

**QUAKER APPROACHES TO QUEER:  
GAY AND LESBIAN INCLUSION  
IN THE LIBERAL TRADITION  
OF THE RELIGIOUS  
SOCIETY OF  
FRIENDS**

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by  
Brian T. Blackmore  
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Examining Committee Members:

Dr. Rebecca Alpert, Advisory Chair, Department of Religion  
Dr. Laura Levitt, Department of Religion  
Dr. Terry Rey, Department of Religion  
Dr. David Harrington Watt, External Member, Haverford College

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines the contributions of Quakers, specifically from the liberal tradition of the Religious Society of Friends, to the advancement of lesbian, gay, and bisexual rights in the United States between 1946-1973. In this period, Quakers established the first social service organization for gay people in the United States, wrote the first public and positive evaluation of homosexuality from a religious perspective, and composed the first public statement in support of bisexuality from a religious assembly. A critical study of Quaker pamphlets, periodicals, lectures, business minutes, and personal papers from this era reveals that Quaker support of gay liberation was exercised through experiments in criminal justice reform, challenges to Christian moral codes, and advocacy for change within the Religious Society of Friends. The findings presented in this project seek to broaden our understanding of gay rights history by showing that Quakers played a pivotal role in the emergence and development of the gay rights movement in the United States.

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## INTRODUCTION

*It is as simple as a syllogism . . . there is that of God in every human, and because sexuality is an innate part of the human being, then there must surely be that of God in human sexuality . . . The great challenge of being a Friend has always been for me that only one of us may hear, each one for his or her own self, God speaking to us. No other human being can overhear these messages, nor our response to them, nor can any other human being respond to them on our behalf; and so a double burden is laid on each one of us alone—to hear and to respond.<sup>1</sup>*

-Mary S. Calderone, 1973

In 1977, the Conference of Friends in the Americas (CFA) was the first Quaker gathering attended by Friends from North, Central, and South America. It brought thousands of Quakers to Wichita, Kansas, from the four major branches of American Quakerism, represented by delegations from The Evangelical Friends Alliance, the Friends General Conference (FGC), Friends United Meeting (FUM), and Conservative Friends.<sup>2</sup> A few months before the conference, Gary Miller, a member of San Francisco Monthly Meeting, wrote a letter to the Oversight Committee of the CFA on behalf of the Friends Committee on Gay Concerns (CGC), a national network of gay Friends in North America that had formed in the early 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Miller's letter featured a series of requests: a table in the conference's exhibition hall for CGC members to display their literature about gay rights, an affinity space for gay Friends to worship, and an event in the conference program, open to all, for a discussion about gay concerns. Many members on

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<sup>1</sup> Calderone, Mary Steichen. *Human Sexuality and the Quaker Conscience*. Friends General Conference, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> Roe, Jon. "Historic Conference of Quakers to Be in Wichita." *Wichita Eagle*. 23 June 1977, 1C.

<sup>3</sup> Fager, Chuck. "Quaking Over Gay Rights." *A Friendly Letter Blog*. 1 July 2019. <https://afriendlyletter.com/quaking-over-gay-rights-kicked-in-the-head-in-wichita/> Accessed 25 June 2023.

the CFA Oversight Committee, who had carefully planned the CFA for months, opposed any changes to the program.

Miller did not receive a response and his request for formal recognition of gay and lesbian people was seemingly ignored, until a mere few days prior to the start of the conference, the General Chairman of the Oversight Committee, Donald Moon, received another letter from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Committee on Civil Rights for Homosexuals (PYMCCH). At that time, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) was the largest and most influential Yearly Meeting in America.<sup>4</sup> The letter sent to Moon in support of the gay Quakers was printed beneath the weighty moniker of the PYM letterhead.

The *Wichita Eagle* received a tip and published the headline: "Gays Ask Spot in Quaker Meeting."<sup>5</sup> The paper teased at the tensions between the PYMCCH and the Oversight Committee, reporting that: "while the conference will deal with the rights of women and blacks, there is nothing scheduled on gay rights." The Oversight Committee agreed to meet with representatives of the CGC the day before the conference attendees were scheduled to arrive. At that meeting, support for the gay Friends gained momentum, but some of the committee members threatened to leave. In order to maintain unity, the Oversight Committee formed a subcommittee of five Friends with various competing views on homosexuality who agreed to have a public conversation about gay rights during the conference, as Miller and the CGC had requested. When the administration at

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<sup>4</sup> Most Quaker religious communities in the liberal tradition of Quakerism are called "Monthly Meetings," named after the tradition of holding monthly business meetings. A Yearly Meeting is a coalition of Monthly Meetings, typically found in the same region as one another, who meet once a year.

<sup>5</sup> "Gays Ask Spot in Quaker Meeting." *Wichita Eagle*. 23 June 1977, 8C.

Friends University, where CFA was being held, responded to this decision with disapproval about the Friends conducting a discussion about homosexuality on their campus, the Oversight Committee relocated the subcommittee's public discussion to a large church nearby. Midway through the week-long conference, over one hundred people watched an unprecedented conversation among Friends. Never before had Quakers from such a wide spectrum of traditions talked about gay and lesbian people in a public forum.

The *Wichita Eagle* reported on the event under the headline "Quakers Try Tolerance at Gay Seminar." The newspaper tells us that a mother spoke about her experience raising a gay daughter and pleaded for Quakers to develop greater understanding about homosexuals. "What is the purpose of this meeting?" asked a Friend in the audience. "If the purpose of this meeting is to decide how we are going to treat them, let's treat them like people." A young man retorted: "Friend, it's not 'them,' it's us." Another young Friend said she had both homosexual and heterosexual experiences and was looking for guidance from the Quaker community to help her figure out "which path to follow."

Voices of support for gay and lesbian people in the audience reflected the views typically expressed at the time (and still today) by Friends in the liberal stream of the Quaker tradition. Liberal Quakerism is characterized by its low christology, resistance to biblical inerrancy, and quiet 'unprogrammed' worship. By 1977, there was also a consensus among liberal Friends to support gay and lesbian people. Evangelical Friends tend to express a more biblically informed and christo-centric worldview than liberal Friends. Evangelical Friends also conduct their church services in a manner that more

closely resembles other evangelical Christian traditions, which in themselves are quite diverse, but do not tend to dedicate time for extended silence. Additionally, evangelical Friends' church services are led by a pastor, meanwhile, liberal Friends reject the practice of hiring clergy. Opinions about gay and lesbian sexuality vary among American evangelical Friends today, but most evangelical Friends organizations have rejected gay and lesbian sexuality as inconsistent with Christian teachings. In 1977, the evangelical Friends on the subcommittee explained to the audience at the church in Wichita that they had threatened to leave the conference if a conversation about homosexuality became incorporated into the official program.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the intensity of this debate, the *Wichita Eagle* reported that the conference ended with harmonious relations between all the various branches of Friends.<sup>7</sup> Quaker scholar Chuck Fager claims the Evangelical Friends felt their interpretation of the Bible was respected and the liberal Friends felt that they were able to openly express their concerns. The CGC was not allowed to host a table in the exhibit hall or worship as an affinity group, but they did get the public recognition Miller had originally requested. The rest of the CFA proceeded without interruption and the controversy did not result in any apparent schisms within the Quaker world, however, all of the various traditions and major associations of American Quakerism—FGC, FUM, and EFI—would not gather together again in one place until the fifth World Conference of Friends almost in 1991.

In the years leading up to the Wichita Conference, Friends in the liberal stream of Quakerism were becoming exponentially more inclusive of gay and lesbian people in

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<sup>6</sup> Goodwin, Dave. "Quakers Try Tolerance at Gay Seminar." *Wichita Eagle*. 30 June 1977.

<sup>7</sup> Dawson, Gret. "Silent Joy Ends Quaker Session." *Wichita Eagle*. 2 July 1977.

their communities and more substantial in their support of gay rights. The history of how liberal Quakers became an open and affirming religious tradition for gay and lesbian people in the mid-twentieth century is not well-known, within or outside of the Religious Society of Friends.<sup>8</sup> Most scholarly accounts of twentieth century Quaker history do not describe the development of liberal Quaker views on gay and lesbian people during this period, and most scholarly works about gay rights history do not examine the important influence and involvement of Quakers in the emergence and development of the gay rights movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the field of LGBTQ+ religious studies, there is not a single text devoted to a comprehensive understanding of how the Quaker tradition has historically, culturally, and theologically related to gay and lesbian sexuality. Quaker writing about gay and lesbian sexuality has been featured in Quaker pamphlets and Quaker magazines, and an anthology of lectures given at LGBTQ+ Friends' gatherings between 1977-1993 was published under the title *Each of Us Inevitable*, but very little has been written for readers outside of the Quaker establishment.<sup>9</sup> A chapter on "Quakers and Sexuality" in the *Oxford Handbook on Quaker Studies* is a notable exception, highlighting important events concerning the acceptance of gay and lesbian people in the Quaker tradition and giving a comprehensive

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<sup>8</sup> Liberal Friends relate to and differ from Evangelical and Conservative Friends in their ways of worship and their theology. Liberal Friends and Conservative Friends practice silent "unprogrammed" worship, but have different views on soteriology and the authority of the Bible. In counter-distinction to Conservative Friends, liberal Friends tend to perceive greater authority in truth gleaned from the Inner Light rather than the Bible and they do not profess a belief in Christ's power to remove sin. Evangelical Friends tend to express a similar theology and similar approaches to the Bible as Conservative Friends, but Evangelical Friends practice "programmed" worship, which often includes a sermon from a minister and hymn singing. A more detailed explanation of the distinctions between Quaker traditions can be found in Dandelion, Ben Pink. *An Introduction to Quakerism*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Leuze Robert et al. *Each of Us Inevitable: Some Keynote Addresses Given at Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns and Friends General Conference Gatherings 1977-1993*. Rev. expanded ed. Friends for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer Concerns 2003.

description of the diversity of Quaker views about gay and lesbian sexuality. Its account of the role that Quakers played in the advancement of gay rights, however, is incomplete.<sup>10</sup> Another important work by Angell, Fager, and Souza examines the turmoil and schisms resulting from debates about LGBTQ+ inclusion among evangelical Friends in the Midwest and Pacific Northwest regions of the United States, but does not address the evolution of views in among liberal Friends. David Blamires's *Pushing at the Frontiers of Change: A Memoir of Quaker Involvement with Homosexuality* gives a detailed account of his involvement, with other Friends, in gay rights activism in the United Kingdom from the 1960s through the 1990s, but a study of liberal Quaker involvement in gay rights movements in the United States has not yet been written either as a memoir or as an academic project.<sup>11</sup> Notwithstanding these important contributions to scholarship and the Quaker world, no writing to date has analyzed changes in liberal Quaker theology and ethics with the intention of better understanding how and why Quaker views about gay and lesbian sexuality in the liberal stream of the Quaker tradition changed over a time.

This project will show that Quaker involvement in gay liberation during the mid-twentieth century deserves much greater recognition in a variety of fields, including American religious history, queer religious history, and LGBTQ+ studies. A series of highlights from the story of Quakers and gay rights in this era helps to punctuate the importance of this untold history: Quakers opened the first social service organization for

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<sup>10</sup> Doan, Petra L., and Kamphausen, Elizabeth P. "Quakers and Sexuality" *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, ed. by Angell, Stephen Ward, and Dandelion, Ben Pink. First ed. Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Blamires, David. *Pushing at the Frontiers of Change: A Memoir of Quaker Involvement with Homosexuality*. London, England: Quaker Books, 2012.

gay people in the United States in 1946; a group of British Quakers were the first religious group to profess a positive and public evaluation of gay and lesbian sexuality in 1963; a spontaneous gathering of Friends at Ithaca College during the Friends General Conference annual gathering in 1972 were the first to write a statement in support of bisexual people from a religious assembly; the first happy gay couple in an American novel were Quakers; gay rights leaders in the 1960s and 1970s were trained by Quakers in nonviolent resistance; some influential gay rights leaders were Quakers themselves; a few important gay rights organizations operated out of Quaker owned properties; and Friends were the only religious group to participate in the first gay pride parade. This dissertation is the first scholarly attempt to understand these events in constellation with one another. Together, they reveal the important role Quakers played in challenging Christian moral codes and the legalized criminalization of gay and lesbian people during the mid-twentieth century.

### **Quaker Views of Gay and Lesbian People**

There are two common misconceptions about Quakers which interfere with developing a more informed understanding of their views on gay and lesbian people. One powerful misconception about Quakers is that they are culturally conservative, too often confused with Mennonites and the Amish. While there are historical connections and theological affinities between Quakers and these groups, there are also many historical, cultural, theological, and liturgical differences. Most liberal Friends do not wear plain clothing, follow austerity rules for daily behavior, or profess biblical inerrancy. Quakers also resent being associated with the image of an older man in a black hat with gray hair. The familiar image featured on the packaging of products—like Quaker Oats—that are

made by companies which misappropriate the image of Friends in order to benefit from the good reputation of the Quakers as honest business people. Contrary to many assumptions, most companies with “Quaker” in their brand name have little or no connection to the religious tradition of Friends. Another misleading characterization of Quakers, expressed by both people outside of the Quaker establishment and Quakers themselves, is the assumption that Quakers have an essential drive to protect oppressed groups. This assumption is often shaped by an informed understanding that *some* Quakers were involved in anti-slavery, women’s suffrage, and the civil rights movement. This view of Quakers as a whole, however, is misleading because it is historically inaccurate and reinforces the notion that Quakers have an essential propensity for acting on behalf of oppressed peoples.

The Quaker axiom that there is ‘that of God in everyone’ indicates that Quakers should affirm lesbian and gay partnerships, but this is a devotional claim which is disrupted by the fact that Quakers around the world express the entire spectrum of views about gay and lesbian sexuality. The vast majority of Quakers in the world are evangelical Friends which hold affiliations in Yearly Meetings that have communicated ambivalence about supporting gay and lesbian people or condemned homosexuality as inconsistent with Christian teachings. In 2012, Friends Church Kenya—the umbrella organization for the largest population of Quakers in the world—released a press statement which stated that “God’s attitude towards the vile behaviour of homosexuality is clear . . . . Homosexuals are those who have deliberately deviated from what is normal sexual practices as God intended it to be.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Friends Church Kenya. “Quakers and Homosexuality Press Statement.” December 2012.

Debates about gay and lesbian belonging in the Quaker religion have destabilized many historic Quaker associations, at times leading to their dissolution. In 2015, West Hill Friends Meeting was formally “released” by Northwest Yearly Meeting (NWYM) for marrying a lesbian couple and recognizing the spiritual gifts of gay and lesbian Friends. Two years later, several other Monthly Meetings in the area with LGBT-affirming views voluntarily split from NWYM to form the Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting (SCYM). In its first Epistle, SCYM Friends declared: “We are led by the Spirit to commit ourselves to recognizing the full participation of LGBTQ+ people in all aspects of the life of the new yearly meeting.”<sup>3</sup> Wilmington Yearly Meeting’s membership dwindled and the North Carolina Friends Meeting (FUM) was dissolved entirely over tensions between Friends concerning homosexuality. Some individual meetings have expressed dissent with the official views of their Yearly Meeting but retained their memberships, while others refuse to be affiliated with Quaker organizations which express opposing views. When the FUM minuted a stance against homosexuality in 1988 and formalized this stance in a Personnel Policy in 1991, some Yearly Meetings with dual affiliations in the FGC and FUM maintained their affiliations with both organizations and others changed course.<sup>13</sup> In 2005, the Baltimore Yearly Meeting decided to maintain its dual affiliation but suspended its membership contributions to FUM, and in 2010 the Southeastern Yearly Meeting left FUM entirely.

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<sup>13</sup> Quakers in the Liberal tradition of Friends tend to shy away from pronouncing official doctrines or creeds, and instead they demonstrate their stance on particular issues by writing and communally approving a “minute” (singular) during their Meeting for business. The end of this project is marked by the years in which the largest Yearly Meetings in the U.S. began “minuting” their support of gay and lesbian people. Discussions during Quaker business meetings are also recorded in “minutes” (plural).

While opposition to gay and lesbian sexuality is predominant among Evangelical Friends, such as in Kenya, Quaker views of lesbian and gay people are generally positive in liberal Quaker communities in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the U.K. In 2004, American liberal Friends demonstrated their support in a statement from FGC: “Our experience has been that our Gatherings and Central Committee work have been immeasurably enriched over the years by the full participation and Spirit-guided leadership of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends. We will never go back to silencing those voices or suppressing those gifts.”<sup>10</sup> The Canadian Yearly Meeting allows local Monthly Meetings to make their own decisions about same-sex marriages; however, the group stated in 2003 that they support civil marriage for same-sex couples and the right of gay parents to raise children.<sup>14</sup> Australian Quakers have spoken out against discrimination towards lesbian and gay people since 1975, and the first Australian Quaker gay marriage was celebrated in 2007. Quakers in the UK might rightfully claim the longest continuous history of any Christian group in demonstrating a public affirmation of gay and lesbian sexuality. In 1963, a group of eleven British Friends published *Towards a Quaker View of Sex* (TQVS) and amazed the world by proclaiming that homosexuality was entirely congruent with Christian morality.<sup>15</sup> In 1988, British Friends formally supported gay and lesbian people by conducting celebrations of same-sex partnerships. More recently, British Friends led the way in a faith-based movement in

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<sup>14</sup> Canadian Yearly Meeting. Faith and Practice. Ottawa, Ont: Canadian Yearly Meeting, 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Friends Home Service Committee. *Towards a Quaker View of Sex: An Essay by a Group of Friends*. London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1963.

2009 that successfully put pressure on the British Parliament to pass legislation in support of same-sex marriage.<sup>16</sup>

### **Focus and Scope**

Thus far I have described the diversity of views about gay and lesbian sexuality in the Quaker world to provide context, but an examination of Quaker views in all the various traditions of Quakerism through the course of the religion's entire history is beyond the scope of this particular project. Rather, what follows is an account of how Quakers in the liberal tradition of Quakerism endeavored to create a sense of belonging for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in the Quaker faith as well as advocate for gay rights during the mid-twentieth century.

The period between the late 1940s and early 1970s is particularly significant, because this is when we see the greatest transformation in liberal Quaker opinion about homosexuals (the most common term for gay and lesbian people at the time). In the late 1940s, most homosexual Quakers lived in the closet for fear of imprisonment, eviction, public ignominy, or loss of employment. None of the Yearly Meetings had yet minuted their support of gay and lesbian people or tasked committees with supporting gay rights. Both during and immediately following World War II, liberal Quakers encouraged young men and women to seek monogamous heterosexual marriages and they expressed discontent with talk related to homosexuality. For example, in 1948, the *Phoenix*, the student newspaper at Swarthmore college, an elite Quaker school, published an article supporting the Kinsey report's claim that gay sex was a more common experience than

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<sup>16</sup> An outline of Quaker inclusion of gay and lesbian people across many different Quaker traditions can be found in Blackmore, Brian. "A Short History of Quaker Inclusion of Gay and Lesbian People." *The Quaker World*, edited by C. Wess Daniels and Rhiannon Grant. Routledge, 2023, pp. 368-375.

had previously been known. The President of the school issued a cease and desist order on the newspaper, claiming the article “violated the canons of good taste.”<sup>17</sup> While no action was taken against the student editor of the paper, who had already graduated from the college and was retiring from his role as editor by the time the article was published, this event still illustrates how vociferously talk about gay sex was prohibited in the Quaker world during the 1940s.

In large part due to the Kinsey report, but also in response to the rising visibility of homosexuals in popular culture and the growing strength of homosexual communities in cities after World War II, the figure of the homosexual was becoming more legible in American society. At the same time, the medical and psychiatric establishment was developing new methods for diagnosing and treating homosexuality. Freud’s psychoanalytic theory had convinced the public that social deviance was rooted in psycho-sexual dysfunctions and monogamous heterosexual partnerships indicated healthy psycho-sexual development. While psychiatrists looked for a cure, the courts and law enforcement sought to protect citizens from the ‘indecent’ of homosexuality by developing new laws and imprisoning people for their sexuality at rates that were unprecedented in American history. The churches were also developing new strategies for condemning homosexuals. The first time the word “homosexual” appeared in an English-language Bible was in 1946, giving homophobic streams of American Christianity a clearer target. Two words used by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, whose meanings are difficult to interpret, but most likely meant something like “effeminate” and “abusers of themselves with mankind” respectively, had been combined

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<sup>17</sup> “Swarthmore Press Silenced For View on Kinsey Report.” *The Harvard Crimson*. 14 July 1948.

in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible into a singular term: the “homosexual.” Gradually, but also somewhat rapidly, church officials began more often associating the figure of the homosexual with other passages from the Bible, including the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, two verses from Leviticus, and a letter from Paul to the Romans.<sup>18</sup> In the 1940s, homosexuality was a sickness, a crime, and a sin.

It was within this historical context, at the confluence of an emerging homosexual identity and the merciless repression of homosexuals in the 1940s, that a few Quakers in New York City decided to take the first steps by anyone in the United States towards protecting homosexuals from cruel laws which almost guaranteed their imprisonment. Their approach was primarily psychiatric, not so much seeking to cure gay people of their sexuality but rather help gay men avoid arrest for seeking sex in public restrooms, parks, and movie theaters. The first experiment among Friends in support of gay rights rejected the notion that homosexuality was a crime, but perpetuated the idea that homosexuality was a psychological disorder and avoided addressing the problem of homosexuality as sin. The primary objective of the Quakers was to help young men, many of them traumatized by World War II, from facing jail time which could also result in loss of employment, public disgrace, and estrangement from friends and relatives. Their experiment was quite successful, but short-lived.

Quaker support for homosexuals/gay and lesbian people would lie dormant for most of the 1950s and into the early 1960s. Most gay Quakers at this time were in the closet and did not speak openly about their sexuality. The atomic era ideal of the monogamous heterosexual marriage deeply influenced Quaker approaches to

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<sup>18</sup> White, Heather Rachelle. *Reforming Sodom: Protestants and the Rise of Gay Rights*. University of North Carolina Press 2015, pp. 1-3.

relationships and family making. The mass firing of gay federal employees, also known as the ‘lavender scare,’ suggested to Americans that homosexuals were inherently unpatriotic and untrustworthy. When the sexuality of gay Friends became public knowledge in the 1950s, liberal Quakers responded with reprobation and punishment. In 1954, the first happy gay couple in an American novel were portrayed as Quakers, however, the community of Friends connected to the couple in the text are unable to fully respect their love and sexual intimacy. The story of Quakers and gay rights starts earlier than one might expect, but lies fallow for more than a decade.

In 1963, a group of eleven British Friends catalyzed a new era in Quaker discourse about sexuality with the publication of *Towards a Quaker View of Sex* (TQVS), the first public and positive evaluation of gay and lesbian sexuality from a religious perspective. Emboldened by the Wolfenden Report, which sought to persuade the British government to decriminalize homosexuality in 1957, and in response to concerns shared by Cambridge young Friends related to the suicides of gay students, the authors of TQVS shocked the world with their assertion that homosexuality was neither sinful or morally unsound. Suddenly, American Friends had to deal with an issue that they had spent considerable time avoiding. The impact of TQVS on American liberal Quakerism was light at first, but gained momentum as more gay rights organizers took notice of it. The late 1960s is also known as the ‘sexual revolution’ in American history, a time when liberal views about sexuality were spreading across the country. For the first time, gay Quakers started feeling more safe and comfortable identifying themselves (often using pseudonyms) and speaking about their sexuality in Quaker magazines. Gay Quakers were

also becoming drawn into gay rights groups and in some cases leading these groups themselves.

In 1969, the Stonewall riots pushed gay rights activism into the mainstream and Quakers were reported to be there at the scene, healing injured rioters in the streets. Quakers continued to make important contributions to the emergence and the development of the gay rights movement in the post-Stonewall era. They were respected by gay rights leaders for their nonviolent anti-war activism and participation in the civil rights movement. The organizers of the first Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade, an event meant to commemorate the Stonewall riots, employed Quakers to teach parade marshalls about nonviolent civil disobedience. Quakers were the first and only religious group to march in the first gay pride parade and they have done so ever since.

