us, waiting and tending continually on us, beside the washing, cleaning, scouring, cooking very nicely fine and curious, sewing, knitting, darning, almost ever at hand and command; and in other places milking, churning, cheese-making, and all the drudgery in dairy and kitchen, within doors and without. And the proud, dainty, lazy daughters sit with their hands before 'em, like some of the worst idle sort of gentlewomen, and if they want a trifle rather than rise from their seats, call the poor slave from her drudgery to come and wait upon them . . . and Friends, what I touched at a little before, concerning the delicate damsels, or fine idle dames, it may be pretty much like it with the young men, and maybe the old ones, that have their Negroes to plough, sow, thresh, winnow, split rails, cut wood, clear land, make ditches and fences, fodder cattle, run and fetch up the horses, or fine curious pacing mares, for young Madam and Sir to ride about on, impudently and proudly gossiping from house to house, stuffing their lazy un-

godly bellies. Then old Sir Master calls "Negro, fetch my best gelding quickly for me to ride to Meeting, to preach the Gospel of glad tidings to all men and liberty to the captives and opening the prison-doors to them that are bound; but I'll keep thee in bondage nevertheless, help thyself if thee can." (id.)

Now dear Friends, behold a Mystery! These ministers that be slave-keepers, and are in such very great repute, such eminent preachers, given to hospitality, charitable to the poor, loving to their neighbours, just in their dealings, temperate in their lives, visiting of the sick, sympathising with the afflicted in body or mind, very religious seemingly and extraordinary devout and demure, and in short strictly exact in all their decorums, except slave-keeping, these, these be the men and the women too, for the Devil's purpose, and are the choicest treasure the devil can or has to bring out of his Lazaretto, to establish slave-keeping. By these Satan works wonders many ways, these are the very men, or people of both sexes that come the nearest to the scribes and Pharisees of any people in the whole world, if not sincere: for the scribes were exact and demure seemingly in their appearances before men, according to Christ's account of them, and yet the worst enemies the dear Lamb had, or that the Devil could procure for or against him. And I do surely believe that one such as these, now in this our day, in this very country, does more service for the Devil and hurt in the church, in slave-keeping than twenty publicans and harlots; for by their extraordinary conduct, in hypocrisy, smooth and plausible appearance, they draw into the snare almost insensibly, and so beguile unstable souls before they are aware, which is sorrowful to consider as well as write, their example being much more powerful than others. (id.)

(Of ministers who continue to keep slaves.) Time for such old rusty candlesticks to be moved out of their places, who have disowned many less nocents than themselves. (*id.*)

It is most certain that all men, as they are the sons of Adam are coheirs; and have equal right unto Liberty and all other outward comforts of life. (*id.*)

It is likewise most lamentable to think, how in taking Negroes out of Africa, and selling of them here, that which God has joined together, men to boldly rend asunder; men from their country, husbands from their wives, parents from their children. How horrible is the uncleanness, mortality if not murder, that the ships are guilty of that bring great crowds of these miserable men and women. (*id.*)

And for men obstinately to persist in holding their neighbours and brethren under the rigor of perpetual bondage, seems to be no proper way of gaining assurance that God has given them spiritual freedom . . . these Ethiopians, as black as they are; seeing they are the sons and daughters of the first Adam, the brethren and sisters of the last Adam, and the offspring of God; they ought to be treated with a respect agreeable. (*id.*)

JOHN BELL (1681-1761), *English Quaker who entreated slave-owning Friends to treat their servants well.*

And, dear friends, when I consider the circumstance and situation you are in, upon whom much labour has been bestowed, I apprehend there is much required of you, whose livelihood chiefly depends on the labour of



bondslaves, whom you have purchased—they being of God's creation, and as I believe, have immortal souls, for whose salvation amongst the rest of mankind our great Lord was offered upon the tree of the Cross.

*Epistle to Friends in Maryland, Virginia, etc.,*

1741.

ISAAC JACKSON, *an eighteenth-century Friend, was visiting slaveholders in a Quarterly Meeting in North America, the far greater number of whom confessed the wrong of slavery and agreed to take measures to free their slaves.*

An incident occurred during this visit of Isaac Jackson which impressed him deeply. On the last evening, just as he was about to turn homeward, he was told that a member of the Society, whom he had not seen, owned a very old slave who was happy and well cared for. It was a case which it was thought might well be left to take care of itself.

Isaac Jackson, sitting in silence, did not feel his mind quite satisfied; and as the evening wore away, feeling more and more exercised, he expressed his uneasiness, when a young son of his host eagerly offered to go with him and show him the road to the place. The proposal was gladly accepted.

On introducing the object of their visit, the Friend expressed much surprise that any uneasiness should be felt in the case, but at length consented to sign the form of emancipation saying, at the same time, it would make no difference in their relations, as the old man was perfectly happy.

At Isaac Jackson's request the slave was called in and seated before them. His form was nearly double,

his thin hands were propped on his knees, his white head was thrust forward, and his keen, restless, inquiring eyes gleamed alternately on the stranger and on his master. At length he was informed of what had been done; that he was no longer a slave, and that his master acknowledged his past services entitled him to a maintenance so long as he lived.

The old man listened in almost breathless wonder, his head slowly sinking on his breast. After a short pause, he clasped his hands, then spreading them high over his hoary head, slowly and reverently exclaimed, "Oh, goody Gody, oh!"—bringing his hands down again on his knees. Then raising them as before, he twice repeated the solemn exclamation, and with streaming eyes and a voice almost too much choked for utterance he continued, "I thought I should die a slave, and now I shall die a free man!"

*From a footnote in an introduction by John G. Whittier to the Journal of John Woolman (Headley, 1899.)*

JOHN WOOLMAN (1720-1772). *"The greatest Quaker of the eighteenth-century and perhaps the most Christlike individual that Quakerism has ever produced"* (Drake). *A New Jersey tailor who devoted his life to the Quaker ministry, working for the abolition of slavery, and to improving relations between his countrymen and American Indians.*

My employer having a Negro woman sold her, and directed me to write a bill of sale, the man being waiting who had bought her . . . through weakness I gave way and wrote it, but at the executing it I was



so afflicted in my mind, that I said before my master and the friend, that I believed slavekeeping to be a practice inconsistent with the Christian religion; this in some degree abated my uneasiness yet as often as I reflected seriously upon it I thought I should have been clearer, if I had desired to be excused from it, as a thing against my conscience, for such it was. And some time after this a young man of our Society, spake to me to write an instrument of slavery, he having lately taken a Negro into his house. I told him I was not easy to write it, for though many people kept slaves in our Society as in others, I still believed the practice was not right and desired to be excused from doing the writing. I spoke to him in good will, and he told me, that keeping slaves was not altogether agreeable to his mind, but that the slave being a gift made to his wife, he had accepted of her. . . .

*John Woolman's Journal, ed. Gummere, 1743.*

When I eat, drank and lodged freecost with people who lived in ease on the hard toyl of their slaves I felt uneasie, and as my mind was inward to the Lord, I found from place to place, this uneasiness return upon me at times through the whole visit. Where the masters bore a good share of the burthen, and lived frugally, so that their servants were well provided for, and their labour moderate, I felt more easy; but where they lived in a costly way, and laid heavy burthens on their slaves, my exercise was often great, and I frequently had conversation with them in private concerning it. Secondly this trade of importing them from their native country being much encouraged amongst them, and the white people and their children so generally living without much labour was frequently the subject of my serious thought, and I saw in these southern provinces, so many vices and corruptions

increased by this trade and this way of life that it appeared to me as a dark gloominess hanging over the land, and though now many willingly run into it, yet in future the consequence will be grievous to posterity. (id.)