By 1973, the year which marks the end of the epoch explored in this project, and just four years after Stonewall, a national network of gay Friends had formed with the support of FGC and at least five Yearly Meetings had formally minuted their support of gay rights. Some of these Yearly Meetings formed committees to work on supporting gay and lesbian Friends, and some of them supported gay rights organizations outside of the Quaker establishment. A lecture given on behalf of the Religious Education Committee of FGC in 1973 with a clear statement of support for gay and lesbian people indicates that a consensus among liberal Friends had finally formed.

### **Literature Review, Methods, and Structure**

Most of the primary sources used for research on this project were found in the archives at the Friends Historical Library (FHL) at Swarthmore College. This includes the personal files left to the archives as well as business minutes donated by Yearly

Meetings and the Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC). Most of the other primary sources for this project were provided by the archives at the American Friends Service Committee, *Friends Journal*, and the LGBTQ Religious Archives Network. National newspapers, business minutes of homophile group meetings, homophile/gay ephemera of the era, and Quaker pamphlets were also important resources. Secondary texts primarily included books and articles by academics about the biography of Friends, gay rights history, and Quaker theology and practice.

Historians of gay and lesbian communities and activism in the mid-twentieth century such as Michael Bronksi, George Chauncey, St. Sukie De La Croix, John D'emilio, Lillian Faderman, Hugh Ryan, Marc Stein, and Don Teal were particularly helpful in providing insight into the historical and cultural contexts that liberal Quakers experienced from 1946-1973. For example, D'emilio writes about 1940-1970 as an important historical period when gay and lesbian people began to understand their identities in ways they had not before. He writes that in earlier eras:

men and women caught in [a homosexual] act were severely punished, but their behavior was interpreted as a discrete transgression, a misdeed comparable to other crimes such as adultery, blasphemy, and assault. By the late nineteenth century, a profound conceptual shift had occurred. Some men and women were homosexuals. The label applied not merely to particular sexual acts, as 'sodomite' once had, but to an entire person whose nature—acts, feels, personality traits, even body type—was sharply distinguishable from the majority of 'normal' heterosexuals.<sup>19</sup>

The process of constructing the homosexual as a discrete identity with its own 'orientation' had to be well-developed before Quakers with same-sex desires could view themselves as part of a distinct oppressed group of people and before Quaker institutions

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<sup>19</sup> D'Emilio John. *Sexual Politics Sexual Communities : The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States 1940-1970*. 2nd ed. University of Chicago Press 1998, pp. 4.

could take a stance in support of gay rights. In D’emilio words: “Before a movement could take shape, that process had to be far enough along so that at least some gay women and men could perceive themselves as members of an oppressed minority sharing an identity that subjected them to systemic injustice.” Bronski and Faderman helped situated 1946-1973 in a larger arc of queer activism, and Teal brought the political strategies of homophile activism in this period into greater relief, while Chauncey, De La Croix, Ryan, and Stein clarified important events in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. D’Emilio’s biography of Bayard Rustin, an openly gay Quaker anti-war activist and civil rights leader, was also instrumental in providing insight about the attitudes Friends had towards gay people in the 1950s.

Historians of Quakerism were also helpful in framing the historical and cultural context of interest in this project. Ben ‘Pink’ Dandelion provided the theoretical framework for defining and describing one particular stream of the Quaker tradition, liberal Quakerism, in the modern era. I am also particularly indebted to Chuck Fager, Doug Gwyn, and Dandelion for providing me frameworks for interpreting the social and theological dimensions of modern Quakerism. For example, in a co-authored book by Dandelion, Gwyn, and Timothy Peat, they claim that during the mid-twentieth century, it was thought among Friends that “seeking is more important than finding...authenticity is to be found in a process, not outcome, or that the desired outcome or truth is already manifest in the search, not in further fruits.”<sup>20</sup> Changes in liberal Quaker approaches to epistemology also changed the ways they engaged with the world. By the 1940s, most

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<sup>20</sup> Dandelion Pink et al. *Heaven on Earth : Quakers and the Second Coming*. Curlew Productions ; Woodbrooke College 1998, pp. 188.

Quaker communities had discontinued the practice of endogamy, Friends schools started accepting more non-Quakers, and the ‘hedge’ between the Society of Friends and the non-Quaker world was disappearing. As a result, they were becoming more open to receiving truth from outside of the Quaker world, including from gay rights leaders and their organizations.

There are instances of Quaker support for gay and lesbian people which predate the beginning of the focus of this project in 1946. For example, according to Stein, Quakers in Philadelphia hosted house parties in the early 1940s for straight and gay people to intermingle in an effort to humanize gay people and normalize their lifestyle.<sup>21</sup> Even more significant, however, was the establishment of the Civil Readjustment Committee (CRC) of the Quaker Emergency Service (QES) in 1946. Chapter 1 focuses on the creation and operation of a psychiatric clinic designed by the CRC to help men who had been arrested for public sex with other men in subway toilets, parks, and movie theaters. In Chapter 2, I focus on literature produced by Quaker ‘Family Relations Committees’ in the 1950s aimed at defining and regulating human sexuality, the arrest of an openly gay Friend in 1953 for public sex, and the portrayal of the first happy gay couple in an American novel, who were Quakers. Against the backdrop of Cold War paranoia about gay communist sympathizers and the perceived threats gay and lesbian people posed to the stability of the nuclear family during the atomic age, American Quaker support for gay people ran fallow for about a decade. In Chapter 3, I will examine the work of the group of British Friends who authored TQVS, the first public and positive

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<sup>21</sup> Stein Marc. *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves : Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia 1945-1972*. Temple University Press 2004, pp. 32.

evaluation of gay and lesbian sexuality from a religious group, and the immediate impact of TQVS on American Friends. In Chapter 4, I focus on the decade following the publication of TQVS, a period characterized by a flourishing of Quaker activity in support of gay rights. At this time, the visibility of gay Friends in the Quaker world dramatically increased, gay Friends forged new alliances and built community with one another, and the relationships between Quakers and gay rights activists multiplied. Yearly Meetings began to form committees, sometimes at the insistence of gay Friends, which were charged with challenging the legal systems that criminalized gay and lesbian sexuality. These committees also gave guidance to Quaker meetings and churches on how they could be more welcoming and inclusive of gay and lesbian people. Throughout this project, I have intentionally avoided presenting any confident assertions about what motivated Friends to become more accepting of gay and lesbian people, and involved in the early gay rights movement. In conclusion, I speculate about how Quaker pacifism, the historic experience of Friends in abolition movements, gender egalitarianism, and the rising visibility of gay Friends in the mid-twentieth century may have stimulated and propelled liberal Quaker support of gay and lesbian people.

## CHAPTER 1: THE CIVILIAN READJUSTMENT COMMITTEE

*The scene is a little clinic in a Quaker Meetinghouse in New York City. Within its walls a team of doctors, supported by judges of the New York courts, treat sex offenders [mostly men who have sex with men] as sick people whose illness, though mental, is no less a disease than influenza or typhoid. As long as we viewed the sexually abnormal as fiends and demons we could do little about them. The doctors at the Quaker Meetinghouse refused to accept this ancient untruth. They are willing to tackle the big job of working with an illness so deep, so shocking to our morals, so little understood that we have kept it under wraps since the Middle Ages.*

-Howard Whitman<sup>22</sup>

The “little clinic in a Quaker Meetinghouse,” was run by the Civilian Readjustment Committee (CRC) of the Quaker Emergency Service (QES). From 1946-1951, it operated in various locations in New York City—initially at the Quaker Meetinghouse on 15th street and later in the Court Building at 300 Mulberry street and finally in its own office on 153 East 57th street. It was the first of its kind, an experiment forged out of a cooperative agreement between the Magistrates Court of New York City and the QES. It was created to abolish the practice of sentencing people to conscripted labor or prison for violating Penal Law 722, section 8, a city ordinance against “degenerate disorderly conduct.” Enacted in 1923, Penal Law 722, section 8 was on its face a broad and comprehensive municipal statute against all forms of public sex but in its enforcement it mostly targeted men who had sex, or solicited sex, with men in public subway toilets, movie theaters, and parks. In the 1940s and 1950s, thousands of men,

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<sup>22</sup> Whitman, Howard. “The Biggest Taboo.” *Collier’s*, 15 Feb. 1947, pp. 24, 38-40.

known as “D.C. 8’ers,” were arrested from violating 722, section 8 by plainclothes officers running sting operations in places where men were known to cruise for sex.

In 1925, officials estimated that the number of men arrested for violating 722, section 8 hovered between one to two hundred arrests per year. This number ballooned to around 750 arrests per year after World War I ended. Many American soldiers returning from Europe had their first sexual intimacy with other men while in the military during the war. Cruising for sex in public restrooms was the only way many closeted gay men, including many new veterans, were able to experience gay sex.<sup>23</sup> In 1945, the year World War II ended, some officials estimated that the number of arrests for disorderly conduct stood at 2,147, which was more than double the number of arrests a year prior. By 1948, that number would rise to 3,289 arrests.<sup>24</sup> During this period, while the Quaker-sponsored CRC was in operation, about 15% to 20% of men who were caught for having sex, or soliciting sex, with other men in New York City were treated by psychiatrists at ‘the little Quaker clinic,’ rather than being sent to labor work camps or jail. Compelled by the peace testimony and traumatized by the war, Quakers established what historian Hugh Ryan has coined as “the first-and only-alternative-to–sentencing programs for men arrested for their sexuality in the United States.”<sup>25</sup>

In the 1930s and 1940s, gay communities were growing rapidly in numbers, becoming more adept at articulating their identities, and becoming more outspoken about

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<sup>23</sup> Bérubé, Allan, et al. *Coming out under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*. University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Annual Report City Magistrate’s Courts, City of New York, 1948, New York City Metropolitan Archives. Found in Ryan, Hugh. *When Brooklyn Was Queer*. St. Martin's Press 2020, pp. 229.

<sup>25</sup> Ryan, 231.

their experiences of discrimination and violence, but this was also a time when the state was increasingly regulating and punishing gay culture, gay affinity spaces, and gay sex.

According to historian George Chauncey, this was a time when:

State regulations upheld by the state's highest court explicitly prohibited gay men and women from gathering in licensed public establishments . . . the new regulations not only codified the ban on gay visibility but raised the stakes for those who considered violating it. They threatened to destroy the business of any bar or restaurant proprietor who served a single drink to a single gay man or lesbian, to close any theater presenting a play with gay characters, and to prevent the distribution of any film addressing gay issues. They explicitly defined one man's trying to pick up another man as a criminal offense. Never before had gay life been subject to such extensive legal regulation.<sup>26</sup>

Reeling from the suffering and atrocities they had witnessed, both abroad and at home, during World War II, Quakers felt compelled to protect vulnerable homosexual communities that were being surveilled and punished by the state.

The visionary behind the creation of the Civilian Readjustment Committee was the Chairman of the QES, Josiah P. Marvel (1896-1959). Marvel was born into a Quaker family in Indiana and he graduated from Earlham College (Quaker). He became a great patron of the arts and an early reproductive health advocate. Before World War II, he served as the Assistant Director of the Brooklyn Museum, where he helped produce the first exhibition of Picasso's work in America and the first performance of a ballet in an American museum. To help fund the QES, Marvel hosted exhibitions of great artists such as Eugene Delacroix and Paul Cezanne. He also collaborated with fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli to create anti-venereal-disease posters and helped Margaret Sanger establish the first birth control clinic in the United States. While working for the AFSC abroad

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<sup>26</sup> Chauncey George. *Gay New York : Gender Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940*. Basic Books, 2019, pp. 368.

during the war, he was the only social worker allowed in Gestapo prisons in the Paris area, where he brought food and medical supplies to prisoners. He also arranged to have Belgian families receive life-saving provisions during the British coastal blockade, he established medical services in internment camps for British civilians and Jews, and he handled funds in France for the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.<sup>27</sup> Marvel's Quaker pacifism earned him great respect by Europeans during the war. It was deeply integrated into his life and he demonstrated his testimony to nonviolence through courageous action.

In January 1942, the Peace and Social Concerns Committees of the two New York Monthly Meetings asked Marvel, a member of the 15th Street Meeting, to serve as the Chairman of the newly formed QES, an organization established with the intent "to enable Friends and sympathizers of Friends to train themselves and have an avenue of useful service during the emergency."<sup>28</sup> The AFSC was established in 1917 and the Friends Service Council in Britain was established in 1927 to do similar work, which makes the motivation of New York Friends to create their own civilian service organization somewhat unclear. Nonetheless, the QES was authorized by the New York Office of Civilian Defense to offer courses in first aid, home nursing, nutrition, recreation, and child care, as well as recruit conscientious objectors to work in hospitals and asylums. QES also provided legal counsel to conscientious objectors, operated three

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<sup>27</sup> Ryan., p. 225-226; Special to The New York Times. "EX-QUAKER AIDE RULED A SUICIDE: JOSIAH MARVEL, ORGANIZER OF EMERGENCY UNIT IN WORLD WAR II, DIES IN VERMONT." *New York Times* (1923-), Jul 27, 1959, pp. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 51, Folder 3.

nurseries in Harlem, and funded a mobile clinic for ill and injured people in Syria and Lebanon.<sup>29</sup>

Like many Americans, Quakers at this time were concerned about the psychological wellbeing of young people both during and immediately following World War II. Beginning in the spring of 1944, the QES started sponsoring a series of lectures focused on adolescent psychology in an effort to understand the capacity of young people to handle trauma. These lectures seem to have provided Marvel with the inspiration to form a clinic for psychologically ‘maladjusted’ young men.<sup>30</sup> Titles for some of the lectures included: “Aggressive and Delinquent Adjustments,” “The Problem of Anxiety in Adolescents,” “Recessive, Passive Adjustments,” “Neurotic and Psychotic Syndromes in Adolescents,” and “Postwar Readjustments Which Adolescents in Europe Will Face.” From this short list of lecture titles we can see the term “readjustment” repeated, a term that was incorporated into the name of the CRC. The lecture speakers used the term readjustment in a variety of different ways, making its precise meaning in the name of the clinic somewhat unclear. Sometimes “readjustment” meant a soldier’s acclimation to civilian life, and at other times lecturers talked about how adolescents were learning to “adjust” to a society that had more women choosing careers over marriage and motherhood. In Dr. Caroline Zachary’s talk on “Sexual Evolution,” she used the term “adjustment” to talk about how young boys and girls “adjust” to feelings of attraction for people of the ‘opposite sex’ at a time in their lives when most of their friendships were with children of the same gender. The use of the terms “adjustment” and “readjustment”

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<sup>29</sup> Quaker Emergency Service records, Box 51, Folder 1.

<sup>30</sup> Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC. 290. Quaker Emergency Service Lectures, 1944.

is inconsistent through the lecture series as a whole, but together they point towards cultural anxieties about soldiers transitioning to civilian life, the rise of feminism, and adolescent psycho-sexual development. The QES invited a slate of speakers who spoke towards Quaker concerns about the traumatizing effects of war on soldiers and society, even if they themselves refused to support war or serve in the military.

In addition to Zachary's talk about adolescent sexual development, there are two other lectures which may have most influenced Marvel's decision to establish the CRC: Dr. Frank Curran's "Aggressive and Delinquent Adjustments," and Thomas Rennie's "Neurotic and Psychotic Syndromes in Adolescents." Zachary's lecture was first and it outlined psycho-sexual development from a Freudian psychoanalytical perspective. In Zachary's interpretation of normal psycho-sexual development: when male adolescents learn how to construct a new life apart from their parents, they get caught between their experience of positive homosocial friendships, the emergence of sexual attraction towards girls, and confusing societal messages about masculinity. With this basic Freudian approach to adolescent psycho-sexual development in mind, Zachary taught that as adults put pressure on young men to develop a romantic relationship with a girl, his male peers will come to resent the redirection of the adolescents affections and tease him for showing attraction towards women. All along the way, the male adolescent is figuring out what he needs to do to be desired by women and gain the approval of other men. According to Zachary, "he wants to know what boys and men think the masculine role is. He wants to know what girls and women think the masculine role is and he wants to play it so as to be satisfying both to the demands of members of his own sex and the demands of members of the opposite sex." Zachary presented for Marvel a model of male

heterosexual development, eleven days before Dr. Frank Curran impressed upon him in his lecture on “Aggressive and Delinquent Adjustments” that homosexuality and antisocial behavior were linked.

Curran argues in his lecture that all children demonstrate impulses of aggression because “the destruction of objects and the injuring of others give children a sense of power.” This need for power can stem from a desire to possess objects or people, rivalry with others, or exaggerated feelings of inferiority or superiority. He cites a clinical case from Bellevue hospital—which he contends is the first of its kind in the world—to demonstrate his claims. The case involved two patients, Ben and Nick, both about fifteen years old who were sent to Bellevue after admitting to shooting at a streetcar with a stolen gun and killing one of its passengers. Curran notes that “they had been engaged in mutual homosexual practices” and despite performing well on an I.Q. test, “both had made poor school adjustment, being two years retarded.” Curran also describes an escalation in their aggressive behavior over time. They “participated in delinquent behavior both in school and in the community. They admitted to stealing, truancy, destruction of property, and so forth. They broke into an armory, stole a 22 cal. rifle, purchased several hundred shells, went into the woods and began shooting.” First at “stationary objects, such as cans, bottles, and trees” but later they chose to shoot at gasoline tanks, hoping they would explode, and progressed to shooting at streetcars. Curran describes Nick’s terrifying childhood upbringing, a time when he was tormented by an abusive father and severely neglected by his mother. After describing his traumatic upbringing in detail, Curran turns to drawing a connection between Nick’s homosexual behavior, his gender nonconformity, and his proclivity for social deviance:

Nick was recognized as a severe behavior problem in kindergarten and was under treatment in child guidance clinics while in school until his family arranged for private institutional care prior to being taken to Children's Courts. In one institution, he showed very aggressive antisocial behavior. When he and Ben were taken into Bellevue, they both attempted sex pally with each other as well as with other children. In our dramatic activities, Nick insisted on taking the feminine roles. On the ward, when he could, he would take rouge and hair ribbons from the nurses and wear them. He would ask other boys to treat him as a girl and to kiss him. He would destroy art material and he would deliberately throw ward equipment out the windows. He openly boasted of his antisocial behavior.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout the rest of his lecture, Curran reinforces a connection between homosexual desire and moral corruption by oscillating somewhat haphazardly between descriptions of Nick's violent impulses, Nick's "sex play" with Ben, and his feminine gender presentation. Eleven days earlier, Zachary had outlined the ideal direction for psychosexual development in male adolescents for the Quakers. Curran was able to build upon that to project his illustration of a link between male homosexuality, social deviance, and criminal impulses.

Curran also prescribes a remedy for social deviance that would be adopted by Marvel and the staff of the Quaker clinic for men arrested for public gay sex. First, Curran recommends extended observation for at least four weeks, "because often we are not able to determine in a shorter period of time whether or not a boy will be able to adjust in a community or if he should require an institutionalization, it is hard to decide just what type of institution should receive him." The next layer of treatment involves using therapeutic techniques to help patients transfer their destructive and aggressive impulses towards productive and morally sound activities. Curran also contends that "both children and adults need outlets for their aggression and if society does not provide

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<sup>31</sup> Quaker Emergency Service Lectures, 1944.

wholesome outlets, such as in competition in sports—either by active participation or by witnessing of ball games and prize fights . . . their aggressive impulses may be expressed in a more serious fashion in the form of gang activities and crime.” The last layer of treatment, and Curran believes this is the most important, involves ensuring that adolescents with aggressive impulses feel safe, nourished, and loved: “If the parent or the parent substitute gives frequent demonstrations of affection to the child and does not deprive him of food and other physical support, much of his aggression may be checked.” In hindsight, it appears as though Curran provides the basic template for the CRC: a program of extended periods of supervision and therapeutic interventions to treat psychological maladjustments for the sake of redirecting antisocial impulses towards productive labor and masculine gender performance. Curran also emphasized the role that religion could play in psychological rehabilitation. He said towards the end of his lecture: “With the aid of educators and clergymen—and many physicians are now stressing the need of such ethical and moral training—the aggressive drives of the child and adult can be directed into socially accepted channels.” Despite not having a paid clergy, the Quakers would hire religious leaders of other traditions to offer pastoral care to D.C. 8’ers at the CRC.

Three days after Curran gave his talk, Dr. Thomas Rennie took the stage to speak about “Neurotic and Psychotic Syndromes in Adolescents.” Rennie’s lecture seems to have had an impact on Marvel because years later he would state that six years old was a pivotal age for psycho-sexual development, a very specific understanding of human psycho-sexual development that he must have learned from Rennie’s lecture and committed to memory. The majority of Rennie’s talk focused on describing different

forms of psychoneurosis—anxiety, neurasthenia, hypochondria, hysteria, schizophrenia, and manic-depressive disorders, but what likely caught Marvel’s attention was Rennie’s conclusions about the common causes for psychoneurosis, one of which was war.

Rennie posited that no matter the variations in symptoms and behaviors, psychoneuroses are always activated by a traumatic event. He argued that trauma has the potential to reanimate a pattern of emotional events that were forged earlier in life during a period of adjustment or maladjustment. The adult psychoneurotic, therefore, is by definition a person whose problems are rooted in childhood, although their neurotic behavior may not manifest until after a traumatic event in adulthood. Rennie insists that the only way for a psychoneurotic person to overcome or manage their impulses is for them to speak openly about their childhood trauma with someone who has a sympathetic and understanding ear, for which he specifically means a trained psychiatric professional.

So the special task of the psychiatrist is to help that person revive the forgotten, disturbing experiences, relive them as an adult, in a particular situation, namely, his relationship to his doctor who becomes then temporarily his father, his mother, his brother, or any one with whom his major emotional difficulty has arisen, and that is the very essence of treatment of the psychoneurotic condition . . . depending on the constitutional makeup of the person, depending upon the particular kind of disturbing emotional events that happen to him, knowing something about his temperament, his native intelligence, and his personality, and makeup, we can pretty well predict what has happened, and why, on the simple analogy that if you put enough stress and strain on certain human beings, they will inevitably bend and they bend in these interesting and characteristic ways that we call psychoneurosis, and with that we stop saying that these symptoms are meaningless and unimportant.<sup>32</sup>

This is how Rennie explains how Freudian psychoanalysis can be used as a treatment for psychological maladjustment. He also appeals to the Quaker testimony of equality by rejecting the idea that people with psychoneuroses are “inferior, different, unworthy.”

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<sup>32</sup> Quaker Emergency Service Lectures, 1944.

Rather, he asserts that they “are worthy of as much medical care and human understanding as is a sufferer from a broken back, or tuberculosis; in many cases more so.” After Zachary described what ‘normal’ heterosexual development should be, and Curran showed a link between homosexuality and anti-social behavior, Rennie presents the case for why the Quakers should dedicate their resources towards providing psychiatric care for sexual and social deviants.

Another reason that Rennie’s talk probably gripped Marvel so acutely is that Rennie, like Curran, reasoned that there was a steep rise in psychoneuroses among American men due to the trauma of serving as a soldier during war. “We are hearing a great deal about the psychoneurotic these days,” said Rennie, “and rightly so, because they are coming back from service by the tens of thousands. Indeed, pretty nearly half of all the men being discharged from the Army today are suffering from one or another kind of psychoneurotic illness, but they are being sent home because the Army hasn’t time to treat them.” Marvel knew the horrors of war himself from working in the Gestapo-run prisons in Paris, so he might have personally connected with Rennie’s assessment of the Army’s lack of care or concern for mental wellness. Marvel could have felt implicated in Rennie’s chastisement of American society for creating a stigma around the development of psychoneuroses in young soldiers. Rennie said, “So one of our great problems with these men coming back from service is to desensitize them and their families to the idea that there is the slightest stigma involved in having developed a psychoneurosis. There is no stigma. It is completely understandable that they should develop such a reaction under the circumstances.” The final words of Rennie’s lecture resonated strongly with Marvel’s religious conviction to enact peace and abolish the violent actions of the government:

It becomes your obligation, if you are going to be responsible for human beings, if you mean to do any work with human beings, to learn always to try to interpret what is going on inside that person, to let him talk, if you have the time and can create the confidence, that in the sharing of these troubled emotions there is healing itself, and that the role of anyone in the humanities who proposes to help other human beings can never be that of judge of their conduct or behavior; it must always be that of searching and seeking and striving for the interpretation which makes that behavior intelligible.<sup>33</sup>

It is more of a hypothesis than a definitive claim that Zachary, Curran, and Rennie's talks spurred Marvel to take action in pursuit of establishing the CRC, but it is very likely.

Marvel was the Chairman of the QES and therefore it is very likely that he was in attendance at these lectures or at the very least he read the lectures when they were published by the QES. Furthermore, the CRC operated on a format described in these lectures and there are many similarities between the views expressed by the CRC staff and the rhetoric used in these lectures to describe psychology, criminality, and sexuality.

In 1945, Marvel began to take an interest in the work of Dr. George W. Henry, Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology at Cornell University's Medical College, an attending psychiatrist at New York Hospital, and a leading voice in the emerging field of psychiatric research on homosexuality, albeit as a form of "sexual deviance." Henry was hired by the Selective Service to screen draftees for any signs of "homosexual proclivities," and if detected, he would officially disbar them from military service. During World War II, the army rejected roughly five thousand soldiers for homosexuality at the point of induction.<sup>34</sup> Henry also worked in a private office donated by the Payne Whitney Clinic with soldiers who were discharged from military service for their

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<sup>33</sup> Quaker Emergency Service Lectures, 1944.

<sup>34</sup> Bérubé, Allan. *Coming Out Under Fire : The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two*. Free Press 1990, pp. 147.

“psychiatric maladjustment,” the military’s favorite euphemism at the time for homosexuality.

By the 1940s, Henry had established himself as a leader in the emerging field of psychiatric research on homosexuality. He published one of the very first psychiatric studies of homosexuality in 1933, and two years later he joined the Committee for the Study of Sex Variants, a trailblazing multi-disciplinary organization of researchers committed to understanding the many dimensions of homosexual experience. He authored hundreds of case studies on gay experience, about both men and women, which he later published in his first monograph.<sup>35</sup> His research was groundbreaking in part because it was supported by an ‘insider’ assistant, Alfred A. Gross, a defrocked openly gay Episcopalian priest that would serve as Henry’s most-trusted colleague and secretary throughout his career. Gross was at one time one of Henry’s patients, but he later became Henry’s secretary. He was responsible for recruiting patients and conducting preliminary interviews as part of the research Henry conducted for the Committee for the Study of Sex Variants. He was listed as a co-author with Henry on many publications, served as the secretary for the CRC, and managed most of the clinic’s operations. Many reports about the CRC were ghost-written by Gross with Henry’s signature.<sup>36</sup> Clarence A. Tripp, a photographer who worked for Henry during the war, confided to Alfred C. Kinsey that he doubted whether Henry actually read the second annual report of the CRC.

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<sup>35</sup> Henry George W and Committee for the Study of Sex Variants. *Sex Variants : A Study of Homosexual Patterns*. One-volume ed. Paul B. Hoeber, 1948.

<sup>36</sup> For a more detailed account of Henry and Gross’ work from 1937-72, see Minton Henry L. *Departing from Deviance : A History of Homosexual Rights and Emancipatory Science in America*. University of Chicago Press 2002, pp. 94-121.

Marvel learned about Henry and Gross's work at a semi-public meeting where they were presenting on the work they were doing respectively at the Committee for the Study of Sex Variants and the Selective Service.<sup>37</sup> After listening to their presentation, Marvel wrote to members of the QES about

a large number of young men [who] were found to be disqualified for the performance of military duty by reason of psychiatric maladjustment. So serious did this problem become, and because this situation was so infrequently met by psychiatrists in their own practice, that the Selective Service authorities designated Dr. George W. Henry with special jurisdiction over these problems.<sup>38</sup>

Marvel met Gross and Henry at a meeting arranged by Jacob Panken, a socialist reformer and New York City Judge. Panken's role in the formation of the CRC was short-lived but very important because he later introduced Marvel, Henry, and Gross to Judge Edgar Bromberger, Chief Judge for the Magistrates Court, who was interested in providing a therapeutic alternative to sending the D.C. 8'ers to jail. At the beginning of 1946, an agreement between Bromberger and Marvel was forged to put Henry and Gross at the helm of a new clinic for men who had been arrested in public for having sex, or soliciting sex, with other men.

The CRC had its first operation in the Quaker Meetinghouse on 15th street. The agreement that the courts had with the Quakers worked like this: the Magistrates Court would send D.C. 8'ers to the CRC for examination, offenders would be screened by a psychiatrist, and a report would be given to the Magistrates Court before sentencing was decided by a judge. Most sentences included ongoing visits with a psychiatrist at the

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<sup>37</sup> Ryan, 226.

<sup>38</sup> Quaker Emergency Service records, Box 44.

clinic. Pastoral counseling by a Catholic priest, a Protestant minister, or a Rabbi was sometimes recommended, but not in all cases. In the early years of the clinic, the CRC staff encouraged probation, an intervention which they saw as well situated somewhere between jail time and a fine and recommendations for probation as a part of sentencing D.C. 8'ers continued continued for a few years until the staff at the CRC determined that it was "not only irksome but meaningless."<sup>39</sup> Henry believed that offenders would tell their probation officers as little as possible and in some cases "it seems as though the men on probation avoid rearrest right up until their probation ends." In the early years, it was also part of the committee's work to prepare a report for the courts and probation officers which included a description of an offender's "disposition." This practice was almost immediately discontinued by Henry because he believed it, "is not really the function of a psycho-social service such as ours." In his second annual report about the clinic to Judge Bromberger, Henry wrote:

The first year's mass examinations disclosed the fact that the diagnosis was almost invariably that of psychopathic personality with pathological sexuality, and the patient was either homosexual or bisexual. Most of the men claimed to be bisexual, and, in the absence of affirmative evidence, we were obliged to accept their statements. It is impossible, of course, to make an absolute diagnosis that a patient is completely incapable of having intercourse with a woman.<sup>40</sup>

For Henry, it was not important to discern a patient's sexual identity as homosexual, bisexual, or otherwise, but rather Henry sought to help men manage the psychological compulsion to seek sex with other men in public spaces. The clinic also helped men with

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<sup>39</sup> Informal report on the clinic written by Gross and sent to Dorris Clarke, Chief Probation Officer at the New York Magistrates Court. July 26th, 1946. Found in Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 44.

<sup>40</sup> Second Annual Report to Bromberger by Henry. December 31st, 1947. Found in Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 44.

employment, “warned them against predatory lawyers, and even set them up on dates with one another.”<sup>41</sup>

Bromberger, Henry, and Marvel each understood the purpose of the clinic quite differently, but they shared the goal of keeping the D.C. 8’ers out of prison. For Bromberger, the D.C. 8’ers showed signs of pathological de-evolution and they were potentially dangerous. In an article about the CRC for *Collier’s*, Bromberger said

Some of these people keep out of trouble for years. But there is always the danger that eventually they will wind up in crimes of the most revolting type. Some are not a serious menace when they are young and can make attachments with others like themselves. But eventually the time comes when they have passed the age of attractive appearance. They must direct their activities toward those incapable of resistance. They begin to impose themselves upon children. Then comes the fear of detection. From this point on, the path leads inexorably to crime.<sup>42</sup>

For Bromberger and many of his criminal justice colleagues, homosexual behavior was an antecedent to pedophilia, a terrible crime that needed to be studied so that it may be stopped. Henry concurred with Bromberger that homosexual behavior resulted from psychological maladjustment, but he pushed back against the notion that homosexuality was linked to criminality and/or sexual desire towards children. Henry believed that same-sex attraction was caused by inadequate sexual development, resulting from poor parenting or insufficient sex education, and the compulsion towards homosexual behavior stemmed from certain psychological neuroses. Rather than inculcating the idea in his patients that they were driven to commit crimes, Henry said that “one of the significant contributions of our service has been toward the re-establishment of the offender’s self-

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<sup>41</sup> Ryan, 231.

<sup>42</sup> Whitman, 38.

respect.”<sup>43</sup> In a report about the first year of the clinic, he wrote: “each case must be studied on its own merits, and the criminal homosexual episode is interesting to us primarily not for its own sake but for the clear indication that it is a guide to other personality difficulties in other departments of the patient’s life.” Furthermore, Henry’s closest colleague, Gross, was openly gay and he lived without any trouble from law enforcement and there is no evidence that Henry ever tried ‘to cure’ Gross of his homosexuality. It was the fact that so many men were getting arrested that gave Henry concern.

For Henry, there was a great variety of psychological reasons that these men were seeking sex with men in public. In one of his first reports about the CRC, he wrote about a patient who had “severe anxiety neurosis” and would punish himself for “homosexual lapses by developing pseudo-somatic complaints.”<sup>44</sup> He also wrote about another patient who was so riddled by his “inadequate personality” and “insecurity” that he was compelled to seek oral sex by strangers in public. This patient was arrested on multiple occasions until he obtained a job and an apartment and became “so thoroughly occupied that he has little time left to devote to any interests of which the Court might disapprove.” There was also the case of a patient who was an aspiring singer and had so “many emotional upsets between auditions” that he frequented public toilets to manage his “guilt feelings” and “panic reactions.” It was only after “religious and social advisors reassure[d] him of his competence as a person,” that he “learned somewhat, under

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<sup>43</sup> Informal report on the clinic written by Gross and sent to Dorris Clarke, Chief Probation Officer at the New York Magistrates Court. July 26th, 1946. Found in Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 44.

<sup>44</sup> First Annual Report of the Civilian Readjustment Committee, December 31st, 1946. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948.

treatment, how to live with himself. Frustration and defeat no longer drive him to cheap subway toilet episodes as frustration and defeat with equal potency drive the inadequate alcoholic to the bottle.” Contrary to Bromberger, from Henry’s sympathetic and psychiatric point-of-view, the men who were being arrested in the public toilets of New York City’s subway stations were not representatives of a criminal underworld who increasingly developed their appetites for more dubious crimes over time. Rather, they were socially troubled men who were struggling with psychological problems.

Henry’s therapeutic approach, however, had its limitations. According to Ryan, which men the committee “considered redeemable” was highly selective:

The committee generally accepted only white men, later estimating that only 1 percent of their clients were ‘colored.’ Given that black men, as well as gay men, were more likely to receive blue discharges, this was a painful, racist irony that left gay black men with few therapeutic options and an increased likelihood of incarceration while removing their experiences from any reports, findings, or recommendations that would come from the QES (or from any historians using their wealth of data to reconstruct the queer world of the late 1940s and early 1950s).

All factions of the QES agreed that it was best to work with younger men who had relatively stable lives, were employed or at least actively looking for work, wanted the help they were being offered, and, most of all, weren’t too effeminate or vocal about being gay. Their program, groundbreaking though it was, emphasized respectability, and men who lacked an interest in hiding from the straight world infuriated the committee.<sup>45</sup>

Marvel himself demonstrated this kind of commitment to respectability and keeping up appearances. He never stated that he thought homosexuality could be cured, but he also believed that homosexuality developed in people at an early age and it could be jettisoned before the age of six. He hoped that data collected from the work done at the clinic could

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<sup>45</sup> Ryan, 230.

help develop treatments that would prevent men from generating homosexual desires and subsequently acting upon them. I will show at the end of this chapter how Marvel's anxiety about the development of homosexual desires and the impulse to act upon them in public were private concerns of his own.

The stated goal of the CRC was to help men control their impulses to seek out sex with other men in public, or at the very least to help them avoid arrest, and it was by Marvel's account a resounding success. According to Marvel's reports, before the clinic opened about 25% of men were rearrested within one year of their initial sentencing. In 1946, the staff at the clinic saw 441 patients and celebrated that only four were rearrested that same year, less than 1%.<sup>46</sup> The integrity of Marvel's claims, however, are difficult to corroborate as there are no other studies or reports about the recidivism rates of sex crime offenders in New York City at this time. Furthermore, in a 1948 radio broadcast about the clinic, Marvel repeated these numbers with some unexplained changes. He still contended that of the 441 patients only four were rearrested in the first year the clinic was in operation, but he now stated that prior to the clinic about 22%, instead of 25%, of men arrested for violating 722, section 8 experienced recidivism.<sup>47</sup> According to Bromberger, of all the patients the staff at the clinic saw in its first year of operation, "only two," rather than four as Marvel reported, "failed to show improvement and a progressive ability to control abnormal tendencies."<sup>48</sup> These are slight variations in figures, but even

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<sup>46</sup> Report on the Rehabilitation Clinic of the Quaker Emergency Service by Josiah Marvel. April 28th, 1947. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948.

<sup>47</sup> "Homosexuality." *Something Ought to Be Done*. WMCA Station, New York, N.Y, 1 Nov. 1948.

<sup>48</sup> Whitman, 38.

if the rates of recidivism were close to what Marvel and Bromberger reported, the clinic was tremendously successful. The Quakers had good reasons to be proud. During the abolition era, they had helped runaway enslaved people avoid arrest and imprisonment for being who they were and now the CRC was protecting gay men from discrimination and violence enacted by the criminal justice system.

The value of the clinic could not be better pronounced than by the outpouring of appreciation from its patients. In a report to Bromberger in late 1946, a year into the work of the clinic, Marvel wrote, “it has been our fortunate experience on occasion to hear from other sources that men referred to the Quaker Emergency Service for examination have spoken highly of the considerate treatment they have received at the hands of the probation officers and the Quaker Staff.” According to the *Collier’s* article, one patient:

felt more like a human being when he came out of the Quaker Meetinghouse. Dr. Henry and his assistant, Alfred A. Gross, a one time clergyman, had given him for the first time in his life the hope that he might be ‘just like everybody else.’ For the first time, instead of making him feel like dirt, people in authority had told him he need not be ashamed of his emotional illness any more than he would be ashamed of a weak heart or palsy.<sup>49</sup>

The success of the clinic was attested to by the number of men who came to the clinic voluntarily. In May, 1947, Alfred Gross wrote to Marvel that, “more and more men are returning to us informally” and “the number of visits to the office is indicative of the feeling that we can help some individuals.”<sup>50</sup> The number of voluntary visits to the clinic grew exponentially each year during its time of operation. Eventually, the number of

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<sup>49</sup> Whitman, 38.

<sup>50</sup> Informal Report from Gross to Marvel, April 1947. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948.

voluntary visits surpassed those that had been ordered by the courts by two to one. The author of one report said it was “encouraging” to see that there were a rising number of voluntary cases. The services the CRC offered had value, not only for D.C. 8’ers but also other men who had sex with men in New York City, because hundreds were willing to visit the clinic without a court order.

The work of the CRC was so successful that it drew attention and praise from non-Quaker religious organizations and many public social service agencies. In October 1947, for example, the QES approached the Brooklyn Division of the Protestant Council to ask about Protestant clergy that might join their pastoral counseling staff and the Protestant Council set up a committee to investigate the operations of the clinic. After their investigation, they wrote: “The committee reports that there is an urgent need for the work that the Quaker Emergency Committee is doing among homosexuals by Dr. George Henry, psychiatrist, and it feels that the Brooklyn Division of the Protestant Council should approve of the work that is being done to keep those apprehended out of jail and to attempt rehabilitation.”<sup>51</sup> The Protestant Council sent one of their most respected staff members to work at the clinic, Reverend Leland Barnes, Director of Social Services for the Protestant Council of Brooklyn. They also advocated for the clinic among other Protestant groups in New York City as well as make “efforts to win the interest of the Jewish groups.” Staff at the CRC clinic also received dozens of letters of support from public health experts and government officials. In a letter to Gross, the Medical Director of the Society for the Prevention of Crime wrote:

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<sup>51</sup> Letter from the Protestant Council. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 44.

Considering the enormous handicaps under which you and your heroic staff work, it seems to me to be the least of the rewards to which you are entitled to know that we consider your efforts invaluable. So long as the rigidity of our penal statute continues, insofar as they affect sexual deviates, it is refreshing and encouraging to know that this civilized effort is going on in our city. I am sure it does not partake of undue optimism to say that one day in the reasonably near future this type of service will be organically affiliated with the courts and will be publicly operated and maintained.<sup>52</sup>

More letters of support poured in from the Special Social Services of New York City, the Domestic Relations Court, and The National Committee for Mental Hygiene in Canada.

Despite the abundance of praise they received and their many success stories, the CRC experienced operational dysfunction and financial challenges which kept the continued existence of the clinic in constant jeopardy. Just six months after it opened, Gross wrote to the Chief Probation Officer of the Magistrates Court: “Unfortunately the Committee finds itself unable or unwilling to raise the necessary funds for its continuance.”<sup>53</sup> Eight months later, Gross expressed grave concern about the continued viability of the clinic in a strongly worded letter to the QES leadership, in which he reminded them that he had not been paid for his work for over a full year. In May 1947, he wrote in a report to Marvel that “the financial situation of the Committee is as chaotic as ever” and “the committee should really consider whether it feels it has any obligation at all to pay its servant, or whether it considers that he is really worth what they are

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<sup>52</sup> Letter from Edwin Lukas, Medical Director of the Society for the Prevention of Crime. March 2nd, 1948. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 44.

<sup>53</sup> Informal report to Dorris Clarke, July 26th, 1946. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 44.

paying him—which is precisely nothing.” He ended the letter with a biting undercut: “It would be tragic if it had to fall apart for the lack of a small budget.”<sup>54</sup>

Dwindling financial resources and a change in venue suggests that the Quakers were slowly rescinding their support of the clinic. Sometime in 1947, and for reasons that are not entirely clear, the clinic moved from the 15th Street Meetinghouse into the Manhattan Court building at 300 Mulberry Street a few blocks away. Gross was immediately displeased with his new office. “The reception room needs attractive furnishings,” he wrote. “Floor covering has been promised but there is little chance, considering the nature of our finances, of our getting it. We need lamps, a cupboard for my office, a rug or two.” In his second annual report to Bromberger, Henry expressed gratitude for the new space at Mulberry Street, but also concerns about the Committee’s finances and supplies:

Not enough funds have come forward, salaries are unpaid, stationery and postage have to be begged, but somehow we manage as a venture of faith. The hardships and difficulties seem compensated by the occasional unsought expression of gratitude that comes from men and boys whom we have helped to put emotionally on their feet, and who have been able to work out for themselves a better adjustment in an unsympathetic and often intolerant world.<sup>55</sup>

When the CRC was founded, the D.C. 8’ers were treated in the Meetinghouse, with its warm brick facade, wide windows, and elegant but simple Quaker carpentry on display, such as on the bannister that led patients to the clinic on the second floor. Now they had to enter a busy court building, walk past police, lawyers, and court officials that may have participated in their arrest and convictions, and reveal to anyone who cared to notice that

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<sup>54</sup> Report from Gross to Marvel. 28 April, 1947. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 44.

<sup>55</sup> Report from Gross to Marvel. 28 April, 1947. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 44.

they were meeting with counselors at the CRC office. The Meetinghouse supported the development of their sense of self-respect because the Quakers were admired for their peace testimony and historic commitments to protecting oppressed people. Henry believed the courthouse continually reminded the D.C. 8'ers that they were criminals, further instilling in them a sense of shame and humiliation.

The reputation of the CRC in the public eye was also about to take a dramatic plunge in their second year of operation. In February 1947, *Collier's* magazine published "The Biggest Taboo" an article which talked about the CRC and purported that there were strong links between homosexuality, "sickness," sociopathy, the development of criminal impulses, and in extreme cases, homicidal ideation and murder. The article began with a description of the clinic, an explanation of the agreement the Quakers had made with the Magistrates Court, and a profile of one of its patients, using the pseudonym Emil Smith. After being arrested for seeking sex in a public subway toilet, Bromberger told Emil, "You think you can change human nature! Well, you can't!" And added later: "we're not aiming to change human nature. We just want to give it some cooperation. I'm not going to send you to prison, Emil. You are going to the Quaker Meetinghouse. I think Dr. Henry can help you."<sup>56</sup> The article portrayed Emil's experience as a success story. Henry had promised to help Emil with "an emotional house cleaning," and "whether he will achieve complete adjustment is up in the air. But a social adjustment is virtually certain. Emil will find a way to live more productively, less offensively. You can forget about ever finding him beneath the 'sex fiend' headline in the morning tabloid." The CRC staff became upset that the article publicly named a Catholic

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<sup>56</sup> Whitman, 38.

priest associated with the clinic. Gross chastised the article's author, Howard Whitman, and in retaliation Whitman reported to Bromberger that Gross was "fraternizing" with patients.

Marvel sought to maintain peaceful relationships between Bromberger, the CRC staff, and the clinic's Quaker overseers, the QES members, even when it seemed like the foundations of the clinic were about to collapse. The CRC business meeting minutes show Marvel using Quaker discernment practices when the physicians, the magistrates, and the Quakers could not agree with one another about how to incorporate the CRC underneath or in affiliation with the Religious Society of Friends. Marvel kept peace by synthesizing the various competing opinions in classic Quaker fashion: "No clear sense of the meeting was felt, save that all present were of a mind that the connection with [sic] the Friends was desirable, and should be continued if a formula could be worked which would be satisfactory to all concerned. It would seem to be the sense of the meeting that incorporation is desirable and should be effected immediately." Twice, Marvel evokes a "sense-of-the-meeting" in the QES minutes. A sense-of-the-meeting approach to decision-making is a non-voting Quaker practice that seeks to resist majority rule and emphasize points of unity among a group of decision-makers. Marvel knew the effectiveness of Quaker approaches to conflict resolution because he used them to build trust with the Gestapo in Paris.

Despite Marvel's efforts, mistrust between the magistrates, the physicians, and the Quakers grew stronger over the following year. Bromberger was agitated by the amount of attention the clinic, and especially Gross, were receiving from various court employees in the Manhattan Court Building. He complained that "every conversation could be

heard” outside the walls of the clinic. Lancaster Greene, a Quaker lawyer and the Secretary of QES, agreed with Bromberger and reported that “Mr. Gross is active all over the building, being called for by magistrates and others. The clinic helps others than those referred to it by [sic] the court and is thus more than a servant to the court. It appears difficult to keep them as separate as they should be while they are physically together.”<sup>57</sup> Henry and Gross were using the space provided by the courts to provide treatment to men who had not received a court order, effectively taking advantage of a free office for their work. Bromberger was outraged, and about a year after being relocated from the Meetinghouse, the CRC clinic was feeling increasingly unwelcome in their new address.

In March 1948, Bromberger requested that future referrals to the clinic be seen outside of the Court Building because the presence of the clinic “gives the wrong impression.” Henry tried to appease Bromberger by acknowledging complaints he had heard about Gross “calling downtown.” He promised that the matter would be addressed, but Bromberger had enough and wanted Gross to be fired. Henry stalled, buying time to protect his friend and colleague. The Quakers disciplined Gross’ by revoking his ability to manage the clinic’s funds and access to petty cash.<sup>58</sup> Bromberger became convinced that Gross needed to be removed from the courthouse and he ordered the QES to find a new location for the clinic in less than a month. In the notes for a QES meeting, Bromberger’s motivations for the relocation of the clinic were made evidently clear:

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<sup>57</sup> Notes from Lancaster Greene on meeting between Bromberger, Henry, and officials from the Magistrates Court. Found in Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 44.

<sup>58</sup> Ryan, 232.