These are a people who have made no agreement to serve us, and have not forfeited their liberty that we know of. These are souls for whom Christ died and for our conduct toward them, we must answer before the Almighty Being who is no respecter of persons. (id. 1757.)

Love was the first motion, and then a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians, that I might feel and understand their life, and the spirit they live in, if happily I might receive some instruction from them, or they be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of truth amongst them. (id. 1763.)

A weighty and heavenly care came over my mind, and love filled my heart toward all mankind, in which I felt a strong engagement that we might be faithful to the Lord while his mercies are yet extended to us and so attend to pure universal righteousness as to give no just cause of offence to the gentiles who do not profess Christianity, whether the blacks from Africa, or the native inhabitants of this continent. (id. 1763.)

Man is born to labour, and experience abundantly showeth that it is for our good: but where the powerful lay the burthen on the inferior, without affording a Christian education, and suitable opportunity of improving the mind, that themselves may live at ease and fare sumptuously, and lay up riches for their posterity, this seems to contradict the design of providence, and

is sometimes the effect of a perverted mind: for while the life of one is made grievous by the rigour of another, it entails misery on both.

*Considerations on Keeping of Negroes, 1762.*  
(*ed. Gummere.*)

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

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

Placing on men the ignominious title SLAVE, dressing them in uncomely garments, keeping them to servile labour, in which they are often dirty tends gradually to fix a notion in the mind, that they are a sort of people below us in nature. (*id.*)



To come at a right feeling of their (the negroes') condition, requires humble, serious thinking; for in their present situation, they have but little to engage our natural affection in their favour.

DAVID COOPER (1724-1795), *New Jersey Quaker who signed his pamphlet "A Farmer" and wrote in a worldly style to conceal his Quaker identity.*

If neither the voice of justice, the dictates of humanity, the rights of human nature, and establishment of impartial liberty now in your power, the good of your country, nor the fear of an avenging God, can restrain your hand from this impious practice of holding your fellow-men in slavery . . . then let justice, humanity, advocates of liberty and the sacred name of Christians, cease to be the boast of American rulers.

*A serious address to the rulers of America on the inconsistency of their conduct regarding slavery, 1783. (Drake.)*

JOSHUA EVANS (1731-1798), *a New Jersey Friend with strong views about slavery, drink, wearing apparel and all forms of worldliness. Like John Woolman's his apparel was home-made, undyed and devoid of superfluous appendages. He caused great offence to his Monthly Meeting by wearing a beard, and his concern to travel in the Ministry was repeatedly refused. When he was finally liberated to travel he was well received in many parts of the American colonies.*

1757. About this time, I became engaged, with other exercised brethren, to plead for liberty to the black people who were held in bonds of slavery among our fellow-members. These we visited from house to house, particularly in the parts near us. This labour, at that time, went hard with some who held slaves, and who thought it would cause uneasiness between them and their black servants; and so would scarcely permit us to perform the visit. I saw it was the Lord's work, and that in performing it we had need be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Truth opened our way to proceed much in this manner: first to sit down in silence with the whole family, and not to let our communications give the blacks any knowledge of our business with those who held them. But when the other parts of the family withdrew, we pleaded with the master and mistress, and Truth favoured us to do it in a way that gave general satisfaction. I thought I never felt a greater reward than in pleading the cause of those poor, injured, captive people.

*Journal. (Published in Friends' Miscellany, Vol. 10.)*

1796. We were at a large meeting at Somerton, near one third were black people, and they as well as others sat solidly and many appeared tender. . . . In the evening we had a meeting for the black people, in a school house, near the widow Scott's being the first of the kind ever held in these parts. It was large, and one of the justices, with some other masters of negroes, attended. They spoke well of the meeting, and said they felt very free their negroes should be at such meetings, and were glad they had been there themselves; uniting with what was spoken, and wishing it might be observed. (id.)

1797. I am often seriously affected with the oppressions and wrongs done to the poor Indians and negroes; many of whom have been destroyed. If the blood of Abel cried from the earth that opened her mouth to receive it, and reached to the holy ear,—how loud will be the cry of the blood of so many thousands of Indians and negroes, who have been slain in this land? (*id.*)

ANTHONY BENEZET (1713-1784), a Frenchman who emigrated to Philadelphia and joined the Society of Friends. He was a friend of John Woolman's and campaigned ceaselessly against the slave-trade. He wrote many books and pamphlets and made a personal appeal to Queen Charlotte.

. . . I am like-minded with thee with respect to the difficulty and danger which would attend a sudden manumission of these negroes in the southern colonies, as well to themselves, as to the whites; wherefore, except, in particular cases, the obtaining their freedom and indeed the freedom of many even amongst us, is by no means the object of my concern; but the using the best endeavour in our power to draw the notice of the Government upon the grievous iniquity and great danger attendant on a farther prosecution of the slave trade is what every truly sympathising heart cannot but earnestly desire and (under divine direction) promote to the utmost of their power. If this could be obtained, I trust, the sufferings of those already amongst us, by the interposition of government and even, from selfish ends, in their owners, would be mitigated and in time providence would gradually work for the release of those whose age and situation would fit them for freedom. The large settlements, now in



prospect, to be made, in that vast extent of country, from the west side of the Allegheny Mountains to the Mississippi, on a breadth of four or five hundred miles, would afford a suitable and beneficial means of settlement for many of them amongst the white people, which would in all probability be profitable as well to the Negroes, as the new settlers. It is clear to me that whenever a manumission of the bulk of the Negroes takes place, the thought of settling them in a body, by themselves, will be found as impossible, as it would be dangerous both to black and white. (What part of the world is so vacant as peaceably to admit near a million of peoples and without a counsellor from heaven as in the case of the Israelites, how would such a people be prevented from becoming a prey to their ignorance and passions and a sad annoyance to their neighbours.) The only rational, safe and just expedient both natural and religious would, I think, be that they be mixed amongst the whites and by giving them a property amongst us, make them parties and interested in our welfare and security.

*Letter to John Fothergill, 1773*

PAUL CUFFEE (1759-1817), *an American Negro born in Massachusetts, the son of a freed slave; prospered as a farmer and established himself as a respected member of the community. He undertook a triangular trade between Westport, Mass., Liverpool and Sierra Leone where he helped to transport Negroes from America who wished to settle as freedmen in Africa, financing his voyages by trading with Liverpool. He and his parents became members of the Society of Friends.*

How animating a spectacle for the eye of humanity, to see a vessel trading to the port of Liverpool, commanded by a free and enlightened African; to behold him prosecuting another voyage to Africa, with a vessel not laden with instruments of cruelty and oppression, but manned with sable, yet free and respectable seamen, rescued from the galling chains of slavery, and employed in honourable commerce.

Paul Cuffee is tall, well formed and athletic; his deportment conciliating, yet dignified and serious. His prudence, strengthened by parental care and example, no doubt guarded him in his youth, when exposed to the dissolute company which unavoidably attends a seafaring life; whilst religion, influencing his mind by its secret guidance, in silent reflection has, in advancing manhood, added to the brightness of his character, and instituted or confirmed his disposition to practical good. Being questioned some years since respecting the religious profession of parents and himself, it appeared that all three were disposed to attend the Quakers' meetings. Paul has since, on application, been received into membership with the respectable Society of Friends.