“Chief Magistrate Bromberger had asked the Clinic to leave the Mulberry Street location because he could no longer sponsor Mr. Gross.”<sup>59</sup>

Whether it was the *Collier's* article or Bromberger's extreme disapproval of Gross, or both, the Quakers fired Henry, Gross, and the rest of the staff at the CRC in 1948. The clinic had not yet been in operation for a full two years. Henry and Gross would start their own nonprofit organization, the George W. Henry Foundation, which continued to help gay men, and men who had sex with men, caught in legal troubles by offering them legal counsel, psychological counseling, and pastoral care. Henry continued to publish academic literature and Gross wrote articles about homosexuality for academic journals, religious periodicals, and popular magazines, often under Henry's name.<sup>60</sup>

In May 1948, the QES leadership interviewed Dr. Frederick Wertham, a German psychologist who had recently set up a free clinic for working-class African-Americans in Harlem, as a candidate for Henry's replacement. A month later, Wertham became the medical director of the Civilian Readjustment Center at 153 East 53rd Street, a significant distance away from the Quaker Meetinghouse and the Magistrates Court at Mulberry Street. The slight name change of the clinic, from Civilian Readjustment Committee to Civilian Readjustment Center, and the increased distance from the Meetinghouse indicates that the Quaker nature of the clinic was falling into steep decline. At the new clinic, Wertham offered the same formula of psychological counseling and pastoral care

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<sup>59</sup> Meeting of the Quaker Emergency Service Committee. April 14th, 1948. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 44.

<sup>60</sup> “Dr. Alfred A. Gross | Profile”, LGBTQ Religious Archives Network, accessed September, 2022, <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/profiles/alfred-a-gross>.

that was provided before, but he lacked Henry's expertise in treating homosexuality. The operations of the clinic also fell into disarray. Ryan tells us:

The court soon overwhelmed the clinic with cases, which were no longer limited to men arrested for soliciting, but included exhibitionists, Peeping toms, rapists, pedophiles, prostitutes, thieves, runaways, check forgers, burglars, and drunks. Little by little, Magistrate Bromberger was forcing the clinic to conform to his idea that homosexuality and general criminality were linked. Soon, the clinic was seeing over a thousand people a year, far beyond its capacity, many of who[m] had no interest in treatment.<sup>61</sup>

The cost of purchasing new furniture and paying staff reemerged as a problem for the clinic and Wertham was increasingly becoming distracted by his concern for the negative effects of comic books on adolescent development. He would often dominate CRC staff meetings to give presentations about this topic. The capacity of the clinic to handle a rising number of cases and a lack of vision for the clinic's purpose under Wertham's leadership caused the CRC to spiral further and further away from optimal efficiency and therapeutic efficacy. Furthermore, the clinic was becoming disconnected from the Quaker peace testimony and the historic experience of Friends in abolition movements. The Court persistently pressed against Marvel's values and often won. Ryan tells us that, "the court increasingly leaned on the clinic to violate patient confidentiality, to provide recommendations for sentencing, and to allow court-approved researchers access to their confidential files—initiatives that Joe Marvel vocally opposed."<sup>62</sup> Helping men arrested for gay sex fell out of focus as the years went on and the clinic sought to treat a wider

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<sup>61</sup> Ryan, 233-4.

<sup>62</sup> Ryan, 233.

array of cases, rather than focusing on the needs of a particular group the QES had identified as experiencing injustice.

The fraught relations between Marvel, Bromberger, and Wertham were made public in November 1948 during an WMCA radio show called “Something Ought to Be Done.” The format of the show was based on letters sent by the public and responses to the letters from leading authorities in certain professional fields. In this episode of the show, an anonymous letter was sent in which the author confessed that he:

was in a subway toilet one day when a man came in. He made advances to me which meant only one thing. Since I am in this pathetic mental condition I reciprocated to his advances. Whereupon, this ‘gentleman’ pulled out a badge and told me that I was under arrest. I was arrested and taken to a Police Court. For the first time in my life, outside of my army career, I was fingerprinted. I was advised to plead guilty, which I did. I pleaded guilty and the judge sentenced me to a \$25.00 fine or 10 days in jail.<sup>63</sup>

Wertham, Marvel, Bromberger, Whitman (the author of the *Collier’s* article), and New York State Senator McNeill Mitchell were invited to respond. At first, the moderator J. Raymond Walsh suspected the integrity of the letter, but Bromberger and Wertham affirmed its legitimacy because they had seen thousands of similar cases.

They all agreed that the events described in the letter were true but they disagreed about the ethical merits of using police entrapment in public restrooms to arrest D.C. 8’ers. Bromberger said that men arrested for disorderly conduct did not have a right to complain about the ways in which they were arrested, “because, after all, to detect crime, we must have people who will detect crime, and the fact that he may have been invited into the offense merely emphasizes his problems and is no cause for criticism of the

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<sup>63</sup> “Homosexuality.” *Something Ought to Be Done*, hosted by J. Raymond Walsh, WMCA, New York City, NY, 1 Nov. 1948.

detective authorities.’’ Wertham challenged Bromberger’s defense of police entrapment by saying that he did not like "the idea of egging a man on to commit any crime."

Bromberger responded by asking, “How else are you going to discover them, doctor?

Many of these men are grateful that they have been brought in, as a matter of fact.” The pair was determined to disagree. Marvel deployed his Quaker discernment techniques and the conflict resolution skills he developed in war-torn Paris again by deescalating the argument. He interjected with a description of how the clinic operates and helped listeners of the show focus on the value of the clinic. He also spoke about Quaker support for youth mental health services. In closing, the moderator assured audiences that “this is something that can be dealt with, it isn’t insanity, it isn’t criminality of the kind that has to be put away, it can be dealt with,” shortly before giving the address of the CRC and inviting listeners to visit if their services were needed. A few weeks after the radio show aired, a copy of its transcript was reprinted in *the Journal of Sex Education*.<sup>64</sup>

After the WMCA broadcast, things seemed to get better for the CRC before they got terribly worse. Doris Clark from the Court’s probation office wrote a letter to QES expressing gratitude for paying the salary of a full time Psychiatric Social Worker and she praised Wertham for the panel of psychiatrists he put together.<sup>65</sup> The clinic instituted a sliding-scale for their services with plans to expand the scope of their operations the following year. Their goal was to help “even those involved in offenses other than sexual . . . [because] sex delinquents are often involved in other infractions of the law, minor or

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<sup>64</sup> Transcript is reprinted in *Journal of Sex Education*, vol. 2, 1949, pp. 66-75.

<sup>65</sup> Clark, Doris. “Letter to Lancaster Greene.” 7 Nov, 1949. Found in Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 44.

major, and psychiatric examination, given almost routinely to those under the jurisdiction of the Courts, can frequently point out the possibility of future anti-social behavior, sexual and otherwise.”<sup>66</sup> Bromberger stopped complaining about the daily operations of the clinic and the activities of its staff and the QES leadership started to promote the clinic as a “demonstrable project” for how other social service agencies might support D.C. 8’ers.

All of this positive momentum would come to a halt in March 1951, when Marvel (who had been married to a woman for decades) was arrested for soliciting sex from an undercover police officer in a subway toilet. Suddenly, it was revealed that Marvel’s pursuit of abolishing laws and the enforcement of laws which target gay men was personal. Within three weeks of Marvel’s arrest, the Magistrate’s court stopped sending clients to the clinic, and a week after that the Quakers closed it forever. According to Ryan,

Dr. Wertham would tell one of the volunteer psychiatrists that he had to close the clinic because ‘there were things going on which I’m sure you didn’t know’--almost certainly a reference to Marvel’s arrest. The clients were abandoned, the volunteers were disbanded, and the New York City courts seemed to give up on understanding homosexuality at all.<sup>67</sup>

The *New York Times* praised the CRC in an article, “Quakers to Close Sex Case Clinic,” for serving over 15,000 people.<sup>68</sup> Wertham stated in the article that the clinic had to close because the Quakers were unwilling to continue to fund the project. That may be true, but

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<sup>66</sup> Cheatham, Vivian. “Letter to the Magistrates Court.” 20 Sept 1950. Found in Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 51, Folder 3.

<sup>67</sup> Ryan, 234.

<sup>68</sup> “Quakers to Close Sex Case Clinic: Hold Project in Magistrates Court Shows Need for Fewer, Arrests, More Treatment.” *The New York Times*. 25 April, 1951, pp. 44.

it is more likely that Marvel's arrest and tragic end was so humiliating to the Quakers, who had once held Marvel in such high esteem, that QES rescinded their funding to shore up the respectability of Friends. The QES was at one time fearlessly dedicated to exercising their peace testimony and applying an abolitionist critique of law enforcement in order to protect gay men from state-sponsored violence, but their religious convictions were compromised over time and finally broke when one of their own was disgraced in public. Quaker values falter when Friends fear that their reputation may be at risk.

In May of 1951, the QES leadership met to discuss the details of closing the (now renamed again) "Rehabilitation Center." At the meeting, Wertham said the Rehabilitation Center had been open for three years, entirely erasing the work that Henry and Gross had done from 1946-1948. He also said it was "difficult to measure the success of the Center" and "impossible to scientifically rate value," showing that he was unaware of the quantified success rate that Marvel and Bromberger spoke about on the WMCA broadcast. In his final remarks, Wertham said he was pleased that "the Harvard student who was expelled on verge of graduation, and referred by someone to [the] Q.E.S. Center had treatments for 1 year. He was then able to reapply to Harvard." In the minutes of the last meeting of the CRC, Friends reported "it is very difficult to treat a man after arrest" and "there is a need for a center for 14, 15 year olds." A concern for adolescent psychology, harkening back to the QES lectures which gave rise to the CRC clinic, persisted. The meeting ended with a resolution that the Rehabilitation Center was not to reopen "unless it could be more adequately staffed and a sufficient amount of money available."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Meeting Minutes Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, SC 192, Quaker Emergency Service records, ca. 1941-1948, Box 51, Folder 3.

In many ways, the CRC was extraordinary and the Quakers deserve high commendations for their valiant and unprecedented efforts to help men arrested for gay sex avoid arrest or imprisonment. At the same time, the Quakers demonstrated a conservative commitment to respectability and they forged a dubious alliance with the psychiatric establishment and a tumultuous partnership with the legal system. While Marvel was intimately involved in the activities of the clinic, most of the New York City Friends offered support for the clinic from a distance. In some instances, Quakers directly interfered with the goals and objectives of the clinic's staff. But rather than caricature Quakers as the friend or foe of gay men at this time, it is better to situate the work of the CRC in a much larger historical narrative about the development of Quaker views on mental health and homosexuality. If we continue to broaden and then sharpen our field of analysis, we will discover that the CRC sheds light on prevailing cultural concerns about the perceived vulnerabilities of adolescent and young adult men in the post-war era, the formation of a link between criminality and the pathology of homosexuality, and the emergence of a figure which was more increasingly becoming known as the "homosexual" in American society.

The Quaker mandate from Fox to "walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one" seems to have deeply influenced the work of the CRC, especially in its earlier iterations when Friends values were more acutely integrated into the operations and goals of the clinic. Quakerism as a religion contains vast theological diversity, from agnostic and non-theist Friends to Evangelical "Christ-centric" Quakers, but one belief that is almost universally shared between all of the major Quaker traditions, and also one of the few that has endured the test of history, is the belief that there is the substance of

God, however known, in each person. In the modern era, Quakers have traditionally called this essence of God in each person the “Inner Light.” The doctrine of the Inner Light is so much more than a call for Quakers to recognize that of God in each person, it also includes a religious obligation to remove any form of direct, structural, or cultural oppression that restricts the freedom of the Inner Light to express itself. This core teaching of Quakerism has led Friends to stand in the vanguard of abolition movements, women’s rights, and mental health reform. The York Retreat in Britain and Friends Asylum in the United States were some of the first mental health institutions to treat patients with respect and benevolence. According to Charles L. Cherry, “it is a matter of strict religious duty to see that expressions of the Light are not hindered, either by slavery or other forms of physical and mental oppression. Even the most severely afflicted of the mentally ill, Quakers believe, retain that spark of the light which makes them God’s children.”<sup>70</sup> Undoubtedly, Marvel believed this too. He also observed that the military, the criminal justice system, the medical establishment, and the social service agencies in his time were failing to recognize or act on the essence of this most important of Quaker beliefs.

After the CRC closed in 1951, Quaker support for the rights, safety, and wellbeing of gay people would quietly go dormant in the United States for more than a decade. Marvel’s sponsorship of the first social service organization for gay people drifted from the memory of liberal Friends and has been seemingly forgotten by Quaker historians. Research for this project suggests that a publication about Marvel’s dedication to the CRC has not yet been produced by a Quaker author. Research conducted for this

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<sup>70</sup> Cherry, Charles L. *A Quiet Haven: Quakers Moral Treatment and Asylum Reform*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 1989, pp. 91.

project also found that gay and lesbian Friends decades later, in the 1960s and 1970s, rarely if ever mentioned the CRC clinic. It is highly plausible that gay and lesbian Quakers of the early homophile and post-Stonewall era had not heard about Marvel's important contributions to the history of gay rights. The 1950s was a period of accentuated repression of gay and lesbian people and Marvel's legacy was swiftly suppressed after his arrest.

As the 1950s progressed, Quaker tracts continued to imply that any romantic or sexual partnership outside of a heterosexual marriage was inconsistent with Christian teachings. And when a famous Quaker pacifist was arrested for gay sex in 1953, he was ridiculed and punished by the Quaker community. At the same time, members of the American literary elite began to wonder if Quaker aesthetics could accommodate queer extravagance.

## CHAPTER 2: 'TOO QUEER TO BE QUAKER'

We refuse to recognize what it was that he and Bob shared together. Oh dear, we're so dreadfully smug and arrogant, most of us; so very sure we know what's right and wrong. Sometimes, Stephen, this lack of charity—even among those of us who call ourselves Friends—it horrifies me!<sup>71</sup>

-*The World in the Evening* by Christopher Isherwood (1954)

An examination of reports and pamphlets written by Quaker “Family Relationship” and “Family Relations” committees from 1949-1955, reveal that Quakers were in a panic about what they perceived as “dangers to family life and the decline in moral standards” during the cold war era.<sup>72</sup> In 1949, the London Yearly Meeting published a report about how to protect the integrity of Quaker families and the two Philadelphia Yearly Meetings (Hicksite and Orthodox) distributed several thousand copies of it to American Friends, acknowledging it as the official position of their Yearly Meetings. This pamphlet was recognized as the official stance of Philadelphia Quakers after the unification of the Hicksite and Orthodox branches in 1955, and at least through the early 1960s. The pamphlet described what Friends were meant to perceive as troubling changes in society: marriages were becoming weaker, divorces were on the rise, and there was a rapid increase in the number of children born to unmarried parents.<sup>73</sup> The pamphlet further claimed that a decline in religious convictions, changes to personal

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<sup>71</sup> Isherwood Christopher. *The World in the Evening*. Paperback ed. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2013, pp. 81.

<sup>72</sup> See Frost, J. William. *Sex is not a shortcut to spirituality: Liberal Quakers Confront the 20th-century Sexual Revolutions*. 28 July 2001. Swarthmore College Manuscript: <http://www.swarthmore.edu/Library/friends/FGC2000.htm> Accessed June 2023.

<sup>73</sup> "The Marriage Relationship: Report of a Commission appointed by direction of London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)." London; Society of Friends, 1949.

moral standards, and the spread of liberal sexual morality, such as the idea that marriage was not necessary for living a happy life, were together causing families as they had been traditionally configured in the Quaker world to fall apart. World War II also challenged family structures and lifeways, as non-Quaker men left to serve in the army and many Quaker men and women left their homes to serve as conscientious objectors in the Selective Civil Service. The pamphlet accused modern society of too much sexual stimulation but not enough sex education, too much alcohol consumption, a collapse of parental control over children, and a rise of women's empowerment (which ironically was congruent with Quaker beliefs in gender equality), all of which further threatened the continuation of the traditional Quaker family. And the failure of the family was described by the pamphlet as having almost apocalyptic consequences. It warned that if things continued in the way that they were "the whole structure of our society would crumble, and there would be no security for future generations.

In response to a world which they perceived to be propelling itself into greater depths of moral chaos, Philadelphia Quakers took action in an effort to strengthen Quaker marriages and families according to the American cultural standards of the time. In 1952, the two Family Relations Committees of the two Philadelphia Yearly Meetings submitted a joint report asking for Friends to consider hiring "a Counselor with religious motivation as well as professional training; this service to be subsidized by the two Yearly Meetings and made available to members needing help with personal problems."<sup>74</sup> The Family Relationships Committees found a counselor willing to work without pay who would offer a limited but generous amount of his time. In the first year of operation, the Friends

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<sup>74</sup> Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. *Family Relations Committee Report*, 1952.

Counseling Service saw 75 individuals, then grew to 115 clients the following year, and up to 200 by 1957. The counseling staff, which soon grew to three counselors, had strict instructions not to offer psychiatric care, but rather ‘religiously oriented’ advice on relationships and family planning.

In 1959, the Family Relations Committee of PYM (now that the Hicksite and Orthodox branches had unified) released its own pamphlet, effectively updating what they learned and adopted from the London Yearly Meeting pamphlet from 1949.<sup>75</sup> The new pamphlet was titled, “Engagement, Marriage, Parenthood,” and it had three sections on the three topics named in its title. In the first section, “Engagement,” the pamphlet described an engaged couple as one that “walks on air in their mutual happiness and love.” Without explicitly forbidding homosexuality or sex outside of marriage, the pamphlet clearly expressed a preference for sex in a monogamous heterosexual marriage. It warned that long engagements are “unnatural” and that “the physical relationship” between two engaged persons “may be approached with joyous expectation by some . . . while others may feel too uncertain, shy or self-conscious.” In this way, the authors of the 1959 Family Relations Committee pamphlet, in classic liberal Quaker fashion, did not articulate a doctrinal condemnation of sex outside of marriage, but rather they expressed a strong preference for monogamous heterosexual marriages. In the second section, “Marriages,” the pamphlet states that:

sex is in itself [is] neither moral nor immoral, but may be the beautiful expression of a deep love or the casual satisfaction of an appetite, according to the way we make use of it. To the husband and wife who look upon sexual intercourse as an expression in terms of the body of their loving union of heart and mind, it will remain one of the greatest joys and richest experiences marriage can provide.”

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<sup>75</sup> Family Relations Committee of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. *Engagement, Marriage, Parenthood*. Philadelphia, 1959.

Again, the author's attempt to appear ambivalent about the moral value of sex and they do not explicitly condemn gay sex, however, they do exclusively promote monogamous heterosexual married partnerships, which effectively precludes gay people as long as gay marriage was unlawful. The third section of the pamphlet, "Parenthood," focused on having children and parenting, which also speaks exclusively to heterosexual couples.

The historical and cultural context of American Quakerism in the 1950s is key to understanding why the Family Relationships/Relations Committees said nothing about homosexuality. By this time, American Quaker culture had reached the pinnacle of a long process of assimilation into mainstream American ways of life, including prevailing sexual mores. For most of their history, Quakers lived proudly as a 'Society' of people 'hedged' away from the rest of the world. In the seventeenth century, Friends were known for being counter-cultural in their refusal to remove their hats, bow, or curtsy when introduced to members of the social elite. They also changed their manner of speaking in order to demonstrate their resistance to social hierarchies. Instead of using the formal "you" or "your," forms of address typically reserved for persons of high status, such as in "Your Highness," early Quakers used "thee," "thy," and "thine" when speaking to persons from any social class. In the class-centered world of seventeenth-century England, the Quakers were viewed sympathetically by some as peculiar and less sympathetically by others as socially dangerous.

By the early twentieth century, most American Quakers were not using plain speech, dressing in simple clothing, refusing to adorn their homes with ornamentation, or practicing strict adherence to endogamy rules. Their views about sex were rapidly becoming more with sexual norms in the general population. They had not, however,

escaped the popular image of being a peculiar people. In the twentieth century, when American Quakers refused to fight in the Great War and World War II, their values were questioned and used against them. A new image of the American Quaker was emerging after World War II, someone who looks and speaks like any other American, but internally holds beliefs and convictions that run counter to prevailing standards of patriotism. It was in the context of these American Quaker values, norms, and ideals from the 1950s that an esteemed black Quaker peace activist, named Bayard Rustin, was arrested for oral sex in the back of a car with two men. It was revealed that his sexual life was entirely antithetical to what had been prescribed by the Family Relationship/Relations Committees.

By 1953, Rustin was a nationally recognized Quaker activist who was known for his work with the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). In 1948, he gave the distinguished William Penn Lecture at the historic Arch Street Meetinghouse, in which he encouraged Friends to think expansively about how their peace testimony might call them to social justice work after the war had ended.<sup>76</sup> He was known for being an outspoken advocate for demilitarization and he dedicated his life's work towards racial reconciliation decades before the civil rights movement caught its momentum. He would become one of the most important civil rights leaders of the mid-twentieth century. He mentored Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Christian approaches to non-violent social change, taught some of the most influential civil rights leaders about the philosophy of Gandhian nonviolent resistance, and developed many of the civil disobedience techniques that were used in some of the most

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<sup>76</sup> Rustin, Bayard. "In Apprehension, How Like a God!" Young Friends Movement, 1948.

effective civil rights direct actions of the mid-twentieth century. Rustin, an openly gay Friend, was the lead organizer for the March on Washington in 1963. He also accepted imprisonment for his beliefs. Nine years before his arrest for gay sex, Rustin was convicted for refusing to appear at a draft office and violating the Selective Service Act. For this, Quakers wrote him dozens of letters of support and encouragement.<sup>77</sup> After his arrest for refusing to register with the military, he would continue to work for Quaker organizations and receive invitations to speak at large gatherings of Friends.

Rustin was raised in West Chester, Pennsylvania by his grand-parents and it was his grandmother, Julia, that taught him about Quaker values, history, and theology at a young age. His grandmother was raised a Quaker, but she attended her husband's African Methodist Episcopal church with Rustin when he was a child. As a young person, therefore, Rustin was taught the message of the social gospel and liberation of the oppressed from the Black protestant church tradition and Quakerism. He would later write: "My activism did not spring from my being gay, or, for that matter, from my being black. Rather, it is rooted fundamentally in my Quaker upbringing and the values that were instilled in me by my grandparents who reared me." He also developed a close relationship with a Quaker librarian who discussed books with him about war and peace and it was a lecture from the esteemed Quaker professor Rufus Jones at Haverford College that spurred a "vital turn" in his spiritual development, convincing him to identify as a Quaker.

He had his first experience with AFSC as a college student in 1937 when he participated in a convention of activists on Cheyney University's campus in West

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<sup>77</sup> D'Emilio, John. *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*. University of Chicago Press; 2nd edition, October 1st, 2004.

Chester. That same year, he attended an AFSC-sponsored activist training summer program for young people in Auburn, New York. According to John D’Emilio, the AFSC summer program was rooted in a relatively new approach to activism for Quakers: peace education through immersion in the life of a local community. Rustin worked on a playground as an athletic and craft director, contributed to a radio broadcast on peace and international relations, and produced a ballet about nonviolence. Bayard would later say, “I would never have come to certain social concerns had I missed the experience with the AFSC.”<sup>78</sup> It was also in Auburn that Rustin drew close to Norman Whitney, a Quaker activist and professor of English at Syracuse University. Whitney would be one of many older men in Rustin’s life that would mentor, protect, and care for him. Whitney was also Rustin’s first spiritual advisor and a life-long friend whom he deeply trusted. D’Emilio proposes that since the pair were so close, Rustin might have confided in Whitney about his “homosexual longings that increasingly preoccupied him.”<sup>79</sup> In his formative years as a young adult, Rustin’s identity as peace activist and an openly gay man was taking shape while he was being mentored by Friends.

Quakers were present during Rustin’s early professional and sexual development and they would continue to offer him support as his reputation for being a powerful speaker on nonviolence gained national recognition. Rustin moved to New York City in 1937, enrolled in a degree program at City College (which he never finished), joined the Young Communist League (YCL)--drawn to what he believed was the Communist Party’s commitment to racial justice--and became an official member of 15th Street

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<sup>78</sup> D’Emilio, 26.

<sup>79</sup> D’Emilio, 27.

Meeting, the same meeting Marvel, the Chairman of QES attended. It is possible that Rustin knew about a clinic for gay men on the second floor of the 15th Street Meetinghouse, but research for this project did not produce any concrete evidence to prove that he was aware of it.<sup>80</sup>

The business meeting minutes of 15th Street Meeting do not mention Rustin's arrest in 1953, and it is unclear if Rustin's sexuality was known or discussed off-the-record among New York City Quakers. Rustin was an infrequent attendee at 15th Street Meeting and scholars have said little about his participation at Meeting for Worship. Rustin was also often out-of-town; he maintained a busy travel schedule and spent many years in prison for his civil disobedience. When the CRC opened, for example, Rustin was in Ashland prison for refusing to comply with orders to report to a draft office from the Selective Service. Shortly after his release from prison, he organized the Journey of Reconciliation, the first of the Freedom Rides, and spent considerable time traveling through the American South. For the remaining years of the CRC, Rustin was in India learning about nonviolent civil resistance from Gandhi's predecessors and meeting with leaders of independence movements in Ghana and Nigeria. He also strained his relationship with 15th Street Meeting when he wrote a heated letter denouncing the efforts of the Meeting to support soldiers returning from WWII.<sup>81</sup> Rustin believed that supporting military veterans allowed the military to retreat from its responsibility to deal with the physical, psychological, emotional, and social consequences of war.

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<sup>80</sup> Rustin would continue to work with members of the Socialist Party of Norman Thomas, namely Phillip A. Randolph, and the ardent pacifist and socialist A.J. Muste for most of his career.

<sup>81</sup> Rustin, Bayard. "War is Wrong." Printed in *I Must Resist : Bayard Rustin's Life in Letters*. (City Lights Books 2012), 2-4.

In the years he was becoming more known as a public Friend, his homosexuality was becoming less of a secret, in large part because Rustin was quite candid about his homosexuality for most of his adult life. Indeed, Rustin's openness about his sexuality as a public figure in the 1950s should be honored as courageous, a form of gay rights activism in itself. Shortly after he moved to New York, he started to date Davis Platt, a younger white student he met at a peace-conference. Platt was also connected to Quakers and involved in AFSC service-projects and events. D'Emilio writes that Platt became integrated into Rustin's peace activist community:

[Platt] was young and eager and already leaning toward a Quaker view of war and social justice, he was made to feel welcome, and soon was comfortable appearing there [at the office of the FOR] regardless of Rustin's presence. He got to know the FOR staff and socialized with them in the evenings. If Rustin's inclination toward men was unclear to his workmates before this, Platt's continuing presence made it plain to many of them.<sup>82</sup>

A.J. Muste, Rustin's immediate supervisor at the FOR and a recorded Quaker minister, was uncomfortable with the manner by which Rustin was open about his sexuality. He frequently expressed concerns that Rustin's sexuality would harm the peace-movement. An incident at Ashland, after two prisoners and several guards accused Rustin of having sex with other prisoners, drove Muste to rage. The warden punished Rustin by placing him in administrative segregation—a cell that was separate from the other prisoners—and Muste visited Rustin to express his disapproval of his actions. A month later, Muste wrote Rustin a scathing letter, saying he was,

guilty of gross misconduct, specially reprehensible in a person making the claims to leadership and—in a sense—moral superiority which you were making . . . You had deceived everybody, including your own comrades and most devoted friends . . . You were capable of making the 'mistake' of

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<sup>82</sup> D'Emilio, 70.

thinking that you could be the leader in a revolution of the most basic and intricate kind at the same time that you were a weakling in an extreme degree and engaged in practices for which there was no justification, which a person with a tenth of your brains must have known would defeat your objective . . . You are still far from facing reality in yourself. In the self that has been and still is you, there is nothing to respect, and you must ruthlessly cast out *everything* in you which prevents you from facing that. Only so can your true self come to birth—through fire, anguish, complete and child-like humility.<sup>83</sup>

Platt recalls that Muste even tried to convince Rustin to end his relationship, not because it was wrong or evil, but because “it was not viable and if Bayard continued in this way it could destroy him and hurt the movement.”<sup>84</sup> Muste professed the same ideology expressed by the Family Relations/Relationships Committees, that true fulfillment could only be achieved and sustained in the context of a monogamous heterosexual marriage. When speaking with Rustin, Muste would insist that gay relationships were not only shallow and fleeting, they were “practices for which there was no justification.”

A letter from Franny Lee, a close Quaker friend of Rustin’s, who allowed him to sleep in her home with Platt in the same bedroom, articulates a gentler response to Rustin’s sexual transgressions, but retains some of the same paternalism. Lee learned about Rustin’s troubles at Ashland and his contrition about lying to the prison staff about it from Muste. She wrote to Rustin with compassion and concern: “I have never minded the physical angle, and I’ve *always* known of it—The only thing that bothered me . . . is that you tried to hide it from me, and therefore it made any close relationship slightly unreal because of that pretense always between us.”<sup>85</sup> D’Emilio points out that

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<sup>83</sup> Qtd. in D’Emilio, 102.

<sup>84</sup> Qtd. in D’Emilio, 70.

<sup>85</sup> Qtd. in D’Emilio, 110.

paradoxically Lee allowed Rustin to sleep in her home with another man, and yet she accuses him of secrecy about their relationship. Regardless, Lee proceeds to tell Rustin in her letter about her perspective on love, the physicality of gay sex, and her concerns about gay male promiscuity. Since Lee's letter provides so much insight into the complex relationship Quakers had with homosexuality in the 1950s, a portion of it is worth quoting at length:

I would still be not at all concerned at [the physical] side of things if I felt a sense of real love for another person-For it is in the totality of your relationships with other people that I think the difficulty lies-You know how it has been-Relationships have been intense perhaps, but basically very casual for you . . . It dulls everything into intense momentary pleasures, with no regard for the whole personality of the other human being involved-When these pleasures become so important, then everything else becomes less so and it is easy to lie and pretend always more . . . [I] do not begrudge anyone *any* sort of relationship if it is the basis of a really creative and constructive life . . . However, now I wonder somehow, for you, if it ever *can* lead to stable or secure relationships, or whether it *can* be satisfying in the long run-I wonder if it isn't ultimately only frustrating and therefore a natural header into promiscuity . . . it is not the physical side, but the promiscuity and carelessness which bothers me-They lead absolutely nowhere, and I am so concerned that you find a way that is absolutely right *for you*-you have so much to give to others, and are inherently such a creative and forceful person that it would be so wrong for you not to find it.<sup>86</sup>

What Lee's letter reveals is that among some liberal Quakers in the 1950s, the physical act of gay sex was not wrong or sinful, but rather it was understood as inherently inferior because it was (in their view) ephemeral, lacking substance, and susceptible to moral corruption. The problem for Lee was not arousal or intercourse between two individuals of the same sex, 'the physical side' as she put it, but the weak capacity of gay sex to bolster self-esteem and substantiate 'real love.'

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<sup>86</sup> Qtd. in D'Emilio, 110.

Along with the writings of the Family Relations/Relationships Committees, Muste and Lee provide us with insight into how liberal American Quakers in the 1950s disapproved of sex for the sake of arousal and pleasure, also known as ‘casual sex.’ And Rustin was known to have a lot of casual sex. After his ordeal at Ashland, he promised Platt that their relationship would remain monogamous and he tried to impress upon Muste that his sexual behavior would change. But his commitment to sexual fidelity with one monogamous partner was short-lived. Platt bemoaned that Rustin continued to have sex with other people “all over the country . . . he seduced people right and left.”<sup>87</sup> In October of 1946, only four months after his release from prison and while he was still living with Platt, a police officer arrested Rustin for committing a lewd act in public. He was arrested again that year for being in a public park after dark.

Muste was often the person who picked Rustin up from jail after a night of cruising and he continued to insist that Rustin change his behavior. D’Emilio writes, “Rustin was left tensely poised between desires that threatened to sabotage his vocation and demands to exercise a control that eluded him. In his work, the willingness to take risks and put himself in the path of danger made him heroic in the eyes of his comrades. The same characteristic in pursuit of sex brought him trouble and endless conflict.”<sup>88</sup> For a time, Rustin and Platt practiced non-monogamy and even shared sexual partners, but Platt found this arrangement untenable and told Rustin to leave the apartment they shared in New York City. AFSC and FOR staff also reported that they were frustrated with Rustin’s sexual advances towards them during work assignments. Decades later, during

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<sup>87</sup> Qtd. in D’Emilio, 172.

<sup>88</sup> Qtd. in D’Emilio, 174.

preparatory meetings for the March on Washington, civil rights leadership openly discussed his promiscuity and asked Rustin to practice discretion for the sake of the civil rights movement.

In January of 1953, while traveling and lecturing along the American west coast on a tour sponsored by the AFSC, Rustin's penchant for public sex finally shattered his relationship with other Quaker organizers beyond repair. After speaking to audiences at the American Association of University Women at the Pasadena Athletic Club, he wandered into the streets of downtown Pasadena, and around 3:00 A.M. a police officer arrested Rustin for performing oral sex on two men in the back seat of their car.<sup>89</sup> From the police station, Rustin was somehow able to contact the AFSC staffer who arranged his speaking tour and a group of Quakers came to bail him out and find him a lawyer. After his release, Rustin sent word to Muste that he would immediately submit his resignation to the FOR. California newspapers spread word of Rustin's arrest and the FOR leadership gathered to consider Rustin's continued employment in their organization. After a dozen years of service, the FOR distributed a statement to their staff and other pacifists expressing their "sorrow with him [Rustin] over the fact that he is not able to continue as an FOR member." According to Dorothy Hassler, Director of Membership for FOR, Rustin was fired not because "he was gay, but that he was sort of promiscuously gay."<sup>90</sup> Since Muste was a well-known weighty Friend on the FOR staff, and Rustin's supervisor, he was going to be no help in protecting Rustin's reputation among Friends.

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<sup>89</sup> D'Emilio, 191-192.

<sup>90</sup> Qtd. in D'Emilio., 197.

The AFSC response to Rustin's arrest was mixed at first, but voices in favor of distancing AFSC from Rustin eventually prevailed. Elenor Clark scolded the AFSC: "to have used a man with this particular history in the public way we did was, it seems to me a constant threat (more emotional, undoubtedly, than physical) to the young people to whom we sent him, and could not have done other in the long run than hurt the causes of peace and race relations." Steve Cary, an AFSC staffer who had known Rustin for years, rebutted this sentiment by writing: "I have felt confident that the Committee was not exposing any of its young people to risk. I still believe this to be the case." Some wrote to Lewis Hoskins, the executive secretary of AFSC begging him to keep Rustin and pointing out that many "highly respected white men have the same fault" but not the same consequences to their career. Thomas Jones, president of Earlham College (Quaker), pointed out that the State Department was investigating its employees "known to have this weakness." Clarke concluded that Rustin's arrest had resulted in "a great setback to our [AFSC] work in peace and race relations . . . We were wrong in taking these risks."

In 1955, two years after his arrest, Rustin would play a pivotal role in writing *Speak Truth to Power*, an AFSC report that urged nonviolent responses to international conflicts involving the United States. *Speak Truth to Power* focused on the practical efficacy of love to solve interpersonal and international conflicts. The press reported that it was one of the greatest statements of Christian pacifism from the twentieth century. In the days and weeks leading up to its publication, the AFSC leadership feared that Rustin's gay sexuality would compromise the impact of the report and hinder its effectiveness to change public opinion and law makers. An AFSC staff member from

southern California wrote to the central office about “the vulnerability that Bayard Rustin’s name still holds in this region.” After many tense and lengthy discussions, Rustin himself supported a decision to omit his name from the list of the report’s authors. It was not until 2010 that the AFSC Board restored his name to the list and lamented the “regret[able] failure” of AFSC to not give Rustin the credit he was due.<sup>91</sup>

Muste, Lee, and the AFSC’s responses to Rustin’s arrest do not speak for all liberal Quakers, but they do bring the limits of liberal Quaker acceptance of gay sex in the 1950s into higher relief. Rather than challenging the assumption that public gay sex was a crime, protecting Rustin, or demonstrating sympathy—as Marvel might have done—the Quakers closest to Rustin shamed and punished him. The Family Relations/Relationships Committees had clearly articulated the path through intimacy, marriage, and parenthood that Friends should follow, and Rustin was breaking the rules. His behavior seemed to confirm for Friends that homosexuality led to social deviance and crime. It is not surprising, therefore, that liberal Quaker support for the rights, safety, and wellbeing of homosexuals was absent during this era.

There is, however, another unexpected entry point for understanding what Quakers may have thought about homosexuality at this time. Aside from Rustin, the most famous gay Quaker in the 1950s was Bob Wood, half of the first happy gay couple in an American novel, from Christopher Isherwood’s *The World in the Evening*.<sup>92</sup> Isherwood started writing *The World in the Evening* while doing volunteer work at a Quaker hostel

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<sup>91</sup> Eason, Leigh. “Gay, Black, and Quaker: History Catches Up with Bayard Rustin.” *Religion Dispatches*. June 2012. <https://religiondispatches.org/gay-black-and-quaker-history-catches-up-with-bayard-rustin/>

<sup>92</sup> The paperback cover of the 1988 edition of the book reprinted by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in 2013 says that *The World in the Evening* “is arguably the first mainstream novel to portray a happy life partnership between two men.”

for German-speaking refugees in Haverford, PA. During this time, he developed relationships with many Quakers, including the great theologian and educator Rufus Jones, who also inspired Rustin to start identifying as a Quaker.<sup>93</sup> In *The World in the Evening*, Bob identifies as a Quaker, and was raised in a Quaker family, but hates the moral certainty and self-assurance of liberal Friends. He also refuses to profess a belief in Quaker pacifism.<sup>94</sup> His tenuous relationship with Quakerism seems to speak for Isherwood's personal critique and general disapproval of the limits of Friends' acceptance of gay relationships.

Isherwood's fourth novel takes place during World War II but was published in 1954, the year after Rustin was arrested in California. It features Isherwood's semi-autobiographical account of a young man's early experiences with love, loss, and gay sex. Its protagonist, Stephen Monk, is an emotionally distraught writer who retreats to his childhood hometown in the suburbs of Philadelphia to temporarily live with his Quaker "aunt" Sarah, who is actually his childhood nanny, in order to recover from catching his wife in an act of infidelity during a party. In the second chapter of the book, Stephen befriends Bob, and his partner Charles Kennedy, and all three routinely visit Sarah's home and go with her to Meeting for Worship.

The majority of the book is oriented around flashbacks from Stephen's past, including his marriage to another novelist named Elizabeth, her struggle with cancer, and the affair he once had with a young man named Michael while he was on vacation with

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<sup>93</sup> Isherwood attended Meeting for Worship while living in Pennsylvania and a scene in the novel describes a Quaker Meeting for Worship in great detail. All to indicate that Isherwood was very familiar with Quaker practices and well-versed in Quaker Mid-Atlantic culture.

<sup>94</sup> Isherwood, 103.

Elizabeth in Italy. The sex Stephen has with Michael is described in some detail, but not with more graphic descriptions than what is used to describe the sex he has with various women. The reader also learns in this chapter about homosexual experiences Stephen had while living as a student at an English-boarding school. In the final section of the book, Bob joins the army—a sign of his personal triumph over his Quaker upbringing—and Stephen finalizes his divorce, just before Bob sees him sail off to Spain to serve in the U.S. Navy.

When Isherwood began writing *The World in the Evening*, he wrote to Lincoln Kirstein, a close friend and fellow writer, that he had “started a novel secretly entitled ‘Too Queer to be Quaker.’”<sup>95</sup> Isherwood situates his protagonist, Stephen, in a setting where Quaker pacifism, passion for social justice, and plain fashion are contrasted with gay characters who serve in the army, give scant attention to the needs of the oppressed, and what is described in the novel as the ‘exaggerated artificiality’ of camp. Quaker pacifism, austerity, and conservative views on sex are the foil to the authentic patriotism, glamor, and sexual liberation expressed by its gay and bisexual male characters. Harker proposes that the gay couple in *The World in the Evening* is most likely based on a Quaker couple he met while living in Haverford, John Judkyn and Dallas Part. Isherwood wrote that “Judkyn interests me because he has become a Quaker without giving up his urban chic, upper-middle-class tastes: he is still the kind of elegant, well-tailored youngish man you meet at New York Cocktail parties.”<sup>96</sup> According to Harker, Judkyn

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<sup>95</sup> Harker Jaime. *Middlebrow Queer : Christopher Isherwood in America*. (University of Minnesota Press, 2013), pp. 34.

<sup>96</sup> Qtd. in Harker, 33.

and Part represent for Isherwood a rare and surprising amalgamation of “New York camp inserted into Quaker protest.” The novel is in large part an extended meditation on the tensions between Quakerism and queer experience.

The contrast between Quaker austerity and queer camp is easily detected because it is so starkly pronounced. Charles, Bob’s lover, ridicules the Quaker’s “lack of style.” “They don’t know how to do things with an air,” he complains. “They’re hopelessly tacky. They’ve no notion of elegance.” Stephen also bemoans the dreary style of the Quakers:

They comb their hair back and twist it into a knot. They use no make-up. They wear flat heels, cheap sensible dresses, and, in summer, straw hats which somehow resemble sunbonnets . . . If war has a smell, the Quakers remind you of a taste; the taste of plain homemade bread . . . Sometimes, after a long illness, when the tired stomach recoils from every kind of sauce, spice or sweetness, you ask for that bread and you munch it humbly and gratefully, admitting sadly to yourself that this is your sane and proper diet, that all those fancy dishes were unwholesome . . . It was certainly wholesome. It was so wonderfully horribly drearily wholesome that the mere prospect of it made me want to weep.<sup>97</sup>

According to Harker, Stephen articulates Isherwood’s disdain for Quaker pacifism, or more specifically the lack of style he perceives in American anti-war activists of the time. His solution to ‘dull’ pacifism is camp and Bob’s partner Charles is the penultimate advocate for camp’s power and importance. “What I’m talking about is High Camp,” he tells Stephen. “High Camp is the whole emotional basis of the ballet, for example, and of course of baroque art. You see, true High Camp always has an underlying seriousness. You can’t camp about something you don’t take seriously. You’re not making fun of it; you’re making fun out of it. You’re expressing what’s basically serious to you in terms of

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<sup>97</sup> Isherwood, 21.

fun and artifice and elegance.”<sup>98</sup> Harker argues that Isherwood’s insistence on the seriousness of camp was not only about rebuking Quaker aesthetics, but rather Isherwood sought to chasten the literary elite for their inability to understand the impact of social and political critique that was both earnest and flamboyant.

The sweet conflation of serious protest and humorous camp that Isherwood seeks to promote is expressed by Bob through his paintings. Stephen says he was able to see in Bob’s paintings, “the conflict between Bob’s birthright Quakerism and Charles’s ‘High Camp.’ Perhaps the creation of ‘Quaker Camp’ would be the only possible solution to Bob’s problems, both as a human being and a painter.”<sup>99</sup> At one point in the second chapter, Stephen asks Charles outright if Bob thought the Quakers needed High Camp. “He does in his heart,” said Charles, “but he [Bob] won’t admit it. He can’t criticize them or discuss them objectively, at all; he can only love them or hate them. He’s in a classically schizoid predicament. His conscience is split right down the middle.”<sup>100</sup> Charles may be expressing here the author’s eagerness to criticize the Friends and his apprehension about doing so.

At first glance, the characters of *The World in the Evening* seem to have the capacity to help American Quakers feel more comfortable supporting gay people’s pursuit of more rights, dignity, and respect in American society. Stephen as its protagonist had a Quaker background and gay sexual experiences. Gay relationships are portrayed in the novel as healthy and sustainable. And the most Quaker character in the

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<sup>98</sup> Isherwood, 115.

<sup>99</sup> Isherwood, 115.

<sup>100</sup> Isherwood, 111.

novel, Sarah, delights in the company of her gay friends. Closer inspection of the novel, however, shows that Bob, Stephen, and Sarah each respectively articulate ways in which American Quakers during the mid-twentieth century felt at odds with expressing a positive evaluation of homosexuality.

Bob and Stephen's enlistment in the armed forces at the end of the novel, rather than choosing the path of conscientious objection as many Quakers did during World War II, puts the authenticity of Bob and Stephen's Quakerism into question. Bob tells Stephen, "I thought to myself: I can't be a CO because, if they declared war on the queers—tried to round us up and liquidate us or something—I'd fight. I'd fight till I dropped, I know that. I'd be so mad, I wouldn't even be scared... So how can I say I'm a pacifist?"<sup>101</sup> For many Quakers, military service would effectively disqualify Bob as a member of the Religious Society in good standing, but for Isherwood, Bob's choice to join the army is noble and courageous, because he risks being disciplined, or dismissed, by the army for his homosexuality. Bob explains to Stephen that: "All you have to do is tell them you're queer, and you're out. I couldn't do that, though. Because what they're claiming is that us queers are unfit for their beautiful Army and Navy—when they ought to be glad to have us."<sup>102</sup> This is one of the ways that Isherwood dually challenges Cold War assumptions that gay men, and Quakers, were disloyal and unpatriotic. Bob chooses military service, rather than being conscripted like so many others, and this choice entailed great risk for him as a gay man. He is portrayed by Isherwood as a brave, manly, and patriotic figure relative to heterosexual soldiers or the pacifist Quakers.

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<sup>101</sup> Isherwood., 281.

<sup>102</sup> Isherwood, 281.

Stephen also joins the Navy at the end of the novel, a subtle way for Isherwood to suggest to the reader that Stephen is entering an all-male environment where gay sex might, or is likely, to happen. And yet, Stephen's sexuality is more complicated than Bob's and he cannot easily represent the respected homosexual citizen that Quakers would want to support. With two marriages to two different women, and multiple homosexual affairs, Stephen might better be categorized as a bisexual person, rather than a homosexual. In fact, Harker wonders if Stephen was created by Isherwood in order to express Isherwood's disdain for married bisexual men. Isherwood is known for publically rejecting Gore Vidal's claim that homosexuality as a discrete sexual orientation is false and that all people are inherently bisexual.<sup>103</sup> Isherwood once described Frank Taylor, a book editor and film producer, as "dishonest" because he "bragged about his homosexual affairs and even sometimes demanded that they should be respected as serious love dramas. At the same time, he became maudlin over his marriage and his responsibilities as a father." He criticized others for being "deeply false in the same way."<sup>104</sup>

Furthermore, Harker surmises that by contrasting Stephen's fraught bisexuality with the more stable homosexuality of other characters in the novel, Isherwood was intentionally challenging Cold War era assumptions about the immaturity and deviance of homosexuals. Stephen's lover, Michael, as well as Bob and Charles are emotionally grounded, charitable, monogamous, and open about their gay sexual experiences with others. Stephen, on the other hand, is emotionally immature, narcissistic, promiscuous, dishonest, and insensitive. Harker writes that Stephen is "a checklist" for the classic

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<sup>103</sup> Harker, 29.