*Memoir of Captain Paul Cuffee, a man of colour. York, 1811.*

HANNAH KILHAM (1774-1832), *English Quaker who had a strong concern for Africa and especially for the liberated slaves who formed the colony of Sierra Leone. She visited West Africa three times and her journal and reports show her deep missionary zeal combined with the practical common sense of the educational methods she advocates.*



This station (Sierra Leone) having been formed and maintained on a principle of benevolent concern for the good of Africa, and as a place of reception for the unhappy victims of cruelty and oppression when rescued from the slave-ships, presents a very peculiar and a very powerful claim to our interest and regard; . . . if from feelings of individual compassion a Christian philanthropist had rescued from the hold of a slave-ship one helpless child, and placed it under care for shelter and instruction, would he not feel so much interest for his rescued charge, as fully to inform himself from time to time how the child was cared for and instructed? Whether its physical wants as to food, shelter and medical care were suitably provided for, and its mind receiving the advantages of appropriate instruction and judicious Christian care?

But have the advocates of the African cause as yet obtained all the information of the state of the liberated slaves, the children and the people, when landed in Sierra Leone, which their dependent position in society has called for? The children especially, who from their greater helplessness do assuredly claim much of a parent's care from the friends of Africa in this country.

*Claims of West Africa to Christian Instruction through the Native Languages.* 1830.

But in the system hitherto pursued in the schools, of using English lessons only, for children to whom English is quite a foreign language (excepting that they have a very few words in occasional and colloquial use) whilst the native languages, for conversation, are of course in general use among themselves, can it be expected that the lessons thus learned should prove any more than mere *sound* to the pupil? (*id.*)

I am satisfied that the system of school-instruction should be combined with useful employment, and that the girls should be taught from books the theory of domestic business, and in turns the practice of it. The boys should be taught agriculture and mechanics.

*Journal, quoted in Memoirs of Hannah Kilham. 1837.*

Is there any probability of an improved loom being introduced into Africa, so that the people in the Gambia and Sierra-Leone might weave basts and gingham, and send them into the interior? Might the people here be also taught to make many little articles of turnery to be sent into the interior? (*id.*)

My mind has for years been impressed with a conviction, that our great duty toward Africa is to strengthen the hands of the people, *to promote each other's good*; and, if we may be so permitted, to be instrumental in leading some to the acknowledgement of Christianity from experimental feeling, who may become humble instruments in the divine hand of spreading the truth and the love of it, and especially among the rising generation in Africa. It is the Africans themselves that must be the Travellers, and Instructors and Improvers of Africa—let it be kept in mind to what perpetual interruption every purpose must be subject, that is made dependant upon European life on the African shores. (*id.*)

BENJAMIN LUNDY (1789-1839), *American Quaker, joint editor of "The Philanthropist", an anti-slavery journal, who met William Lloyd Garrison in Boston and first awakened Garrison to the evils of slavery.*

I returned home, having considerably increased my subscription list and, as I have since learnt, having scattered the seed of anti-slavery in strong and luxuriant soil. While casting it by the wayside and on mountains covered with flint and glaciers (for it was then the very winter of philanthropy) I could not know on what ground the good seed fell.

*Earle's Life of Lundy, quoted in Rufus Jones "Later Periods of Quakerism". 1921.*

His (Lundy's) was the mission of a John the Baptist. He was a voice crying in the bleak, dull wilderness period of the anti-slavery movement. His greatest work was that of discovering, awakening, and kindling others. He never spared himself, he was mastered with one idea, and he drove it into the consciousness of his generation. He found America asleep and he toiled and wrote until there were at least plain signs of opening eyes. (Jones)

GEORGE F. WHITE, a New York Quaker who opposed slavery and refused to handle its products but who was opposed to Friends joining "worldly" anti-slavery groups.

No matter into what vice you have gone, join not these associations. I tell you that I preach Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God. There is no name under heaven by which we can be saved but by His. Depend not, then, I say, upon the Temperance Society, or the Abolition Society, or Tract Society, or Missionary Society or Bible Society which rely upon the strength of man and not upon God. I say thus in the face of heaven, these are abominations in the sight



of God and in the presence of the angels. Such of you as have fallen into any infirmity, come and bow at the feet of Jesus, to whom all power has been given to heal every affliction.

*Sermon delivered on October 8th, 1843, at Cherry Street Meeting, Philadelphia, quoted by Drake.*

LUCRETIA MOTT (1793-1880), *American Quaker, abolitionist and early fighter for women's rights.*

In 1825 quite unexpectedly she herself felt a clear sense of duty to abstain from everything produced by unpaid labour, and a little later she and her husband became convinced that the cotton business in which the latter was engaged was too closely allied with slavery for him to continue in it, though it was proving to be financially very profitable to him. The step involved heavy sacrifice but it was taken without a murmur, and it did much to clarify the moral vision of both husband and wife, and to fortify their spirit for the brunt of the struggle. (Jones)

JOSEPH STURGE (1793-1859), *a Birmingham Quaker who took a leading part in the civic life of the city. He was a zealous abolitionist and travelled to the West Indies in order to supply the government with proofs of the evils of slavery; he also started various schemes to assist freed Negroes.*

There is, however, one view of this subject which, I think, at least ought to be conclusive with us as a

religious body. We hold it to be right that whenever we take up anything on religious principles, we should act upon it, without reference to consequences. Now, it has been said, and I believe unanimously admitted within these walls, and I am sure my own heart responded to the sentiment, that the abolition of slavery had been the *religious* concern of our Society for more than half a century; but I believe it will be found by everyone that will fairly examine the subject, that if this be correct, we must advocate immediate emancipation, and that the reasons for any kind or modification of gradual emancipation are founded only on expediency.

*Quoted in "Memoirs of Joseph Sturge" by Henry Richard. 1864.*

**JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER** (1807-1892),  
*American Quaker poet and abolitionist.*

If, within the last ten years, anything has been done for the cause of freedom in this country, our Society cannot claim any credit for it. God, in His all-wise Providence, has raised up *other* instrumentalities to do His Work. As a Friend—as a sectarian—I sometimes regret this, but as a friend of suffering humanity I rejoice that wider and more powerful influences than any which could proceed from our Society, have been put in operation against the great sin of my country. My heart opens to every friend of the slave, irrespective of his sect or his creed. The anti-slavery cause has not, I trust, made me less a Quaker, but it has given me a more enlarged charity, a deeper sense of the universal brotherhood and an entire willingness to labour in whatever way Providence may open, and with what-

ever companionship it may afford me for the promotion of the well-being of my fellow-men.

*From a letter to Joseph Sturge concerning the inaction of American Friends as a body against slavery in general; quoted by Richards.*

FRIENDS' INTELLIGENCER, 1859, *American Quaker journal.*

The great object to be attained should ever be to convince and convert the slaveholders; and this, we believe, cannot be effectually accomplished unless the hearts of speakers and actors are measurably influenced towards them by that love which recognises their claims to brotherhood, and to be treated with perfect fairness and kind regard. (Drake)

JOHN BRIGHT (1811-1889), *English Quaker and Liberal statesman who served in two of Gladstone's Cabinets. He was an unceasing opponent of war and of slavery. During the American Civil War he supported the unpopular cause of the North although this harmed his business interests.*

I blame men who are eager to admit into the family of nations a State which offers itself to us based upon a principle, I will undertake to say, more odious and more blasphemous than was ever heretofore dreamed of in Christian or Pagan, in civilised or in savage times. The leaders of this revolt propose this monstrous thing—that over a territory forty times as large as England, the blight and curse of slavery shall be for ever per-



petuated. I cannot believe, for my part, that such a fate will befall that fair land, stricken though it now is with the ravages of war . . . I have another and a far brighter vision before my gaze. It may be but a vision, but I will cherish it. I see one vast confederation stretching from the frozen North in unbroken line to the glowing South, and from the wild billows of the Atlantic westward to the calmer waters of the Pacific main; and I see one people, one language, and one law, and one faith, and, over all the wide Continent, the home of freedom, and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and of every clime.

*Speech in Birmingham, 1862; quoted Jones.*

SIR JOHN HARRIS (1874-1940), *Secretary for many years of the Anti-Slavery Society.*

Neither by word nor deed can the Christian Church give countenance to these intolerable racial disabilities, and it is the duty of the Church to insist upon the full right of the African to rise to the highest plane of industrial efficiency in his own country. In the mines of South Africa the day of conflict between white capital and coloured labour has almost passed away—a darker day is before us, a terrible racial struggle between organised white labour and unorganised native labour. The 250,000 natives only ask for justice in this industrial struggle, justice for their race in their own country—and the forces of Christianity must hasten to their aid if the Kingdom of God is ever to be established along the Rand.

*Africa: Slave or Free? S.C.M. 1919.*

Forced labour for private profit is slavery; to demand

compulsory labour in the financial interests of an individual or a corporation is to establish the iniquitous principle of a property right in a fellow man. In the African continent this form of labour has been practised for nearly half a century, and it is widely practised to-day . . . Germany, France, Belgium, Portugal and Great Britain have within the last fifty years, knowingly or unknowingly, permitted this form of modern slavery. *(id.)*

The duty of the Christian Church is quite clear—the followers of Christ can never silently permit the imposition of disabilities upon the sole basis of differing race or colour. The restriction of civil rights can be defended possibly from the standpoint of education or of vested interests in a particular country—it can never be defended exclusively upon a colour or racial basis. *(id.)*

It is quite clear that future years will witness a long and bitter struggle for the just rights of the natives of British East Africa; influences are at work with the object of taking from the native the land he occupies to-day in order that labour may be provided. The struggle on behalf of the natives may be short, but more probably it will be long, costly and almost certainly bitter. During that struggle earnest men in the British Isles, co-operating with good men from the Protectorate, will need, and should have the help of every Christian man to whom the words righteousness and justice mean anything at all. *(id.)*

The cardinal fact is that the Eternal Father of men “hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.” The lifestream of the whole human race is one, flowing from one source,



flowing towards one goal, animated by one and the same desire for freedom and progress, impelled by one certain hope that justice will ultimately overcome all barriers erected by avarice, envy, prejudice and hatred. The African of one blood with the European and Asiatic claims, and rightly claims, his place as a free man—free to sell the labour of his hands to the highest bidder, free to till his own soil, free to multiply and replenish the earth, free to voice his opinions in the religious, social and civic upbuilding of his own country. (id.)

WILLIAM A. CADBURY (1867-1957), *a member of the well-known Quaker family of manufacturers. He took a leading part in negotiations with the Portuguese Government concerning labour conditions in the cocoa plantations in Portuguese West Africa, following on the investigations made for the three firms of Cadbury, Rowntree and Fry by Joseph Burt and Dr. Claude Horton.*

We have always been buyers of S. Thomé cocoa, and in the hope of continuing for many years your business friends, we respectfully urge upon you the need for reforms, all of which will, we believe, be accomplished when throughout Angola and the islands you have established free labour and free repatriation. . . . Plentiful supplies of good cocoa are of the greatest benefit to the manufacturer, and we have always welcomed the good progress of the S. Thomé estates. Much as we should regret to lose the opportunity of buying your excellent cocoa, and even knowing that it would entail to us financial loss, speaking at least for my own firm, our conscience would not allow us to go

on purchasing raw material for our business, unless we are assured that in the future it is to be produced by free labour.

*From a statement made by William A. Cadbury on behalf of the English cocoa makers to a committee of the proprietors of the cocoa estates of S. Thomé and Principe. November 28th, 1907.*

RUFUS JONES (1863-1948), *American Quaker, Professor of Philosophy at Haverford College and author of many works on Quakerism and Quaker history.*

But important as were the eloquent leaders of Conventions and the financial helpers, there was another type of anti-slavery Friend who, in an obscure and quiet way, rendered a no less momentous service. These were the men and women who befriended escaped slaves, opened their homes to them, and became in the course of time a part of the great Underground Railroad system between the South and Canada. Sensitive as Friends were about interfering with the rights of ownership, and conscientious as they were in their sense of obligation to law and order, they nevertheless felt that in the matter of helping slaves to effect their escape, they were obedient to a higher law which had absolute sanction. They did not need to quote as their sanction the passage which ex-President Fairchild of Oberlin College called the Fugitive Slave Law of the Mosaic institutions:

“Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which hath escaped unto thee; he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall

choose in one of thy gates where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him."

The Friends rested their case rather upon the clear voice, which seemed to them the voice of God, in their own souls.

*The Later Periods of Quakerism.*  
MacMillan, 1921.

*On Friends work for Indians.*

One of the most convincing tokens of Indian confidence in Friends is found in the fact that Indians of almost all types and tribes not only in colonial times but through the nineteenth century as well, desired to have a committee of Friends present with them whenever they were making a treaty with their white neighbours. (id.)

*Farewell of the Shawnee Indians to Friends who had been their helpers.*

"We have been brothers," the chiefs said, "together with you for a long time. You took us by the hand and you held us fast. We have held you fast too. And although we are going far away from you, we do not want you to forsake us. . . . Through all we have found that by holding to the Friends we have done best, so we hope always to be in your hands." (id.)

"The Society of Friends is well known as having succeeded in living in peace with the Indians in the early settlement of Pennsylvania, while their white neighbours of other sects in other sections were constantly embroiled. They are also known for their opposition to all strife, violence, and war, and are generally known for their strict integrity and fair dealings. These considerations induced me to give the manage-



ment of a few reservations to them and to throw the burden of the selection of agents upon the Society itself. The result has proven most satisfactory.

*From President Grant's first annual Message to Congress, 1869. (Quoted by Jones.)*

*Writing of the period immediately after the Civil War in the United States when liberated slaves suffered great distress.*

The Friends helped the freedmen build little cabins on their garden plots, supplied them with clothes, and started them in living as free people. During the first few months the receipts of the [Philadelphia] Association amounted to over \$53,000, about \$10,000 of which was contributed by English Friends. More than twenty thousand garments in this same early period were furnished for the "contrabands". . . . The next important undertaken by the Association was the creation of schools and provision for the education of these suddenly emancipated slaves. *(id.)*

At the period of climax in the work of the Philadelphia Association, which was reached in 1870, it maintained and managed forty-seven schools, with no less than six thousand coloured people in attendance, under sixty-seven teachers. *(id.)*

American Friends instantly realised that they were divinely called to meet this crisis, and they rose to the great tasks with a deep sense that they were under the highest commission. The spirit of service swept over all the American Yearly Meetings, and brought a touch of fresh life to the entire membership. It was to a very large degree a young Friends' movement, led and directed by the rising generation.

W. MCGREGOR ROSS (1876-1940), *English Quaker who spent many years in East Africa in the Foreign Office Service and the Colonial Service. He was Director of Public Works in Kenya and a member of the Kenya Legislative Council from 1916-1922. The book from which these quotations are taken deals with the history of Kenya down to 1927.*

The Government created a caste of landed proprietors—a privileged class. Its members can certainly not be blamed for accepting the chances of wealth which a British Government place before them. . . . There (is) much in the record to rouse indignation among British people who have not been subjected to the temptations inseparable from membership of a privileged class, allowed to enrich itself by the labours of uneducated coloured people. Let them remember, that the people who are being described are, for the most part, just such people as themselves and their friends. Difference of experience does so profoundly govern difference of outlook. On the other side, the privileged class in Kenya would do well to remember that it is the British people, and not themselves, who are in charge of the country in which they live and of the Africans among whom they dwell. If the British people have good reason to believe that African natives who are in their charge are being imposed upon, it is probable that wrongs will be righted. Attempts from any quarter to obstruct the process may provide some temporary excitement, but are unlikely to have any permanent success.