<sup>104</sup> Qtd. in Harker, 29.

tropes of “homosexual pathology” in the mid-twentieth century, but his sexual behavior was not exclusively with men.<sup>105</sup> Isherwood clearly shows his intention to destabilize the reader’s impulse to reinforce notions of homosexual ‘maladjustment’ through Stephen by having him repeatedly refuse to identify as a homosexual. He tells Michael, “I’m not that way, and I won’t ever be. If you are, I’m sorry for you. I’m sorry for anybody who’s twisted and warped . . . You don’t understand any kind of real happiness. You know that, inside; and all this talk of being sorry for me is just a defense. You’re the one who’s pitiful.”<sup>106</sup> Stephen may try to distance himself from homosexuality, but he engages in plenty of gay sex, so for the reader his ‘sexual orientation,’ when understood as a stabilized inner essence, is ambiguous. The way Stephen fails both his heterosexual and homosexual partners suggests that the ambiguity surrounding his sexuality is there to make a point. Stephen personifies Isherwood’s long-standing assertion that homosexual and heterosexual relationships are equally susceptible to dysfunction and cruelty, and there is nothing uniquely corrupt or sinister about same-sex partnerships.

Therefore, despite Stephen’s entrenchment in Quaker communities and homosexual experiences, his immoral behavior did not inspire American Quakers to support homosexuals. Stephen personally admitted to lacking the moral qualities it took to be an openly gay person, like Michael or Bob. His second wife Jane tells Stephen, “maybe you should have tried being one. You might have been a whole lot happier, that way.” He replies, “I doubt it. It takes so much character—much more than I’ve got—to be a

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<sup>105</sup> Harker, 27.

<sup>106</sup> Isherwood, 201.

good one. And I can't stand the other kind."<sup>107</sup> Stephen may have helped Isherwood upend Cold War assumptions about homosexuals as lacking moral discipline but simultaneously he may have unintentionally reinforced the idea that men with homosexual desires are prone to deception, disillusionment, and promiscuity.

At one point Stephen considers speaking to Sarah about his sexual experiences with other men, but he ultimately decides not to and the reasons he gives for withholding this information from her strongly echo Lee's concerns about Rustin's sexual secrecy:

I'd betrayed Sarah and everything she stood for. Sarah had never taught me sexual puritanism—her mind was incapable of such dirtiness—but the possibility of her finding out what I'd been doing was too humiliating to even imagine. As for the Friends, I began to hate them and all their works. They were responsible for making me feel such an outcast. I tried to pose to myself as an honest rebel against their hypocritical smugness; they were secretly longing to behave just as I did, I told myself, only they hadn't the nerve.<sup>108</sup>

Sarah shows here that she could recognize the love Bob and Charles had for one another, but any form of gay sex outside of a monogamous partnership was unacceptable, just as the Family Relations Committee had made clear. Later, Sarah shares with Stephen that she felt as though the Quakers had difficulty with seeing the depth and seriousness of Bob and Charles' relationship. After Bob leaves for war, she says to Stephen:

I'm afraid we're all of us apt to be very cruel and simple, in the presence of what we're not accustomed to. I fear that Charles feels cut off from us now, and bitterly lonely; and we refuse him any word of comfort. We refuse to recognize what it was that he and Bob shared together. Oh dear, we're so dreadfully smug and arrogant, most of us; so very sure we know what's right and wrong. Sometimes, Stephen, this lack of charity—even among those of us who call ourselves Friends—it horrifies me!<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Isherwood., 299.

<sup>108</sup> Isherwood., 71.

<sup>109</sup> Isherwood., 289.

To be sure, the ‘we’ that Sarah describes as ‘so dreadfully smug and arrogant’ must not be misinterpreted as the greater sense of a ‘we,’ as in all of American society. She is saying something specific about the smugness and arrogance within the Society of Friends. Recall that Stephen criticized the ‘hypocritical smugness’ of Quakers before, while he was deciding whether to speak to Sarah about his affair with Michael. And elsewhere in the novel, Stephen accuses the Quakers of being “self-righteous, smug hypocrites intolerant and stupid and dull, and crazy about money for all their so-called plainness.”<sup>110</sup> The picture of American Quakers that Isherwood presents for us is of a sexually conservative people infatuated with their own sense of moral righteousness. A religious community, however progressive on many human rights issues, and one that does show respect to monogamous homosexual relationship, but cannot condone casual gay sex and has difficulty seeing the depth of connection and intimacy experienced during sex within a monogamous homosexual relationship.

By the late 1950s, liberal Quakers had not yet untethered homosexuality from sickness, sin, and crime. Marvel’s arrest for soliciting sex in public, Rustin’s arrest for similar ‘indecent’ behavior, and Stephen’s moral impropriety only served to reinforce prejudice towards homosexuals in the Quaker imagination. Although, the sexuality of these figures was not discussed in Quaker publications or in a Quaker public forum. Homosexuality was not something that religious communities talked about. The incitement to discourse about homosexuality among American Friends would come from the other side of the Atlantic. In 1963, a group of British Friends, calling themselves the Quaker Group on Homosexuality and Other Problems of Sex, propelled liberal

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<sup>110</sup> Isherwood., 82.

Quakerism into a new era of gay rights activism and put pressure on American Friends to start having a conversation about whether they felt a responsibility to protect gay people from harm and discrimination. The Quaker Group on Homosexuality and Other Problems of Sex also reflected on the connections between homosexuality, the Quaker tradition, and Christian teachings about sin in ways that no other Quaker individual or group had done before.

### CHAPTER 3: THE QUAKER GROUP ON HOMOSEXUALITY AND OTHER PROBLEMS OF SEX

The Group is the “Quaker Group on Homosexuality and other problems of sex.” Its concern has been to make a frontal but Quaker assault on the traditional Christian moral code so far as sexual behaviour is concerned and to suggest a new Christian attitude to sexual problems especially homosexuality.<sup>111</sup>

-Keith Wedmore, 1962

In 1963, the Quaker Group on Homosexuality and Other Problems of Sex published a 74-page pamphlet, *Towards a Quaker View of Sex* (TQVS), which contains what may be the earliest example on record of a positive and public evaluation of gay sexuality from a Christian group in the twentieth century. The publication of TQVS was a watershed event. Until TQVS, most English-speakers had not heard a Christian voice limit the moralizing power of the Bible or question Christian attitudes towards homosexuality. After TQVS, the claim that *all* Christian groups understood gay sex as sinful was unsound.

The origins of TQVS can be traced back to the late 1950s, when a group of young Quaker Cambridge students asked a Quaker zoology professor what the Quaker tradition had to say about homosexuality. At this time, Quaker organizations and Yearly Meetings had not yet, neither in the U.S. or the U.K., produced any statements on homosexuality, not even to denounce it. The professor invited a small group of Quakers to consider what they might say as a response to the young Friends. They began each of their meetings

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<sup>111</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers, 1958-1963, SC/258, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College.

with a full-hour of Quaker unprogrammed liturgy and they used Quaker discernment practices over a span of two and a half years to examine the theological and moral dimensions of gay sex from a Quaker perspective. They eventually concluded that “an act which expresses true affection between two individuals and gives pleasure to them both, does not seem to us to be sinful by reason alone of the fact that it is homosexual.”<sup>112</sup> And once they recognized the revolutionary nature of their work, they decided to publish their findings as a deliberate provocation to the world. The author’s of TQVS also effectively challenged the Family Relationships/Relations Committees, Muste, and Isherwood’s assertion that someone could be ‘*too queer to be Quaker.*’

The context in which TQVS was conceived was similar and different to what Marvel, Rustin, and Isherwood experienced in America. Section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, also known as the Labouchere Amendment, made any male homosexual act in the U.K. illegal, whether or not a witness was present. The language of the law was so ambiguously written that the Labouchere Amendment became popularly known as the ‘Blackmailer’s Charter.’ It allowed for the accusation of homosexuality to trigger a prosecution. A letter expressing terms of affection between two people of the same sex, for example, was all that was required to bring charges against them.

One trial in the 1950s openly challenged the legitimacy of the Labouchere Amendment, revolutionized how British people thought about homosexuality, and likely drew the sympathy of Quakers in Cambridge towards gay people. In 1953, Lord Montagu invited Peter Wildeblood, a reporter and former pilot, on vacation to his beach house in Hampshire. Wildeblood arrived with his lover, Edward McNally, and a friend from the

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<sup>112</sup> TQVS, 36

Royal Air Force (RAF) named John Reynolds. Lord Montagu's cousin, Michael Pitt-Rivers, also joined them. After the five men returned home from their holiday, gossip about what had happened at the beach house began to circulate through the RAF.<sup>113</sup> All of them were arrested and charged with 'gross indecency.' McNally and Reynolds, however, received immunity when they offered to turn over evidence which verified that illicit acts of 'abandoned behavior' had occurred. Wildeblood tried asserting at first that the weekend was 'extremely dull,' but when his love letters to McNally were read aloud in court, the sexual and romantic connection between the men was undeniable. The press ravenously reported on the trial and delighted in portraying Wildeblood, Montagu, and Pitt-Rivers as sexual deviants. It was a humiliating ordeal. Wildeblood recalls being spit at by strangers in the street. Similar to the ways gay people were targeted by the police in the United States, as evidenced by the rising number of D.C. 8'ers after the end of World War II, law enforcement in the U.K. also focused their attention on gay communities. Lord Montagu developed a life-long conviction that the Home Secretary who had called for "a new drive against male vice," and the Police Commissioner who once vowed to "rip the cover off all London's filth spots," were determined to win a high-profile conviction.<sup>114</sup> Geraldine Bedell has said that "In the mid-1950s, there was an atmosphere of a witch-hunt (probably not unrelated to what was happening in America with McCarthy), with consequent opportunities for blackmail."<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> The spotlight had already been put on Lord Montagu, because a year earlier, he was charged (but acquitted) for having sex with a fourteen-year-old Boy Scout at the same beach house.

<sup>114</sup> Aaron, Kate. "The History of Homosexuality: The Wolfenden Report." 27 September 2015. <https://katearon.com/the-history-of-homosexuality-the-wolfenden-report/> Accessed June 2023.

<sup>115</sup> Bedell, Geraldine. "Coming Out of the Dark Ages." *The Guardian*. June 24th, 2007.

Yet as the trial unfolded, public opinion began to shift. It became clear that McNally and Reynolds had been coerced by the police into giving evidence. The integrity of their testimonies was questioned and their characters ripped apart on the stand. Far from the innocent young servicemen the prosecution had painted them to be at the start of the trial, now they were seen as bribed pawns of a vicious system and cowardly liars who were willing to see their friends' lives destroyed in order to avoid imprisonment. The media changed the way they reported on the trial and Wildeblood was being portrayed as a brave hero. When he took the stand, became the first person in England's history to publicly identify as a homosexual, although he used the term 'invert' at the time, speaking tenderly about the affection he once had for McNally,

Support for Wildeblood grew stronger over the duration of the trial, and yet the jury was not moved. Wildeblood and Pitt-Rivers were sentenced to 18 months in jail and Lord Montagu was sentenced to one year for 'conspiring to incite acts of gross indecency.' After the guilty verdict was read, a mob of about 200 people formed outside the courthouse. Wildeblood, Pitt-Rivers, and Montagu waited over two hours to leave the courthouse because they were petrified that the mob had gathered to harass them. Reynolds and McNally left the courthouse first and a police brigade was needed to help them navigate through a barrage of jeers and insults. When the convicted trio were brought out, they were overwhelmed by the sound of cheering, applause, and shouts of sympathy and support.

The Wildeblood and Montagu trial was among many public dramas focused on homosexuality in the 1950s which gripped the British public and challenged Quakers to think about how their commitments to pacifism and abolition related to mass arrests of

homosexuals. In 1952, the great mathematician, computer scientist, and cryptographer Alan Turing, a national hero who had deciphered the German Enigma code during World War II, was arrested for the same anti-homosexual law used to convict Wilde and Wildeblood. Tabloid newspaper sales soared in the 1950s with sensational stories about the defected Soviet spies Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, Labour MP William Feilding, writer Rupert Croft-Cooke, and the actor John Gielgud. Estimates suggest that between 1945 and 1955, the number of annual prosecutions for homosexual acts rose from under 800 to just over 2,500 and about 1,000 men a year were given prison sentences during this period.<sup>116</sup>

In 1954, David Maxwell-Fyfe, the Home Secretary, ordered a committee (originally setup to investigate the problem of prostitution) to study homosexuals and their communities. The committee became the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution in Great Britain and its chair, Sir John Wolfenden, was supported by three women and twelve men with respective legal, medical, educational, and religious expertise. They had a total of 62 meetings, over the course of three years, about half of which were dedicated to listening to witness testimonies. Wildeblood was one of three witnesses that spoke to the committee, and the only witness that would use his legal name. The testimony of another witness, only identified as “The Doctor,” was even more pivotal in shaping the committee’s final report. The Doctor convinced the committee that homosexuality was not an illness or disability, homosexuals led ordinary lives, they posed no harm to society, they were being harmed by the existing laws, and

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<sup>116</sup> Grey, Anton. *Quest for justice: towards homosexual emancipation* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992), p. 21.

that suicide rates were high among homosexual men because they felt isolated and alienated by society.<sup>117</sup>

In 1957, the committee published what is known as the Wolfenden Report which concluded that “homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence.” The committee agreed that the law should prevent abuse and protect the young and other vulnerable individuals, however, the law should not define or regulate matters of personal morality. The Wolfenden Report said, with the authority of the British government, that homosexual acts between consenting adults in private should not be illegal. The law in the U.K., however, did not conform to the Wolfenden reports’ recommendations until homosexuality was decriminalized in 1967, four years after the publication of TQVS.<sup>118</sup>

Nonetheless, the Wolfenden report played an important role in describing homosexual experience and homosexual communities for a wider audience, including British Friends. In order for the committee to operate effectively, it needed to define what the homosexual was as well as better understand the social environments of homosexuals. This is why the committee members painstakingly compiled a dossier of information about gay sex in London, one of the greatest repositories of data on gay life in its time. They documented where gay people met, how they recognized one another, and what kind of affection they performed in different public and private spaces. The Wolfenden Report,

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<sup>117</sup> The committee was undoubtedly aware that in 1953, Turing’s housekeeper found his lifeless body in his bedroom with a half-eaten apple by the bed. While the cause of Turing’s death is disputed, two of his biographers have speculated that the half-eaten apple was injected with cyanide and this was the prevailing assumption among the public about the cause of his death at the time.

<sup>118</sup> See Aaron.

. . . provided a geography of homosexual acts and a typology of those who committed them, all part of an exercise in the techniques of productive surveillance associated with the exercise of modern state power. It documented homosexual experience, and while it often relied on medical and psychiatric expertise to explain the etiology and behavioral practices of the individual, it also engaged in the mapping of social types—the rent boy, the guardsman, the respectable gentleman—and their perambulations around the city.<sup>119</sup>

The published report of the committee in 1957 was widely distributed and quoted in numerous newspapers. For the first time, the British public was gaining insight into the world of homosexuals from a source that was not a tabloid newspaper or a literary work of fiction. British people, including Quakers no less, were starting to feel more like they knew who the homosexual was and the environments they inhabited.

Around the same time as the Wildeblood and Montagu trial, Anna Bidder (1903-2001), a zoology professor at Cambridge University and member of Jesus Lane Friends Meeting, began a weekly practice of inviting young adult Quakers into her home on Sunday evenings for a light supper and conversation. Keith Wedmore was part of the group of young Friends and he would later serve as one of the eleven co-authors of TQVS. He referred to Bidder as a “Quaker guru,” someone he felt comfortable confiding in during times of personal stress or need. He described Bidder as “formidable . . . She was the sort of woman who, when she stands up, commands the entire room immediately. She speaks clearly and to the point, and very honestly, and she sort of destroys any hypocrisy like dust in the room; it all gets swept out.”<sup>120</sup> Indeed, Bidder was highly respected in the Quaker world and among her Cambridge colleagues. She helped found

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<sup>119</sup> Waters Chris. “The Homosexual As a Social Being in Britain 1945—1968.” *Journal of British Studies* (2012), pp. 700.

<sup>120</sup> Wedmore, Keith. Interview with Neil Fullager. *LGBTQ Religious Archives Network*. 17 June 2012. <https://lgbtreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/keith-wedmore>. Accessed March 2023.

the Lucy Cavendish College where she served as its president from the year it was established in 1965 until her retirement in 1970.

Wedmore recalls that during the years between 1953-1955, the students who were gathering in Bidder's home started to express concerns about the rising number of student suicides on Cambridge's campus. Wedmore told an interviewer years later that he believed many students at that time had taken their lives because they were struggling with homosexual desires. One tragedy particularly gripped his conscience. In 1955, the same year that Wildeblood published his autobiographical account of his trial and incarceration, Wedmore found the body of his classmate, Roger Walker, lying "pink and dead" in his room with his head in the oven and the "slight smell of coal gas" lingering in the air. As one of Walker's closest friends, Wedmore took it upon himself to explain to Walker's parents his belief in the reason for his death: "And I explained to the parents in advance that he was gay - not using that word, I expect, at the time - and that . . . oh, maybe I did. But anyway, and that he was extremely worried and depressed about it all, and that that's why he had committed suicide."<sup>121</sup> Wedmore estimates there were about six suicides a year at Cambridge while he was a student in the mid-1950s. It is unclear how many student deaths were related to homosexuality, however, Turing (also from Cambridge) committed suicide one year before Walker.

Wedmore recalls that there was also a vibrant party scene at Cambridge for homosexuals and he remembers recognizing other Quaker students at these events. He thought it was somewhat odd to speak with Friends about homosexuality on Saturday evenings and then pretend that homosexuality did not exist on Sunday mornings, when

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<sup>121</sup> Wedmore interview, 2012.

Friends typically gather for worship. “So I somehow felt,” he wrote, that since, “hypocrisy is one of the main things which Quakerism has triumphed over, that I had some kind of duty to see if I could make a bridge here.” From this point forward, Wedmore intentionally started to speak more openly about his homosexuality with other young Quakers at Cambridge. When a group of young Friends went to Woodebrook, a Quaker study center in Birmingham, for a Christmas retreat, Wedmore talked about his homosexual experiences to homosexual Quakers in other parts of the U.K besides Cambridge. He was intentionally instigating conversations among young Friends and began searching for an opportunity to spark change. Disturbed by the Montagu and Wildeblood trial, reeling from Walker’s suicide, emboldened by the Wolfenden Report, and invigorated by Wedmore’s openness about his sexuality, the young Friends began to talk about homosexuality in Bidder’s home and they asked her what the Quaker tradition had to say about it. In 1957, according to Bidder, they formally presented her with ‘a minute’ of concern, challenging the Society of Friends to ‘do something’ about the Wolfenden Report.

Bidder contacted Quaker professionals in her community. She reached out to Lotte Rosenberg, a child psychiatrist; Duncan Fairn, Director of the Prison Commission; Alfred Torrie, another psychiatrist and former Director of the Retreat York; and Alastair Heron, a fellow of the British Psychological Society and Director of the Medical Research Council's Unit on Occupational Aspects of Ageing. At the end of Britain Yearly Meeting in 1958, Bidder called them all together to discuss the addition of other members. From that meeting, they invited Kenneth Nicholson, a Headmaster of a Friends School; Kenneth Barnes, also a Headmaster of a Friends School and author of many

publications on sexuality; Mervyn Parry, another Headmaster with a specialization in teaching children with special needs; and Wedmore, who was studying at Cambridge to become a barrister.<sup>122</sup> Richard Fox, another psychiatrist working for Maudsley Hospital joined the group within a year. Bidder never married and Rosenberg was divorced by her German husband during the war for her Jewish blood, so Joyce James, a marriage counselor and member of the Marriage and Parenthood Council of LYM, was added later when the group felt that a married woman's perspective was needed.

They had their first meeting in what Bidder describes as a "queer small room" at the University Women's Club on Audley Square. Wedmore recalls that it was "like all the films where this kind of thing happens. You had to touch a certain door, and then it would open, and you would be in this secret room." They would continue to meet in that place, month after month, until the end of their work together. Wedmore remembers that Bidder would prepare lunches for the group and cut little slices of lemon for their water. They pooled their money into a shared fund to help cover travel, accommodation, and food costs, especially for those in the group with more modest incomes. Bidder was named Chairman and Rosenberg served as the group's Secretary. They met regularly, once a month for about 10 months a year. Their goal was to discern,

what Quakers could say to homosexuals and to others who found that society strongly condemned their sexual feelings and who found, too, that the expression of those feelings could lead to victimization, blackmail, and imprisonment, whereas 'normal' heterosexual conduct, however irresponsible, went virtually unchallenged.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Bidder, Anna. "Writing Towards a Quaker View of Sex: A Letter" *Friends Quarterly*. October 1988, pp. 146-150.

<sup>123</sup> TQVS, 5.

Wedmore joking (and persistently) referred to the group as The Quaker Committee on Buggery or Q.C.B., but the group preferred to call themselves the Quaker Group on Homosexuality (QGH) or the Quaker Group on Homosexuality and Other Problems of Sex. The latter was sometimes used when they wanted to communicate an intention to expand the scope of their work to consider the moral value and theological nature of many forms of sex, not just homosexual, outside of married partnerships. They explain in TQVS that “the group soon found that the study of homosexuality and its moral problems could not be divorced from a survey of the whole field of sexual activity.”

At this early stage, the group had not yet decided that they wanted to publish a pamphlet or do anything besides respond to the concern expressed by the young Cambridge Friends. Their first step was to speak with a variety of representatives from Friends organizations. They started with the Young Friends Central Committee (YFCC), the formal entity of the Young Friends Movement (YFM) in Britain. Bidder and Nicholson were sent to consult with the YFCC members, and they reported back to the QGH that there was a “wide range of outlook among Young Friends.” Some had “personal experience of homosexuality” and others thought it was “outside the concern” of the YFCC. Rosenberg volunteered to write to the Clerk of the YFCC for a list of names of young Quakers that might come speak with the QGH. She also drafted a questionnaire for them with two sets of questions, some that asked about “sexual problems arising in Quakerism” and others about “the Quaker attitude towards problems arising in the wider society.”<sup>124</sup> At the second formal meeting of the QGH, Bidder shared a statement she had drafted for the YFCC. She wrote,

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<sup>124</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

I think you know that some of us have been meeting from time to time, largely as a result of the publication of the Wolfenden Report and the experience some of us have had, especially in University towns, in an attempt to make a fresh analysis of the ethics and morals of the whole field of sexual relationships for us as Christians and Quakers. We want to take nothing for granted but to get back to the very beginning, with such questions as what acts and relationships do we consider wrong and why?<sup>125</sup>

The rest of the statement presented an invitation for representatives from Young Friends to join the next QGH meeting and requested responses to Rosenberg's questionnaire.

Some questionnaire questions, and particular phrases in the minutes of the QGH's second meeting, give helpful insight into the preconceptions QGH members had about homosexuality before they started their work in earnest. The first question, "do you consider that Young Friends are faced with problems of sex in the same way as other young people?" shows that the QGH had wondered if young Quakers experienced sexuality differently than other young people. A few sections of TQVS indicate that the QGH held on to this view of Quakers and human sexuality. According to TQVS, the unique qualities of Quakerism which led Friends to a more "clear and wholesome understanding of the significance of the sex relationship" are: (1) a Quaker testimony concerning the equality of men and women, (2) a belief in continuing revelation, that divine truth is constantly becoming better known, (3) an assertion that dominant Christian traditions and creeds should be scrutinized, and (4) "Quakerism has never accepted a distinction between the sacred and the secular." Additionally, the author's of TQVS wrote that Quaker mothers and fathers tend to have certain kinds of personalities which are most typically found in families with homosexual children:

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<sup>125</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

The mother of the male homosexual frequently seems to be forceful, protective and possessive, retaining a powerful emotional hold over the lad well into maturity, while the father is often either weak and ineffectual, or remote and punitive. It is sobering to note that in many Quaker families the father bears careful witness to pacific ideals while the mother adopts a more active, aggressive and ‘emancipated’ role.<sup>126</sup>

Anticipating that readers might assume that Quaker families *create* homosexual children in greater numbers, TQVS makes clear that “the types of background associated with homosexual difficulties are, however, more complex than this and need elaborating.” Nonetheless, the QGH was curious to know if Quakers thought about and experienced sex differently than other people.