*Kenya From Within, 1927.*

Previously the land had been held in the grip of the Slave Trader for uncounted generations. And we



to-day and all who make contact with the human masses of East, West and Central Africa, are still paying and may have to continue paying for generations, some part of the price that stands debited against us for the incalculable miseries of the Slave Trade. . . . The white housewife in Africa to-day pays her part of the price in nervous strain, as she seethes with exasperation at the ingratitude of her servants. The farm-manager's life on earth is being both shortened and embittered by gusts of fury at the unreliability, the cunning and the deceitfulness of his workers. But why should not our teeth be set on edge? Did not our fathers eat sour grapes on the coasts of Africa? We do well to remember that our Christian hymn "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds" was composed by an English slaver, as he was waiting, on the coast of Africa, for a three-masted horror to come up over the horizon, to take away from the land of their birth, a herd of miserable African captives whom he had acquired from the interior. (*id.*)

In the pages of this book there has been pictured—a troubled community. Has the narration at times been sardonic? At times perhaps—but not throughout. But was ever a writer provided with such a field for satire? Has there anywhere flourished in our generation a group of British people as aptly symbolised, as is the small political group in Kenya, by a turkey-cock—ever-lastingly gobbling, strident, aggressive, ugly to look at? And so the yard in which this creature has strutted has known no peace. There has been a perpetual dust-storm on a small scale—due to its antics. As the looked-for periods of peace on earth, good will among men approaches, the creature may appropriately be sacrificed. It is a fate that commonly awaits the turkey-cock at such periods.

Given clear thinking, there is hope of peace. Self-interest of British individuals, concern for the glory of the British Empire, the spiritual health of growing British families in Kenya and response to ethical considerations, alike call for the sublimation of racial hatred. Included in the first, there lies, for the Britons in Kenya, the not insignificant factor of self-preservation. Unless the Africans among whom they dwell remain well disposed to them, serenity of mind, charm of environment and financial attractiveness together take wings, and vanish from their world. Churlishness, arrogance and exclusiveness are attitudes of mind which are only too likely to drive the African to take sides against those who display them. That having taken place, the political and economic downfall of a group enveloped in a hostile African atmosphere is certain. (id.)

CHARLES RODEN BUXTON (1875-1942), a grandson of Fowell Buxton, the great abolitionist. A Member of Parliament first for the Liberal and later for the Labour Party, Principal of Morley College and Treasurer of the I.L.P. He and his wife joined the Society of Friends during the First World War. A champion of the coloured races and one of the foremost thinkers of his day on Colonial problems.

The almost inexplicable strength of the Anti-Slavery Movement of a century ago was due to the fact that it rested upon a religious basis, which was, at the same time, a sound scientific basis. The main living force behind it was the Evangelical Movement. To the religious men and women who supported it with so

much enthusiasm and persistence, the Black man was, first and foremost, a person "for whom Christ died" Some may think that the form of thought has become antiquated; the essential point from the point of view of Native policy, is that this form implied the recognition of the Native as a man fundamentally like ourselves. . . . They looked upon the Native, not as if he were merely a weaker creature to be kind and good to, but as one who has had a right, like the rest of us, to the development of his personality.

*The Race Problem in Africa: Merttens Lecture, 1931.*

THE FRIEND (PHILADELPHIA). *The White Problem.*

Of all the problems of colour, the white problem is the most difficult. The white man has been the chief bearer of much that is most precious in the modern world, but he has likewise been a constant trouble maker. . . . Too often a white man is known to his darker brothers over the earth, not as a bearer of good news, but as an aggressive and dominating intruder.

We are greatly concerned to-day over minority problems, but it seldom occurs to us that we constitute the worst minority problem of all. In our arrogance we seldom stop to think that we *are* a minority and that, as so often occurs when minorities exist, we are trouble breeders. . . . We do not know how the white problem is to be solved, but it seems clear that we are the only ones who *can* solve it. The majority of mankind, being so largely deprived of resources and instruments of power, can do very little about it. They can fight sporadically, but, for most part, ineffectively.



The problem of the dangerous white man cannot be solved except by generosity of spirit, by self-renunciation, and by a genuine sense of contrition, but when we say this we are talking the language of religion. Indeed, the white problem is so great that only a religious solution is possible. The worst problems must be attacked at the deepest levels.

*D.E.T. 16th March, 1944.*

REGINALD REYNOLDS, *English Quaker writer and traveller.*

Anybody who has ever studied the controversies on slavery up to the American Civil War will realise that the arguments used in its defence were those used now in favour of white supremacy in Africa and that this is particularly striking in the case of the theologians.

*Beware of Africans. 1955.*

A certain man, coming into a room where a number of people had been sitting for some hours, remarked that the room was stuffy.

The people sitting there were very annoyed at this remark. "How can you presume to judge," asked one man, "when you have only this minute come in?"

Another said: "It is always these people from outside who make this ill-formed criticism. Only those who have sat here for hours can possibly know whether the air is fresh or foul."

"It is just to keep out ignorant critics like you," said a third, "that we keep all the doors and windows shut."

So they threw the intruder out and bolted the door.  
(*id.*)



RALPH A. ROSE, *American Quaker, Secretary of the Mid-West Section Friends World Committee for Consultation.*

The Race Relations Committee of the American Friends Service Committee was formed in 1944 to plan a national program and to work closely with the Society of Friends and the various committees of the Yearly Meetings in the United States. When some two years ago it changed its name to 'Community Relations Committee' it was recognising the misuse of the term *race*. The problems faced by Friends and others in the United States do not arise out of inherent racial differences, but from the great variety of cultural and national backgrounds from which people come to live together in the close proximity of the modern urban community.

*American Friends and Race Relations.* 1954.

Friends have had their opportunities among the prejudiced as well as with the victims of prejudice. In the light of truth the prejudiced person is seen to be the victim of spiritual hunger or emotional maladjustment, and his prejudices the props which sustain his battered and embittered ego. As the little girl from the poor white family explained to her mother her deep unhappiness in seeing the only coloured family move out of her neighbourhood: "Now there is no one we can be better than!"



## CORPORATE WITNESS

*Yearly Meeting, Burlington, Pennsylvania, to Yearly Meeting, London. 1712.*

And now dear friends we impart unto you a concern which hath rested upon the minds of some of our brethren for many years touching the importing and having of negro slaves and detaining them and their posterity as such without any limitation or time of redemption from that condition. This matter was laid before this meeting many years ago and the thing in some degree discouraged, as may appear by a minute of our yearly meeting 1696, desiring all merchants and traders professing truth amongst us to write to their correspondents that they send no more negroes to be disposed of as above yet notwithstanding as our settlements increased other traders flocked in amongst us over whom we had no gospel authority and such have increased and multiplied negroes amongst us to the grief of divers friends whom we are willing to ease if the way might appear clear to the satisfaction of the general, and it being again last yearly meeting again moved and friends in divers other provinces being more concerned in it than these we thought it rather too weighty to come to a full conclusion therein. This meeting desires therefore your assistance by way of advice and counsel.

*London Y.M. to Pennsylvania Y.M. and others, 1713.*

We think meet to impart unto you as the sense of the yearly meeting, that the importing them from their native country and relations by Friends is not a commendable nor allowed practice and we hope

Friends have been careful to avoid the same, remembering the command of our Blessed Lord, 'Whatever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them.' Besides the multiplying of negro slavery among you may be of dangerous consequence considering the peaceable principles we profess and you are not unsensible of some instances that may be given of their barbarity when opportunity has seemed to present unto them, and we desire you to consider whether your children and white servants may not be injured by keeping such slaves, learning them a domineering spirit, and using them as their vassals extending cruelty to them at their pleasure, which to be sure ought to be avoided for they are human kind; and as the Lord hath been and is merciful to us he expects we should extend compassion to our fellow creatures.

*Pennsylvania Y.M. to London Y.M., 1714.*

We also kindly received your advice about negro slavery and we are one with you that the multiplying of them may be of a dangerous consequence, and therefore a law was made in Pennsylvania laying twenty pounds duty upon everyone imported there which last the Queen was pleased to sign; more we could heartily wish that a way might be found to stop the bringing more here, or at least that Friends may be less concerned in buying or selling of any that may be brought in, and hope for your assistance with the Government if any further law should be made discouraging the importation. We know not of any Friend amongst us that has any hand or concern in bringing any out of their own country and are of the same mind with you that that practice is not commendable nor allowable amongst Friends.



*Philadelphia Y.M. Epistle, 1754 (composed by John Woolman).*

How then can we, who have been concerned to publish the gospel of universal love and peace among mankind, be so inconsistent with ourselves as to purchase such who are prisoners of war, and thereby encourage this anti-Christian practice? . . . we entreat you in the bowels of gospel love, seriously to weigh the cause of detaining them in bondage.

(Drake)

*London Y.M., 1761.*

This Meeting taking into consideration the former advice of this Meeting particularly in 1727 and 1758 against dealing in Negroes and having reason to apprehend that divers under our name are concerned in this unchristian traffic, do recommend it earnestly to the care of Friends everywhere to discourage as much as in them lies a practice so repugnant to our Christian profession and to deal with all such as shall persevere in a conduct so reproachful to the Society and disown them if they desist not therefrom.

*London Y.M. Petition to Parliament, 1783.*

To the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament Assembled, the petition of the people called Quakers sheweth:

That your petitioners met in this their annual assembly having solemnly considered the state of the enslaved Negroes conceive themselves engaged in religious duty to lay the suffering situation of that unhappy people before you as a subject loudly calling for the humane interposition of the legislature.

Your petitioners regret, that a nation professing the Christian faith, should so far counteract the principles of humanity and justice, as by cruel treatment of this oppressed race, to fill their minds with prejudices against the mild and beneficent doctrines of the Gospel.

Under the countenance of the laws of this country, many thousands of these our fellow creatures, entitled to the natural rights of mankind, are held as personal property in cruel bondage, and your petitioners being informed that a Bill for the regulation of the African trade, is now before the House, containing a clause which restrains the officers of the African Company from exporting Negroes, your petitioners deeply affected with a consideration of the rapine, oppression and bloodshed, attending this traffic, humbly request that this restriction may be extended to all persons whomsoever; or that the House would grant such other relief in the premises, as in its wisdom may seem meet.

*London Y.M. Meeting for Sufferings, 1790.*

As a General Election for Members of Parliament is now approaching, we think it right to remind you of the Advices of the Yearly Meeting on that subject, and to urge a close attention thereto; and at this particular juncture earnestly entreat such Friends as are inclined to use their privilege of voting, carefully to enquire whether the Candidates for whom they intend to vote, have manifested a disposition to promote the continuance of the SLAVE TRADE. For it would be inconsistent with our principles to countenance, in any manner, the election of such as are known enemies of a testimony which we believe it our duty to bear to the world.

*Philadelphia Y.M. Meeting for Sufferings urges the U.S. Congress to abolish the slave trade. 1804.*

As the representatives of a large body of citizens, we apprehend we have a right by the Constitution to address you in terms of respect, and to claim your attention upon subjects of importance and interesting to the welfare and happiness of our country; upon this ground, but more especially from a sense of religious duty and obligation, we again come forward to plead the cause of our oppressed and degraded fellowmen of the African race, who by the opening afresh the traffic in the persons of men and by kidnapping and other disgraceful conduct, are brought under cruel bondage and oppressive slavery. We are not about to condemn all those who hold slaves, believing that there are many well-disposed men who hold those people by inheritance, and may not at present see their way to get rid of them, but it is with regret we observe there are many of another description. We are sensible that Congress are as yet restrained from applying an effectual remedy in this dark and gloomy business, but as exertions have been made and are making for opening this atrocious trade in places which we are informed you have legal power and authority to resist, we conceive it right to solicit your firm opposition to this enormity. We believe the testimony against slavery is advancing and will in time overcome all opposition. . . . Can it be supposed that the Almighty Creator who made of one blood all nations of the earth, beholds with indifference one part of his rational creatures, equally the objects of his love and mercy, held under oppression by another part. And is it not just and reasonable to fear that if the gentle language of his Spirit "let this people go" is not attended to, that he will by terrible things in righteousness evince



his sovereignty and sustain the character of a God of Justice who is no respecter of persons.

The temporal sufferings of this people will by the course of nature terminate in a few years, but what will be the lot of their oppressors? We wish the attention of all to the awful consequences of neglecting in time to hear the cries of the poor. . . .

*Othodox Yearly Meetings meeting in Baltimore, 1829.*

Although, as a religious society, we have cleared our hands of holding our fellowmen in bondage, yet as Christians and members of a community in which slavery exists to an enormous extent, we cannot divest ourselves of a tender feeling towards the subjects of this system of oppression and affecting degradation. The hardships which this poor people undergo, in having their just right to liberty and property violently withheld; abused as they are and evilly treated in various ways; and moreover being subjected to have the tenderest ties rent asunder by the internal slave trade which is carried on to the disgrace of a Christian-professing people are crying evils, and if not arrested must unquestionably involve our country in serious difficulties and distress. As advocates of universal righteousness and justice we should . . . embrace every opportunity for exposing the iniquity of the traffic . . . and for rightly preparing the way for their emancipation. Much remains to be done before this foul disgrace is removed from our land . . . we humbly trust that the cause of the oppressed is regarded by a merciful and just God; and as its advocates continue to labour with zeal and perseverance in the spirit of the gospel, we entertain no doubt that their labours will be blessed.

(Drake)



*London Y.M. Meetings for Suffering, 1834.*

In the warmth and freedom of brotherly love we entreat you fearlessly to take your stand upon the uncompromising righteousness of the law of Christ, to suffer no considerations of expediency, no apprehension of commercial or political difficulties, to divert you from your purpose; to assert that freedom, political and religious liberty to their full extent are the unalienable rights of slaves and free people of colour, equal with the white men; that they have an undoubted right to enjoy their freedom in the place where Providence has given them birth. (Drake)

*Baltimore Hicksite Y.M., 1839.*

A concern was also felt and expressed that we may not relax in our righteous testimony against slavery, but that we may continue to labour in the same spirit which actuated our forefathers, when they went forth under the influence of gospel love as mouths for the dumb, pleading the cause of the oppressed. But while this remains to be our earnest concern, we have believed it right affectionately to caution our members against entangling themselves in any manner with those associations which have sprung up in different parts of our country in relation to this subject, and which we fear will retard rather than promote the progress of this work. (Drake)

*London Meeting for Sufferings, 1839. An appeal to the inhabitants of Europe on slavery and the slave-trade. (Extracts.)*

In the warm feeling of Christian love, and with an earnest desire for the total extinction of slavery, and

the immediate abolition of the slave-trade throughout the world, we feel engaged very seriously to call the attention of the inhabitants of Europe to these subjects; and in the performance of our Christian duty, earnestly to plead the cause of the oppressed and deeply injured sons of Africa.