In their fourth question for the Young Friends, the QGH expressed their concern that Friends are “too hide-bound in their attitude towards sex,” another important assumption that would shape and guide their work. The moral superiority of Friends, which was weaponized against Marvel and Rustin, was also troubling for the QGH. In their minutes for the October 1958 meeting, the QGH questions whether Friends were misguidedly righteous and woefully uninformed about matters of sex: “We wonder whether Quakers have a blind spot for problems of sex, for the interest shown is much less than the energy and resources which are given to the solution of other social troubles.”<sup>127</sup> The QGH was starting to zoom in on the apparent hypocrisy of Quakers when they boasted about the peace testimony and celebrated their contributions to abolition movements, but did little for the hundreds of homosexuals who were being arrested, publicly humiliated, and thrown in jail.

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<sup>126</sup> TQVS, 59.

<sup>127</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

The minutes of the QGH's second meeting provide insight into the value the group placed in the practice of Meeting for Worship, which preceded each and every meeting they had without exception. The QGH members valued the opportunity to listen for guidance from the Inward Light and they reported that this time of inward listening was vital to the development of their conclusions about homosexuality. Wedmore wrote that it was simple as not being permitted to "chew sandwiches" during worship, which one could do without reprobation during a committee discussion.<sup>128</sup> For Barnes, the meaning of meeting for worship was much more profound. He told a large audience of Friends during a lecture that worship for the QGH led them "to face everything in ourselves as well as in the world."<sup>129</sup> In their minutes for a meeting in December 1961, the group felt that during worship they understood the need to reexamine their "thinking on sex morality, on commitment in personal relationships and commitment to God."<sup>130</sup>

Two other experiences of worship underlines its value for the QGH. After being away from the group for some time, Bidder felt compelled to deliver a message during worship. Afterwards Duncan told the group, "I haven't done the homework I said I would do for this session, and, since Anna has spoken, I have understood why." In modern Quaker parlance, Duncan felt that Bidder had already 'spoke his mind.' In sum, Meeting for Worship was a routine reminder for the QGH to submit to divine guidance, remain open to inspiration from other members, and demonstrate their care, concern, and support

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<sup>128</sup> Wedmore interview, 2012.

<sup>129</sup> Barnes Kenneth C. *The Creative Imagination*. Repr. of Swarthmore lecture 1960 ed. Friends Home Service Comm 1967.

<sup>130</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

for one another. The group reported that during a particularly moving experience of Meeting for Worship in the fall of 1958 the phrase “remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them” was spoken. After the Wildeblood and Montagu trial, Turing’s ordeal, and Walker’s tragic death, these words carried a profound resonance. The QGH wrote in their minutes that they had adopted this phrase as their motto.

The QGH continued their work by inviting two headmasters of Friends Schools to speak to them, and the headmasters spoke about how sex is taught in their schools and how they advise parents to teach about sex. They warned the QGH that homosexual behavior could take a transient form in childhood and persist into later years. In those circumstances it was “important to help the young person to overcome it without taking any punitive measure.” The headmasters also believed that children who experiment with homosexuality should be distinguished from others for whom homosexuality, “has been conditioned by early experience and is deeper rooted.”<sup>131</sup> They asserted that the latter was “not suitable” for a one-sex educational institution, rather they should be transferred to another school in a discrete and non-punitive fashion. The headmasters also suggested to the QGH that one-sex environments might promote homosexuality because an early separation from parents could thwart proper psycho-sexual development.

At their March 1959 meeting, the group decided to not invite any more guests. It was time to take stock of what they had learned and consider action steps. They noted the ways in which the headmasters spoke about their difficulty in approaching students who had been known to engage in homosexual behavior as well as the challenges homosexual students faced in speaking with faculty about their homosexual feelings. “In this

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<sup>131</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

connection, the situation of students, their loneliness and their high suicidal rate at the Old Universities, were mentioned.”<sup>132</sup> The QGH expressed frustration with the lack of research on the causes of homosexuality and they briefly considered conducting a study which would compare the problems of being a homosexual among graduates of co-educational and unisex schools. Towards the end of the March 1959 meeting, Bidder gave a summary of the work the group had conducted thus far. She said,

We have spent a long time discussing first infant sexuality, then older children, then adolescents, bringing in Young Friends. We were side-tracked into a discussion of Friends' inhibition in discussing sex. This side-tracking was necessary for us, for we as Quakers are concerned with this inhibition and we cannot discuss it with other Friends. So far we have not discussed adult homosexuality and that of the near-adult, the undergraduate. We have not yet come to the place where we could make a moral judgment, except in so far as we distinguished between the pre-marital, the extra-marital (adultery) and the transitory sexual relationship. We have discussed the problem of possible damage through transient sex relationships. We have always assumed the positive value of personality and personal relationships and we have assumed that the physical relation is important only in so far as it affects the personality and its personal relations.<sup>133</sup>

Bidder shows that in the early period of the QGH's work they were operating with the rubrics of a Freudian psycho-social model for understanding homosexuality. It made sense to them to start with Rosenberg's expertise in child psychology and then progress to talking with Young Friends before engaging with the headmasters of Friends Schools. Bidder also expresses the group's growing anxiety about how much support they might expect to receive from the Religious Society of Friends. She lays out next steps, to study adult homosexuality as well as the morality of pre-marital, extra-marital, and transitory sexual relationships. By "transient sex relationships," Bidder is referring to casual sex

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<sup>132</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

<sup>133</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

among unmarried people. The morality of casual sex would be one of the most contested issues among the QGH members as they continued to deliberate, sometimes even more contentious than discussions about homosexuality.

The group also began to question the purpose and intent of moral codes concerning human sexuality. They started discussing the effects of “social sanctions” on homosexuals, such as public slander and humiliation, effectively turning the group’s attention from structural violence (e.g. laws and police actions which targeted homosexuals) to the effects of cultural violence on homosexuals. They said they wished to distinguish between right and wrong sanctions as well as better understand what responsibility Quakers had to them. They recognized that social sanctions tended to target vulnerable communities and that for some “very sensitive” individuals, “excessive fear of sin resulting from prohibitions may have a damaging effect.” The group denounced homophobic interpretations of sin, defining the nature of sin as excessive “selfishness,” not perverse sex. They also noted while Roman Catholics have a formal process for confessing sins through a priest, Quakers could repent to God directly. In fact, the QGH thought Quakers were especially skilled at the process of repentance. Repentance requires “tremendous surrender to self-examination,” they said, something they believed was a hallmark of Quaker worship and discernment practices. Finally, the group lamented that young Quaker children are most often sanctioned for their behavior before they are given the opportunity to reflect and repent. They acknowledged that the Quaker tradition has historically admonished creeds, but “Do we [Friends] also discount [moral] Codes?”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

The spring of 1959 was a pivotal time for the work of the QGH. They were satisfied with what they had learned about childhood sexuality and better informed about the views held by Young Friends outside of the small group of students who gathered in Bidder's home. They had assigned leadership roles, selected a meeting place, and established norms for how they would worship, take minutes, and conduct discussions. By the summer of 1959, they started asking deeper questions about the nature of sin, the legitimacy of moral codes, and the responsibility Quakers had to homosexuals as an oppressed group of people. They also agreed that it was important for them to consider female homosexuality in the next stage of their process and they commissioned a letter from a lesbian couple that would help inform their work. Up until this point, all of the other examples of Quaker support for gay people had been led by men and focused exclusively on male homosexuality. Bidder and Rosenberg had to pressure other members of the QGH to include references to lesbian experience in their work

The group decided around this time to try a new strategy for their work, one that would serve as their template for writing TQVS. Before their June meeting, they asked each member of the group to write a 500 word or less statement on "The relation in the expression of sex between the physical and personality and the relevance of this relation to the sexual code of society." In essence, they were curious about the moral and emotional effects of sexual experiences on an individual's personality and how a dialectical tension between one's personality and sexual experiences might be influenced by social sanctions.

Bidder's response to this exercise expresses a fundamental assertion in TQVS: laws, moral codes, and theological doctrines which condemn homosexual behavior by the

fact alone that homosexuality involves sexuality intimacy between two individuals of the same sex is indefensible. Like Isherwood, Bidder presses the point that individuals in heterosexual relationships are just as susceptible to moral corruption and sin as individuals in homosexual relationships. Therefore, Bidder doubts, “whether it is ever right for the Church to ban any physical act absolutely.” In alignment with the Quaker tradition which has historically opposed Catholic and Protestant churches, Bidder denounced Christians who ostracize “people with sincere moral values doing what they sincerely believe to be right . . . while lives full of bitterness and uncharitableness are apparently not condemned, because [they act] within the [moral] code.” For Bidder, Quakers have a responsibility to speak out against Christian double-standards. “This is surely the kind of unchristian cruelty and injustice,” she writes, “against which Friends should take a stand.”<sup>135</sup>

At their June 1959 meeting, the QGH started experimenting with articulating their views on the fluidity of sexual partner choice. “We note that homosexual behaviour does not invariably indicate that the person is a real homosexual and as such incurable. Nor is apparently heterosexual behaviour always an indication of 100% heterosexual leanings.” Still operating with the ideas they heard from the headmasters, the group felt that sometimes people act on homosexual impulses based on curiosity or a need to “show-off,” but these people were not ‘real’ homosexuals. The “real” homosexuals had “lingering” and “unconscious” desires. Nonetheless, the group was beginning to develop a positive stance towards homosexual partnership. “We also all accept that homosexuals have the right to loyal and permanent relationships,” they said, “and that these may be of

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<sup>135</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

creative value for themselves and for society.” A positive evaluation of homosexuality was radically progressive for the time, unprecedented among religious groups in the late 1950s.

Sometime in the summer of 1959, the group received the letter they had requested from the anonymous lesbian Quaker couple. The authors of the letter said that being lesbian was like living with an “entirely masculine personality in a female body,” and the association made here about gender nonconformity and homosexuality reinforced an idea that was developing in the group that an individual’s personality is profoundly shaped by their sexual experiences. The letter also helped the group better understand the experience of lesbian romantic partnerships and sex:

A woman can make love with another woman without fear of conception. She can – by the very duality of her nature – appreciate a woman’s sensitivity, understand a woman’s needs and consequently possess a woman much more completely than any man, just because of the intensity of her emotional needs and her delicate feminine sensitivity, which knows personally how the feminine body and spirit responds.

The letter also described homosexuals, males and females, as highly intellectual, super-sensitive, and prone to low self-confidence. And it attempted to convince the QGH that casual sex among homosexuals was not inherently wrong. The authors backed this claim up with Quaker theology. “To the world,” they wrote, “they [homosexuals] appear changeable and unstable, but to those who understand them they are behaving honestly and idealistically. If they were not true to this search for this ‘ideal love’ . . . they would be untrue to their deepest spiritual aspirations . . . denying the leading of the Inner Light.” In contrast to the views expressed by Rustin’s Quaker colleagues and friends in the last chapter, the Quaker authors of this letter assert that casual sex among homosexuals should be understood as a quest for connecting with one’s “deepest spiritual aspirations.”

Later in the summer of 1959, the group started feeling more compelled to formally report about their work to the Religious Society of Friends. They were confident, at first, that their report would be positively received; stating, “we believe that Friends will respond with a liberal sympathy to this problem and that lack of knowledge is the chief problem in this field.” What they did not think Friends would easily understand was how social sanctions effectively “embedded” homosexuals in secret societies. They considered the possibility of presenting questions for reflection and discussion in Quaker study groups organized by the LYM. They contacted Stephen Thorne, the recording clerk of LYM, to pilot this idea with him at their next meeting. In the fall of 1959, the group decided to form a bursary fund based on voluntary contributions to help alleviate the costs of members for travel and accommodation and Wedmore was elected to serve as the group’s first treasurer.

They also further crystallize their views about the effects of social sanctions on homosexuals in response to the letter from the anonymous lesbians. They felt confident in asserting that no crime or sin could be found in the “physical expression of a sexual character” between two men or two women, but they struggled to see homosexual people and relationships as equal to heterosexual people and relationships. The benevolence the QGH wanted to demonstrate was stymied by a view of homosexual relationships as intrinsically frustrating and unsatisfying: “the partners are seeking something which the relationships cannot provide. This is due partly to its own nature, partly to the setting in society.”<sup>136</sup> Despite their inability to apply the Quaker testimony of equality to an evaluation of heterosexual and homosexual relationships, the group honored same-sex

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<sup>136</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

relationships, deemed them meaningful to society, and developed a strong stance against the world which inflicted violence on homosexual people.

In the winter of 1959, the QGH began to take concrete action steps towards sharing their work with the Religious Society of Friends. Thorne and another representative from the LYM joined them in the secret room behind the library at the University Women's Club. Bidder proposed three courses of action: (1) present their concern to the Meeting for Sufferings who might identify the plight of the homosexual as a cause for British Friends to identify with; (2) publish an article in *The Friend*, or (3) offer a speaker to present on their work and produce a study-guide with the assistance of the Home Service Committee (HSC). Thorne suggested that the QGH engage with the Marriage and Parenthood Committee (MPC) and the Penal Reform Committee (PRC) instead of appealing to the Meeting for Sufferings, a higher committee which typically responded to the concerns of Friends. Thorne also suggested that members of the QGH engage with their monthly meetings to test how sharing their concern with other Quakers might go. He was supportive of a publication in a Quaker periodical and suggested the group host a conference about Quakerism and homosexuality, two ideas that would come to fruition in the years to come.

Before Thorne and the other representatives from the LYM left the meeting, the QGH impressed upon them the importance and urgency of their work. They said that "toleration can be indifference" and "the Society needs to understand what is meant by pastoral responsibility. We need to re-capture our duty to make a contribution to our group and to people outside." The QGH did not engage with monthly meetings as Thorne had suggested, believing it was too difficult and doing so would not make a significant

impact on changing opinion in the Quaker world. They did, however, pursue working with representatives from the various committees. They also drafted an article to be published in the *Friends Quarterly Examiner* and Wedmore reached out to staff at the Joseph Rowntree Trust for a grant to financially support their work.

The year of 1960 is when the group would transition from reflection, discernment, and contemplation to outward facing action. In January, Barnes gave the distinguished Swarthmore Lecture, the keynote event at the LYM annual gathering, and in part of his lecture he described the work of the QGH. This was the first time many Quakers heard about any Quaker organization doing work on behalf of homosexuals. He told his audience that the QGH knew that they had:

. . . to deal with actions and evidence that to most people were repulsive, and that even in ourselves, who had come voluntarily to investigate these matters, there were disgusts and inhibitions that made it difficult for us to understand the predicament of the offenders against law and convention. We know that we had to do as Jesus did, to reach out imaginatively to understand. To do this we had to set aside all pre-judgments. We could not know these people if we first of all thought of them as sinners. We had to abandon all those fierce certainties and categorical judgments that people have in the past believed to be inseparable from Christianity, relying only on its revelation of the need of love and of the quality of love that Jesus offered.<sup>137</sup>

He attempted to gain the approval of his audience by informing them that the group had a “full-length” Meeting for Worship at the beginning of each meeting. He said that at times worship was completely silent and at other times it was enriched by intense vocal ministry. Reflecting on the two years he spent with the group, he said it was “the most moving and most convincing” experience he had ever had with Friends.

By abandoning certainty of judgment in an aspect of life where the Church has in the past been most vehemently certain and uncompromising, we

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<sup>137</sup> Barnes, Kenneth C. *The Creative Imagination*. Allen & Unwin 1960/1961.

reached a deeper certainty and a more creative one . . . More than anything else the experience of this work has brought us an understanding of compassion, the need to enter into the lives of others and know how life feels to them.<sup>138</sup>

Furthermore, Barnes said the work of the QGH was supported by a “growing unity, of intimacy of spirit, of liveliness as well as gravity.” Their discernment process focused on “revelation,” the unveiling of truth, and truth understood “as a movement, a process, a continuing action.” He closed his talk with a challenge in the form of a question: “Is the Christian Church outgrowing the attitude of ecstatic adoration and near-idolatry, and will it increasingly recognize what it means to be the companion of Christ in discovery?” Never before had a Quaker spoken about care for homosexuals as a sign of Christian love in a public forum.

In the early months of 1960 and through the spring, the QGH held meetings, as was suggested by Thorne, with representatives from various committees of the LYM. Some committees told the QGH that they were already discussing homosexuality in their committee meetings and some committees were also considering putting a concern about the criminalization of homosexuality before the LYM for consideration. The Friends Temperance and Moral Welfare Union said they had responded to requests for information about Christian faith and homosexuality from individual Friends, mostly social workers, by sending out a publication from the Church of England’s Moral Council. All of the various committee representatives affirmed the QGH’s intention to delay approaching the Yearly Meeting without first publishing or opening up discussions with more Friends.

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<sup>138</sup> Barnes.

In early 1960, the group started to mobilize around producing publications and the idea of hosting a small conference, for about 30 Friends, at a Meetinghouse in London. They planned to publish short articles about their work in *The Friend* and *Friends Quarterly* and the HSC approached the group about publishing a longer 8,000 to 10,000 word pamphlet. It was then decided that the primary purpose of the conference would be to review an early draft of the pamphlet, which would later evolve into TQVS. Fairn swiftly made arrangements with the Hampstead Meeting to host the conference and invitations were sent. A plan was forming: the release of a few articles, followed by a small conference, and the publication of a pamphlet with the HSC.<sup>139</sup>

A month before the conference, the QGH published their first article in *The Friend*.<sup>140</sup> Many of the statements in this article were guaranteed to stir up controversy. First, the group asserted that homosexuality was “not a psychiatric curiosity,” but rather it was a more common way of life than had been misunderstood. They alluded to Kinsey’s claim that among men under age 45, at least one-third of American men had experienced a sexual encounter with another man. Most people, according to the QGH, “grow through this stage to a normal adjustment.” They also challenged assumptions about the binary nature of heterosexuals and homosexuals: “Nor can we neglect the overwhelming evidence of psychiatrists that we all carry deeply within us the elements of both sexes, and may be capable of the sexual desire and expression quite foreign to our common selves.” Even in TQVS, the QGH recognized a spectrum of bi-sexuality between the two poles of homosexuality and heterosexuality. They chastised British society for placing

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<sup>139</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

<sup>140</sup> “Towards a Quaker View of Sex.” *The Friend*. 20 May 1960, pp. 686-688.

too much “emphasis” on an “exclusively heterosexual” world. It felt important to them to underline that homosexual affection, whether practiced in public or private, was always illegal; meanwhile, “some other forms of sexual deviation can be practiced in private without impunity.”

The article dodged the question of the origins of homosexuality, stating that, “how these sexual orientations are laid down is (and alas will long remain) a matter for speculation.” They also squarely rejected the notion that homosexuality is caused by childhood trauma and pointed out that scientific studies of hormones and chromosomes had yet to explain the cause of homosexuality. Instead of viewing homosexuals as “patients,” the article asked readers to consider that it was possible that very few homosexuals needed psychiatric treatment. Most homosexuals, the QGH argued, live “quiet, useful lives in society, as well adjusted to their condition as any of us.” At the end of the article, the QGH authors charged the leadership of LYM with taking action: “In particular is this important to Elders and Overseers, because there are many young people in our midst and some of them, we know, are much troubled by sexual conflicts of one kind or another. Our Society needs to make known to them that sympathy and understanding are always to be had, and that the Quaker interpretation of the Christian faith is able to speak to their condition.”

The QGH article in *The Friend* challenged many ideas about homosexuality held by Quaker readers and the social conditions that caused harm to homosexuals. They wrote about how, “social pressures create other evils: the closed society of homosexuals for example, and the reluctance of sympathetic people to speak up for homosexuals for fear of being so branded.” What had been discussed in meetings and promoted by Barnes

in his Swarthmore lecture was now etched in ink: the QGH advocated for the decriminalization of homosexuality, rejected a view of gay sex as sinful, and demanded that more attention be paid among Friends towards the social conditions that marginalize homosexuals.

Responses to the article, sent as Letters to Editor in *The Friend*, show the wide spectrum of attitudes towards homosexuality among Quakers at this time. Arthur Hadley thought the article featured an “enlightened and courageous” statement about homosexuality, and Alison Douglas from Glasgow said she was “glad” to see “an article on one of the problems of sex.”<sup>141</sup> Another Friend wrote: “We thank God that some Friends are filled with a tender concern for those who have succumbed to sexual problems. We whole-heartedly agree with the views they express and welcome their unprejudiced spirit of inquiry.” William Creed from Cheshire was diametrically opposed to the article. He claimed that it showed “a strong and disturbing tendency in the Society towards humanism” and it was “devoid of any vestige of the Christian Gospel.” Creed also argued that there is “nothing distinctively Quaker” about the ways Friends seek to live “a life in Christ.” It was erroneous for the QGH to suggest that “passions of the body” could “illuminate us, cleanse and empower us to live in the Spirit.” William Robinson from Surrey responded directly to Creed, decrying his conflation of gay sex with homosexual love. He contended that physical expressions of love between two men was always reason enough to arrest someone for “gross indecency,” but love between two men without sexual expression is “neither a crime or a sin.” Going one step further, Robinson wondered what readers make of a figure in the New Testament, allegedly male,

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<sup>141</sup> Response in Letters to the Editor. *The Friend*. 27 May 1960. HSC Quaker Group on Homosexuality records, Friends House, London.

described as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He provocatively asked if Jesus had “a special relationship [with this disciple] . . . differing from the love which Jesus had towards all men and women?” These responses show that biblical literacy among Friends did not necessarily determine whether Friends would express positive or negative views about homosexuality.

*The Friend* continued to demonstrate their support of the QGH by publishing another article about the one-day conference held at Hampstead Meeting.<sup>142</sup> They reported that attenders at the conference included representatives from the HSC, the MPC, the Friends Guild of Social Workers, Hampstead Monthly Meeting, a group of Friends from Tunbridge Wells (who had formed a study group about the Wolfenden Report), and lawyers from the Homosexual Law Reform Society. The conference began with Meeting for Worship, as had been the practice of the QGH from their beginnings. Bidder led the first session in which she described the formation of the group and the nature of their work. Torrie, the most senior psychiatrist of the group, asked “what the Quaker answer was to both the homosexual who views his conduct with disgust and loathing, and to those others, differently constituted, who are unwilling to seek help.” He emphasized a belief among the QGH members that all people pass through a normal “homosexual phase” and stressed that doctor opinions about homosexuals were untrustworthy because homosexual patients typically sought out medical help—by their own volition or decree—after they were already in “deep trouble.” Fair, the group’s prison expert, took the stage next and spoke about the traumatic experiences many men sent to prison for homosexuality had to suffer. He addressed the inconsistency in the law

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<sup>142</sup> “Towards a Quaker View of Sex - II” *The Friend*. 24 June 1960, pp. 892-3.

related to male and female homosexuality as well as explained the implications of the Wolfenden Report. Wedmore, the youngest member of the group, spoke from the perspective of being a young Friend. He said that his “experience at a university and in the Army had disclosed for him the wide gap between conventional beliefs and practice” and “he had been forced to ask himself whether our [Quaker] morality was true, right and practicable.” He presented another of the group’s fundamental assertions about sexuality, that all people have the capacity to be homosexual or heterosexual. In closing, Wedmore added his own personal view that homosexuality, more than anything else, resulted from a lack of properly developed heterosexuality. The afternoon session of the conference focused on reviewing and receiving feedback about the first draft of TQVS, there was an hour for tea, and Fairn closed the conference by offering reflections on the spiritual dimensions of the QGH’s work. He said the time he spent with the QGH was a “profound religious experience” and that since the group had intentionally sought to be led by the Spirit, there was a “deep sharing of experience.”