Multitudes of the human race have been kept in slavery, and hence the native energies of their minds have been prevented from showing themselves; the noble faculty of reason has been perverted instead of being cultivated, and they have been debarred from occupying their proper position in the human family. Slavery converts man into an article of merchandise, audaciously steps in between him and his Maker, interferes with his responsibilities to his Creator, and fearfully weakens the endearing relations of husband, parent and child, robs him of his moral usefulness on earth and goes far towards depriving him of all enjoyment in life on a higher scale than that of the brute creation. Indeed, such is the contaminating influence of man holding his fellowman in bondage, that its certain tendency is to deaden the moral feelings, and to blind the judgment in the perception of right and wrong.

The surest remedy for such evils is to receive and act upon the principles of the Christian religion. Our Lord himself, the great Christian lawgiver, whose precepts, if we would bear his name, we are bound implicitly to follow, has declared "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." If we fulfil this law as individuals, and as nations, slavery must cease; no man, no people would willingly be reduced to slavery, therefore those who keep this law cannot enslave others.

Of all the records of cruelty and wickedness which the history of mankind presents, there is, we believe,

none which exhibits a more dreadful amount of crime and consequent misery than is furnished by the African slave-trade and its attendant horrors.

The effectual remedy for the evils of the slave-trade is the utter extinction of slavery: close the market and the supply will cease. . . . Let this great principle, the extinction of slavery, be ever kept in view, and acted upon; at the same time let the powers and the talents of Europe be employed in the promotion of a just and peaceful and legitimate commerce in Africa. Help those vast countries which have been desolated by the slave-trade, by encouraging the productions of the earth with which a bounteous Providence has richly furnished them, which are peculiarly adapted to a tropical climate, and which might then be more abundantly supplied to the inhabitants of Europe for their comfort and enjoyment. As some compensation for the incalculable injuries inflicted upon them, introduce among them the habits of domestic peace and security and civilised life; but above all, promote among them the free spread of the glorious gospel of life and salvation, that comes by Jesus Christ.

*Indiana Yearly Meeting, 1841.*

As the subject of slavery is producing great excitement in our land we again tenderly advise our dear friends not to join in association with those who do not profess to wait for divine direction in such important concerns; lest if we overact the part called for at our hands, we injure the righteous cause, and suffer loss ourselves; comparable to what is said of Ephraim of old "he mixed himself among the people", "strangers have devoured his strength and he knoweth it not."

(Jones)



*London Yearly Meeting, 1858. An Address on the conduct of Christian and civilised nations towards those less civilised and enlightened. (Extracts.)*

No one race is exempt from the effects of the fall; none can claim an exclusive right to the privileges of the Gospel. Whether a man be a Jew or a Greek, a Saxon or a Celt, a Hindu or a Hottentot, he is alike an object of the universal love of Him, who "hath made of one blood all nations of men" and who in Christ Jesus, has proclaimed for all the message of his free salvation.

Assuredly, then, it is a duty incumbent upon all, and especially upon those who bear the hallowed name of our one Lord and Redeemer, *to act towards man, everywhere, however uncivilised or enlightened with that respect, with that consideration and love which are due to our nature and to our common hopes.* To treat man with disdain because his colour differs from our own, is a reproach cast upon Him who made him. It is of the very essence of Christianity to cherish feelings of kindness towards all who, with souls no less precious than our own, are born for eternity; and who, equally with ourselves, may become heirs of Heaven. They are not to be looked down upon as inferior beings, born to be oppressed, pillaged, defrauded, incapable of the feelings or aspirations of men. They may be weak, impulsive, revengeful. But these failings are by no means peculiar to them. Even they who boast of the privileges of European civilisation are sometimes also weak and foolish. . . . If in anything we enjoy a superiority, to what is it to be ascribed but the pure bounty of God? Let their situation then awaken, not our contempt, but our compassion. Let us often reflect what we ourselves should have been under like circumstances, and shew forth our

Christianity with that genuine courage, which consists not in returning evil for evil, but in the unflinching exercise of truth, justice and mercy; which would do or suffer anything, rather than swerve from the eternal law of right.

*London Yearly Meeting, 1866. Report of an adjourned Meeting for Sufferings. (Extract.)*

It is an affecting thought, that the number of slaves still held in professedly Christian countries, probably amounts to about four millions. We hope that Friends will still continue to cultivate an interest in a subject in which the Society has so long and so successfully laboured. There are still ways open by which Friends may promote these Christian endeavours. It appears to us that a deep responsibility rests upon the Society; it may still exert a large amount of influence, and it is our earnest desire that it may continue its efforts in this cause until the sin of slavery and the slave-trade shall no longer attach to nations professing the name of Christ.

*London Yearly Meeting, 1935.*

The relation of the white to the weaker races is, judged by the numbers involved, perhaps the biggest world problem; not with the same immediate urgency as that of peace and war, but more continually present. This problem goes far beyond slavery or forced labour; it includes not only the helping of the very backward peoples, but the sympathetic understanding of the more educated. We recognise that it is one which makes a peculiar appeal to us with our belief in the spirit of God dwelling in every human being at whatever stage of development.

*London Yearly Meeting, 1936.*

We have been reminded in vivid manner of the extent to which we are all dependent upon the work of the native races. The more advanced peoples of the world have made great contributions to the life and advancement of the more backward. But the ruling factor in the situation is the economic dependence of the world upon the products of native labour. This is everywhere leading to exploitation, as has been shown by reference to Abyssinia, to the drastic limitations of the native franchise in South Africa, and to the fear that our own Government may prejudice native races by restrictions on their ownership and use of land.

We recognise that the subject is full of difficulties, but it remains our conviction that a native should be entitled to rise in the political and industrial sphere to the highest place which his character enables him to reach. In order that these human rights may be established, it is necessary to look to the power of public opinion and if public opinion is to be stirred there must be persistent work from an increasing number of those who recognise their debt to our more backward fellow men. We trust that Friends everywhere may play their part in this service.

*World Conference of Friends, 1938. Message from Inter-racial justice section, to all Yearly Meetings.*

Dear Friends, The section of the World Conference of Friends Meeting at Philadelphia in September 1937, studying methods of achieving racial justice, directed that a letter be written to all Yearly Meetings on its behalf calling attention to the grievous denial of our Quaker principles involved in our failure to extend to all God's children full recognition of that relationship on account of race.



Throughout the world we have abundant evidence of the tragic effect of "man's inhumanity to man" and of the rancours which are storing up trouble for the future because of the white man's exploitation of the coloured races, as well as the cruel persecutions of Jews and Strangers-within-our-Gates, whom we call foreigners. In the United States the insult to proud and cultured peoples of the Orient involved in our Exclusion Act is of special significance.

To Friends among the Churches the call to a service of love at all times comes with peculiar insistence and intensity. We would speak to that of God in every man. Must we not, then take special care that our voice is not made harsh with man-made discords? Courage and faith are required of us and above all things love unfeigned if we would be heard above the clamor of those who follow the lust for power or the lures of gain.

We cannot join in the struggle at a comfortable distance. It is upon our doorstep, in our own homes, in the air we breathe and in the clothes we wear. The faithfulness of the Quakers of the olden time, who denied themselves the beauty of blue cloths and the sweetness of sugar cane, because the dyes and the sugar were made with slave labor, shames us as we think of our easy, though perhaps troubled acceptance of things as they are in what we call our complicated life today—complicated, yes, but right is still right and wrong is wrong.

Once Friends responded to the challenge of the iniquity of the slave system of physical bondage brutalizing both master and slave. Shall we be found less sensitive to the agony of men and women who, with their tender children, find themselves derided, disdained, despised, exploited and feared. Though their glorious contributions to our common life are

greedily grasped, the credit is withheld because of race and colour.

Knowledge of such conditions in which thousands, yes millions of our fellows exist is easily obtained if we will but overcome our indifference and instead of asking what the effect of right action will be upon our financial interest or social position, ask the effect upon our spiritual life, of failure to act generously, justly, or even honestly in our relations with our brother.

*Friends Conference on Peace and Reconstruction.*  
(Wilmington, Ohio, 1942.)

It is abundantly clear that Friends should be zealous in removing discrimination and prejudice within our own Meetings, schools, businesses and other organizations. It is our belief that in a Christian Society there is no place for prejudice or discrimination because of race or other minority status. We recommend, therefore, working with all minority groups for the fullest realization of civil liberties, for the enlargement of opportunities, for education and employment, for the betterment of conditions under which we all must live. We must not slacken our efforts until the full fruits of democracy are placed within the reach of every group in this country.

*London Yearly Meeting, 1944. (Extract from the report of the Committee on Slavery and the Protection of Native Races.)*

Our witness against slavery has developed increasingly into concern regarding the exploitation of the coloured man, whether by forced labour, inadequate provision of land, the colour-bar (industrial, social and political) and the failure to combat his

poverty and ignorance and help him on the way to self-government.

*American Friends Service Committee. Some Quaker Approaches to the Race Problem, 1946.*

No task that lies before the world today is so fundamental or so urgent as that of converting the brotherhood of man from a respected phrase to a living practice. The achievement of harmony and good feeling as well as economic and social justice among people of diverse races and creeds lies at the very root of peace. Without it even the best planned international political organization will rest on shaky foundations.

The time is short. Though thoughtful Americans are increasingly aware of the dangerous gap between our professions of democracy and our actual treatment of certain minority groups, we cannot afford to wait for change to come through a slow gathering of momentum. The resentment of those who are discriminated against is rising, and the determination of selfish and prejudiced interests is hardening. An eruption of force would bring tragedy. Change through growth in understanding, through voluntary association and active goodwill must be accelerated.

*Philadelphia General Meeting, 1949. Statement on Segregation (extracts).*

We believe that a society motivated by religious and democratic ideals has no place for (racial) discrimination. . . . While we are encouraged by signs of a growing practice of integration and inclusiveness in many Friendly institutions, we must face the extent to which segregation still exists in others. . . . Even as earlier Friends set themselves to eliminate slavery



from their membership, we in our generation set ourselves to overcome the evils of segregation, hoping to enter as they did upon a new and unguessed richness of human fellowship, new and untried depths of the Divine resources and companionship.

*London Yearly Meeting, 1951. Extract from the report of the Race Relations Committee.*

We are deeply concerned that Friends' attitude to the whole problem of racial antagonism should be raised from that of a vague desire for reconciliation to the awareness of a vital need for active peace-making, and for the cleansing of the very basis of our thinking about individuals, as well as peoples, whose background is alien to our own. The idea of *superiority* of culture must give place to that of *difference* of culture; and while we must be ready to lead in those ways which we have proved to be good, we must be ready also to yield pride of place in the other man's own country.

While we can, and indeed must, be alive to great wrongs still being inflicted on subject and helpless peoples, no useful purpose will be served by mere condemnation, and it behoves Friends, because of their ancient testimonies, to be in the forefront where openings occur for the setting right of these wrongs. We believe in the equality of all men before God. Our work is to see that there is equality in the sight of men.

*Third World Conference of Friends, Oxford, 1952. Extract from report of Race Relations Group.*

What is to be the attitude of Friends to this world-wide problem? Although we must confess our inability to unite on methods we are in a position to make the following categorical affirmations:

1. We deny any scientific basis for the myth of racial superiority or inferiority.

2. We consider ourselves and all men the children of one loving Father, and therefore brothers one with another.

3. We believe in the dignity of the human personality.

4. Accepting as we must individual difference of capacity and of intelligence among members of all nations and so-called races, we nevertheless recognise that all men deserve equal opportunity to develop to the limit of their individual ability.

Such difference of opinion as exists among us is therefore limited to the speed with which we should seek to reach our goal of world brotherhood. We recognise the necessity of constant pressure to effect the social changes we desire, but we tend to exert that pressure in different ways . . . some Friends will maintain a quiet, steady pressure towards racial equality. Others are called to force the issue. We have been challenged to recognise that our testimony demands forthright action for social justice. We refuse to admit that the problem is too great. Rather, we acknowledge our own prejudices and insensitivity, resolve to try to overcome them . . . and remember that with God's help all things are possible.

*London Yearly Meeting Minute 25, 1953.*

Emergent Africa presents an inescapable moral challenge to the Christian conscience, and there is a grave danger that African distrust of white politicians may extend to a distrust of the whole Christian Church. We face perhaps the greatest ethnological problem of all time and we have to confess that our understanding of the situation is lamentably weak. We are uneasy at

the privileges of white people, and are disturbed at the conditions brought about by rapid industrial development. We must face the realities, good as well as bad, and remember how we are linked with Friends in Africa, particularly with that small company of Friends in South Africa who are facing the issues at much closer quarters, and who need our prayerful support in all their efforts towards reconciliation.

*London Yearly Meeting. Race Relations Conference, 1954 (extracts from minutes).*

Loving ones neighbour as oneself is the prime duty laid upon us by Jesus. This is an essentially personal matter and herein lies our hope. Ills in the body politic cannot stand in the face of individual revolt against them. Racial discrimination arises because fundamentally it is easier to see a man as a stranger rather than as a brother if his skin is of a different colour. The stranger tends to be feared rather than loved, and it must be remembered that fears engendered by such differences are not always imaginary. They can be resolved only in so far as relationships between man and man, of whatever race, are conceived in terms of a constant realisation that the members of one race are the children not of the members of another race but the children of God. Against this, imperialism, exploitation and even paternalism cannot stand.

We are agreed that the attempt to give practical expression to the desire to serve (in Africa) rather than to lead requires great humility, great wisdom and much more knowledge than we possess. In particular we have to learn that readiness to serve involves willingness to receive as well as willingness to give.



No political solution is possible until the pre-supposition that the Christian ethic and democracy are synonymous with White rule is given up. We are asked to declare in no uncertain terms that we Friends reject this identification, and that the triumph of the Christian ethic itself is bound up with such rejection.

We are satisfied that, except on the foundation of sound personal relationships, all building is vain. And as the opportunities of fostering these come to all of us, wherever we live none of us need feel debarred from doing something fundamental towards the solution of this complex problem.

In those areas for which we have direct political responsibility, the situation is comparatively easy. Among administrative officers, both in this country and in the field, there is an acceptance without any bitterness of the position that the British Colonial Officer is on the way out. . . . Much more difficult is the situation where white settlers have an economic stake in the countries in which they have settled. The only ultimate answer is that for those who accept Christian principles there can be no guaranteed material security but that does not exonerate this country from the duty of doing what it can to ease the blow, as was done in the past in the matter of compensation to expropriated slave owners.

How can we build up a structure that will take up the responsibility of co-operation as the responsibility of dominance diminishes? Towards this the provision of education in a wide sense is of much more value than money payments. And the quality of the persons who go out is at least as important as the amount of money spent.

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