Fairn’s closing remarks are worth analyzing in more detail because they contain a recurring pattern in the writings of the QGH. We have seen the authors of QGH use the sequence of ideas he used in his conference remarks before: start with a condemnation of social codes and Christian doctrines which condemn homosexuality, follow with a claim that the moral value of any sexual act is best measured through an understanding of the intentions and purpose behind the sexual act, and end with a call to society to demonstrate more compassion towards people who are deemed sexually deviant. Indeed, this is the sequence of ideas that we see presented in TQVS. Likewise, at the conference, Fairn started with building upon the Quaker drive to challenge prevailing Christian

traditions deemed morally unsound. He said that his experience in the QGH process helped him see that “conventional judgements . . . fall short of their understanding of truth.” He proceeded with the second component of the argument, which as Fairn explains it, is that the “truth” of any sexual experience is revealed inwardly, not outwardly: “there was not [a] sexual experience which could be condemned outright without knowledge of its inner quality.” And in the third and final turn of his remarks, Fairn appeals to Quaker sensitivity for people who have been oppressed by unjust legal and social systems.

In the last six months of 1960 the QGH faced significant challenges to their work. They were constantly responding to criticism they had received about Barnes’ Swarthmore Lecture, the first article in *The Friend*, and the Hapstead Meeting Conference. At the same time, the group started receiving feedback about early drafts of the pamphlet from an anonymous editor hired by the HSC. Torrie’s health took a downturn and the group expressed their sympathies. Bidder had alerted the group over a year ago that she was taking a sabbatical, which included an expedition through the “South Seas” for a full year, and Farin took over the role of Chairman. Bidder suggested that the group might accept new members as they transitioned from “research into action,” but the other members wanted to continue as a cohort. Wedmore’s reflections on the group at this time express the sweet affection they had for one another:

Since we knew each other so well from having spent all that time . . . we could speak for the whole group every time on every matter, knowing that they would agree with us completely, and knowing, in fact, what we thought . . . I felt that I had ten very strong friends whom I could trust for life and would know that we would always support each other. It was a bit like the Pendle Hill effect – you go there and you feel that you’re bonded

to the other people forever. And that was the biggest bonding experience I've ever had.<sup>143</sup>

In the fall of 1960, they discontinued the idea of working in partnership with the HSC on a study-guide for small group discussions and turned down an invitation to appear on a television program produced by the Religious Broadcasting Company. All of their efforts were being directed towards drafting the pamphlet. They were running out of time, because by the end of 1960, their funding would run out. Wedmore believed they had about four months left, so he reapplied for another grant from the Rowntree Trust.

Despite their shared agreement to cease writing for other Quaker periodicals until the pamphlet had been completed, when an editor from the *Young Friend* reached out to Wedmore for an update on the progress of the QGH, Wedmore agreed to supply an article that would serve as an update to the article that was published in *The Friend* earlier that year. Wedmore, the youngest member of the QGH, may not have informed the other members of the QGH about this article, because in the business minutes for their December 1960 meeting, the group said it was “advisable in the future for members to send a copy of any publication in advance to the chairman or secretary for confirmation.” Regardless, in Wedmore’s piece for the *Young Friend*, he rehearsed many of the same talking points that Barnes gave in his Swarthmore lecture. He adds, however, an important attack on Pauline theology, claiming it “does not offer the modern world equipment to answer . . . a problem too large for one group—the redefinition of sin and the answer to the question ‘what is love?’” While Barnes had argued earlier that support of homosexuals was consistent with Christian teachings, Wedmore was now proposing that some biblical texts were incompatible with modern approaches to sexuality. Thus,

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<sup>143</sup> Wedmore interview, 2012.

Wedmore became the first Quaker to challenge homophobic biblical texts in a Quaker periodical.

By the start of 1961, the QGH had finalized a Table of Contents and divided up chapters for individual members to draft. They spent the next two years writing, reviewing, and revising each other's work. They continued to meet monthly and shared their feedback through letters between meetings. They seemed to have worked harmoniously, with one important exception. In February 1961, James, the third female member of the group who was added to include a married female perspective, wrote to Rosenberg, the only other female QGH member at the time, about including a section on female homosexuality. James must have noticed that after Bidder, the former female Chairman, had left, all of the drafts of chapters had been assigned to be written by the men. Women's experience was seemingly going to be ignored in the pamphlet entirely, until Rosenberg offered to write a section on female homosexuality. The lack of attention to women's experience in the early development of TQVS shows the dominance of male views in their work. While consistent with the cultural norms of the time, overrepresentation of male perspectives constantly frustrated Rosenberg and created tension between her and the other members of the group.

The problem became exacerbated when new sections relating to gender were incorporated into the early iterations of the pamphlet by male members of the QGH that had not been considered by the group under Bidder's leadership. Torrie and Fox decided that they needed to write sections on women's "Frigidity" and male "Impotence." Fox started to create a section on "transvestism." The QGH said from the beginning that they did not wish to isolate homosexuality from other aspects of human sexuality, which is

why they sometimes called themselves the “Quaker Group on Homosexuality and Other Problems of Sex.” But as the pamphlet developed over time, the married male members of the QGH lost sight of the original intent and purpose of the group, which was to respond to questions from Cambridge Young Friends about homosexuality.

In 1962, the QGH started holding weekly meetings to move their long and deliberate process closer to completion. The date of publication was set, based largely on the date the BBC wanted to interview QGH members on live television. The plan was to air the BBC interview on February 17th, 1963, the day before the pamphlet’s release. Therefore, the HSC needed a completed manuscript no later than the middle of November 1962. A letter from Howard Gorman, the General Secretary of the HSC, who was publishing TQVS on behalf of the QGH, reveals that changes to their manuscript occurred far past the November deadline. In late January, the HSC shared feedback from two readers they had hired to review the contents of the pamphlet. The feedback was largely about what they saw as unnecessary flourishes in the text, lack of clarity about Latin words, and the way the pamphlet suggested that all boys go to boarding schools. These were minor criticisms. The greater complaint they had was with the pamphlet’s title. The HSC readers asserted that since most sex occurs in heterosexual marriages, why had the pamphlet about ‘a Quaker view of Sex’ had so little to say about sex in a heterosexual marriage.

In early February of 1963, the QGH began bracing itself for the release of the pamphlet. The HSC sent an announcement and an advanced copy of the pamphlet to the national press, a handful of provincial papers, the Press Association, and the most influential Sunday papers. The announcement included a 500 word statement written by

Fairn, which covered most of what he said at the Hampstead conference. Something unique in Fairn's press announcement, however, was the way he described the distinctively Quaker contours of the approach used by the QGH to produce TQVS. This was the first time the QGH was addressing a non-Quaker audience. His words were lifted directly from the final drafts of TQVS:

There are certain historical characteristics of the Society of Friends that ought to lead to a clear understanding of the significance of the sex relationship, especially its testimony to the equality of the sexes. Not less important is the attitude towards authority. For Friends, God's will for man can never be circumscribed by any statement, however inspired; the last word has never yet been spoken on the implications of Christianity, and every religious expression is open to critical examination. Quakerism involves a continuous search for truth. Lastly, it is equally important to remember that Quakerism has never accepted a distinction between sacred and secular.

Fairn speaks to the Quaker impulse to challenge Christian subscription to creeds and doctrines. For the non-Quaker press, it was exciting to hear a Christian group speak with such agitation towards prevailing Christian norms. Part of Fairn's attempt to educate a non-Quaker audience also included a brief explication of the Quaker concept of continuing revelation: "Quakerism involves a continuous search for truth." His final claim that "Quakerism has never accepted a distinction between sacred and secular" spoke for the ways in which Quaker beliefs have informed Quaker ways of dress, speech, and social etiquette, but it also denied an important stream in Quakerism that has prized a state of 'perfection' or 'holiness' which transcends the mundane world. Fairn's claim that Quakers have effectively erased the distinction between the secular and sacred only makes sense in the liberal stream of Quakerism. Earlier traditions of Quakerism, and the Evangelical traditions which contain the largest number of Friends in the world, would not so easily affirm a complete conflation of the secular and the sacred.

Three days before the pamphlet's release, Ounsted, one of the school headmasters that spoke with the QGH years before, wrote a scathing review of TQVS in *The Friend*. After giving readers a brief overview of the pamphlet's contents, he praised it on two levels before tearing it apart. First, he expressed appreciation for the way the authors of TQVS exposed the relative failure of legal and moral codes to condemn sexual deviance in heterosexual individuals and dysfunctional sexual relations in heterosexual partnerships. Secondly, he celebrated the ways TQVS rejected "the current tendency to take sexual relationships casually and superficially or in isolation from other aspects of life." Ounsted shares the view expressed in TQVS that casual sex is morally incorrect and "all relationships should be warm, deep, and personal." Another section of Ounsted's review reiterates Fairn's points about how a uniquely Quaker approach to sex relies on the Quaker testimony concerning the equality of the sexes, a challenge to Christian authorities, a belief in continuing revelation, and a dissolution of the divide between the sacred and the profane.

Ounsted took objection, however, with the pamphlet on a number of its key points, stating harshly that "the Devil could cite it to his purpose." He chastised TQVS for promoting an undisciplined approach to sex and ascribing positive moral value to sex not meant for reproduction. "Most people...would agree that the family as a social unit should be safeguarded and sexual practices that threaten its stability vigorously discouraged . . . The tendency to look at sex in isolation from parenthood is one of the chief faults of modern sexual thinking, and one from which this pamphlet is by no means free." Ounsted also criticized the style in which TQVS was written, claiming it caused more confusion than clarity about homosexuality. He is right, that to say "neither are we

happy with the thought that all homosexual behaviour is sinful,” falls short of making a definitive claim that ‘all homosexual behaviour is not sinful.’ Without the explication of more deliberate conclusions, Ounsted accuses the authors of TQVS of falling into moral relativism, extolling the idea that “This is a very complicated matter; almost anything might be true.” He also rails against the ways in which TQVS sometimes slips between speaking about love and sex without clarifying their differences. A particular section of the pamphlet, about “triangular situations,” bothered Ounsted. The guiding principle of TQVS is that if love is there then it should be permissible. By extension, if a person felt love for more than one person, and nobody in the “triangular situation” experienced harm from the arrangement, then sex with more than one person was permissible.

Ounsted thought the liberalism, moral relativism, and the slippage between love and sex in the pamphlet was unconscionable. He proposed that instead of “Towards a Quaker View of Sex” it might have been called “Away from a Christian View of Sex,” believing that the pamphlet dwelled on “abuses which have arisen from the traditional view (for example, ill-treatment of illegitimate children, imprisonment of homosexuals, unloving marriages), abuses that many Christian-traditionalists clearly recognise are only abuses and not part of their code.” For Ounsted, TQVS presented important critiques of Christian moral codes, but not enough constructive recommendations for change. The parts of the pamphlet where the authors expressed apprehension, “how difficult it has been for us to come to definite conclusions as to what people ought or ought not to do,” proved to Ounsted that the group had fallen into a state of ambivalence about the morality of human sexuality.

Ounsted puts forward another criticism of TQVS that is worth highlighting because it relates to the ‘smugness’ and ‘moral certainty’ which Isherwood found detestable in the Religious Society of Friends. The authors of TQVS believed they were courageously resisting the moral certainty of Friends and Christian moral codes, but by doing so they produced a kind of moral certainty of their own. Ounsted spotlights a contradiction and a sense of superiority expressed through the text. At a certain point, the authors say, “We think it is our duty not to stand on a peak of perfectionism,” however, towards the end of the pamphlet they speak about seeking unity with God’s will: “The challenge to each one of us is clear: accustom yourself to seeking God's will and the experience of his love and power, become used in your daily life to the simple but tremendous spiritual fact that what God asks he enables, provided only and always that we will to do his will.” For Ounsted, the authors of TQVS seem to be advocating for a life of perfection and holiness that is impossible for most people to achieve. He wryly parodies the ideals put forth in the pamphlet: “All you’ve got to do is to be a saint and you’ll find your sexual actions are not sinful, as neither are your others.” Rather than thinking of ourselves as saints, Ounsted believes that we should submit to the Christian tradition and its emphasis that we are sinners because tradition is what will “clear the mists and give us a glimpse of God and his will.”

The day before publication of the pamphlet, Barnes and Bidder appeared on the BBC television show Meeting Point and articles ran in *The Sunday Times*, *The News of the World*, and *The Observer*. Gorman impressed upon the news outlets how important it was to make it clear that the pamphlet was written by an independent group and it did not authoritatively represent the views of the LYM or the Religious Society of Friends as a

whole. *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer* were respectful of this request, but *The News of the World* (a more tabloid oriented newspaper) ignored it.

*The Observer* gave a report which included reactions to the pamphlet from a variety of non-Quaker religious leaders. Rev. John Hustable, Principal of New College and Congregational minister, said it was “too muddle-headed to do any real good.” Father Maurice O’Leary, Chairman of the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, commended the report for being rightly critical of the negative expression of traditional morality, but thought it over-emphasised the importance of personal relationships at the expense of what he believed to be the overall purpose of sex: procreation. The most favorable review came from the Archdeacon of London, the Ven. George Appleton, whom the newspaper identified as a member of an increasingly vocal group of Anglican clergymen who were taking a liberal and non-legalistic approach to morality. Appleton, however, shared Ounsted’s concern that the pamphlet did not outright denounce the “triangular situation” of sex with more than one partner.

*The Sunday Times* focused on anticipating the “hullabaloo” that was destined to ensue among the “rank-and-file Quakers.” The paper warned that some Friends might leave the Society, after all many members of the great Quaker families of the 19th century, such as Fry, Barclay, Rowntree, and Cadbury chose Anglicanism over Quakerism. The newspaper argued that “Businessmen, particularly, tend to lapse.” Conversely, “professional people, like the authors of this [TQVS] report . . . stay in and organize reformist movements.” *The Sunday Times* probably oversold the idea that TQVS would cause a mass exodus of Friends, but they did astutely characterize the dynamics of liberal and conservative politics in Quaker communities: “Within the Quaker movement

liberalization is a downward process, seeping from the intellectual top rank of Elders (of whom there are five among the report's 11 authors) through to the puritanical base.”

Indeed, the liberalism as well as the smugness and moral certainty expressed by TQVS was an expression of its author’s education and professional status.

TQVS was published on February 18th, 1963 and responses to it were immediate, and also distinctive on both sides of the Atlantic. In Britain, it caused a media frenzy in the major newspapers. Headlines read: “Quaker Group Rejects Church View of Sex,” “11 Quakers Attack Moral 'Hypocrisy,’” and “Shock Sex Report from the Quakers.”<sup>144</sup> It also received a positive review in *The Lancet*, a British medical journal.<sup>145</sup> Among British Friends, a heated debate erupted in LYM and many Friends chose to express their approval or concerns about TQVS in Quaker periodicals as well as non-Quaker news outlets. In a letter to the editor for *The Guardian*, one Friend wrote: “we think the members of the Society of Friends who recently gave national publicity to their essay, ‘Towards a Quaker View of Sex,’ are muddled and mistaken . . . they are profoundly mistaken in suggesting . . . that Christians should dispense with clear religious statements about morality.”<sup>146</sup> Other letters to the editor were flattering, even grateful to the authors of TQVS for representing a less popular but more progressive view of homosexuality. Between February and April of 1963, *The Friend* published dozens of letters to the editor by Friends about TQVS. Some letters praised the pamphlet and others conveyed

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<sup>144</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

<sup>145</sup> “The Quaker Pamphlet.” *The Lancet*, March 2nd, 1963. Found in HSC Quaker Group on Homosexuality records, Friend House, London. Accessed through LGBTQ Religious Archives Network.

<sup>146</sup> Hodgkin, Elizabeth and Robin. “Letters to the Editor.” *The Guardian*. Feb. 21st, 1963. Found in Personal Papers of Anna Bidder, Lucy Cavendish College Archive. Accessed through LGBTQ Religious Archives Network.

concerns, even outrage. Some wrote that they were upset about matters beyond the mere contents and message of the pamphlet. They were angry that it was published without any formal consultation with the London Yearly Meeting. Thus, the pamphlet might be mistaken as an authoritative statement on behalf of all Quakers, causing confusion for anyone who was unfamiliar with the structures of Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings. According to Wedmore, the bookstore at Friends House in London sold over 500,000 copies and it helped the bookstore make a profit for the first time in its history.

On the other side of the Atlantic, American homophile groups tried to draw attention to TQVS, meanwhile American Friends and American news outlets were less vocal about it. The *Mattachine Review*, the most widely read magazine about gay rights at the time, reprinted the pamphlet in three separate installments claiming that it was “the soundest and most objective view yet published on the subject, and may well serve as a manual for all organizations working in this field.”<sup>147</sup> A group of San-Francisco based gay activists and Methodist ministers calling themselves the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Inc., requested in 1964 that the National Council of Churches “make a statement along the lines of that of which was made by the Quakers in England.”<sup>148</sup> Yet, despite the apparent importance of TQVS, only a small handful of major American news organizations mentioned it in the months and years immediately following its publication. An announcement was made in the *Washington Post* saying “Quaker Group Urges Sex Enlightenment,” and the *Washington Daily News* sensationalized a line from the

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<sup>147</sup> *Mattachine Review*, April 1963. GLBT Historical Society, San Francisco, California. Accessed through LGBTQ Religious Archives Network.

<sup>148</sup> Council on Religion and the Homosexual Collection, Coll2008-065, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

pamphlet with the headline: “‘Where there’s genuine tenderness’ Quakers O.K. Casual Sex.” LIFE magazine praised the pamphlet in two paragraphs of its headline feature on “Gay America,” comparing TQVS with the ‘love the sinner, but not the sin’ approach extolled by some centrist and progressive Catholics.<sup>149</sup> Beyond these few examples, it seems as though the American media was relatively silent.

American Quaker publications also gave it scant attention, with a few notable exceptions. In April of 1963, Lawrence Miller wrote a review of TQVS in *Friends Journal*, the major American Quaker publication of the time, applauding the authors of TQVS for asking “searching questions” and drawing “courageous tentative conclusions.”<sup>150</sup> Miller’s review received four published responses by Quakers before the end of the year, which together illustrate the vast diversity of responses—some negative and some positive—to the pamphlet. Another important instance of American Quaker writing about TQVS comes from Harold Loukes’s lesser known pamphlet, “The Quaker Contribution,” in which he devoted six-pages to examining TQVS.<sup>151</sup> Loukes both endorsed the condemnation in TQVS of Christian ‘blind’ allegiance to traditional moral codes and he asserted that love and compassion should foreground any effort to offer support and counseling to homosexual people. Notwithstanding, he also contended that traditional Christian commitments to life-long monogamous heterosexual partnerships are the “soundest basis for the abundant life and for the following of God’s will.”

Additionally, Quaker historian Robert Frost has reported that when a member of the

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<sup>149</sup> Towards a Quaker View of Sex collected papers.

<sup>150</sup> Miller, Lawrence. “British Quakers Consider Sex Problems.” *Friends Journal*. Philadelphia: Friends Publishing Corporation. April 15th, 1963, pp. 174-5.

<sup>151</sup> Loukes, Harold. *The Quaker Contribution*. Macmillan, 1965.

Family Relations Committee of PYM offered to have a series of discussions on the pamphlet at her home, the other members did not accept the invitation. Frost also tells us that copies of TQVS were available for purchase at Pendle Hill, a Quaker study center in Wallingford, PA, but they were kept hidden from customers behind a counter in the bookstore.<sup>152</sup>

Shortly after the release of TQVS, the QGH began meeting again to produce a second edition. They felt it was important to re-write the section on the “triangular situation” as well as expand the section on marriage and adolescents. In the preface to the second edition, they remarked that many people have been helped by reading the pamphlet, “but others inside and outside the Society of Friends have been hurt by what we have written and for this we are sorry.” They acknowledged the criticism (from Ounsted) which said that what they had written was “confused and confusing” and dismissed accusations that their pamphlet condoned “fornication and adultery.” According to Wedmore, the primary reason for the second edition was to clarify the group’s perspective on extra-marital sex. In the first edition, the pamphlet claimed that extra-marital sex was permissible in some circumstances but not others without much clarification about which circumstances made extra-marital sex appropriate. The ambiguity about extra-marital sex in the first edition reflects the lack of unity in the group about extra-marital sex as the final drafts of the pamphlet moved closer towards completion. In the second edition of TQVS, however, it was made clear that “the gravest threat is always that which endangers the central unity of a marriage by dividing one partner from the other. The most obvious and recognized danger arises from an overtly

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<sup>152</sup> Frost, J. William. *Sex is not a shortcut to spirituality: Liberal Quakers Confront the 20th-century Sexual Revolutions*. 28 July 2001.

sexual relationship between one partner and a third person.” Here they stated outright that they do not condone extra-marital sex, but they do support partners forging meaningful friendships with people outside of the marriage. Finally, the authors asserted that an extra-marital sexual relationship “can, but need not, destroy the marriage.” When marriages successfully move on from the pain and distrust that was generated by sexual infidelity, it often goes unnoticed by others. The authors conceded that in some cases the third person can even be “incorporated into a rich and equal friendship” with the couple, although the authors wanted to be crystal clear that they were not endorsing “as is sometimes suggested, a menage-a-trois.”

TQVS would be reprinted at least three more times. Wedmore reports that he saw copies of it printed out of the PYM offices on Cherry Street with a repudiation of the pamphlet’s content inserted into a blank space on one of its final pages. The insert contained phrases such as “much more is now known about sexual offenses,” and “much more is known about sexual activities of children.” Without any attribution to the author’s of TQVS or anyone else, Wedmore feared that the inserted text would be interpreted as a kind of epilogue or postscript written by the pamphlet’s authors. Wedmore discovered this after the pamphlet had been in circulation for almost twenty years. He contacted the printing press in the U.S. who referred him to the Friends bookstore in England, who told him that the added paragraph was one of the conditions for printing a copy of TQVS in the U.S. Wedmore inquired about why none of the members of the QGH were asked about this addition and the response he was given was that the printers believed the authors wanted to be anonymous. Outraged, he pointed out that the names and professions of all the authors, except Fairn who wished to remain

anonymous, were prominently featured below the table of contents. The bookstore agreed to destroy all of their remaining copies but some still remain in circulation to this day.

The publication of TQVS was a watershed event in the history of religion and gay liberation. In the early 1960s, despite some efforts to decriminalize homosexuality, such as the Wolfenden Report, very few people were publically contesting whether gay sex was morally wrong or a Christian sin.<sup>153</sup> A memo from Anna Bidder written in 1959 shows how much she wanted to change that:

The Church's primary responsibility is with the moral code, i.e. with spiritual and emotional values; I doubt very much whether it is ever right for the Church to bann [sic] any physical act absolutely. Too often, however, the Church has failed to keep to this and has made moral pronouncements about acts. This can result in people with sincere moral values doing what they sincerely believe to be right and finding themselves condemned and osreacised [sic], while lives full of bitterness and uncharitableness are apparently not condemned, because within the code [sic]. This is surly the kind of unchristian cruelty and injustice against which Friends should take a stand . . . All this applies also to the problem of homosexuality. I can see no Christian basis for condemning real, high quality, unselfish and faithful love between two men or two women, however it is expressed between them.<sup>154</sup>

TQVS was significant because its authors spoke directly out of and towards the Christian tradition. Until its publication, most English speakers had not experienced a Christian voice which so deliberately sought to limit the moralizing power of the Bible or question the legitimacy of prevailing Christian opinion on homosexuality.

TQVS provided a new theological framework for affirming gay and lesbian sexuality from a Quaker perspective. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the first American Quaker groups to focus on gay rights would assign TQVS as required reading for their

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<sup>153</sup> Bailey, Derreck Winston. *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*. Longmans, Green and Co., 1955.

<sup>154</sup> "Bidder Memo 1959," LGBTQ Religious Archives Network

work because it directly rejected the stigma of homosexuality as a crime, illness, and sin. TQVS helped liberal Friends move beyond inquiry into the nature of homosexuality to action. TQVS also promised gay people a place of belonging in the liberal Quaker tradition, which inspired some Quakers to come out as gay. Within a decade after the publication of TQVS, small groups of gay Quakers and their supporters in New York and Philadelphia would organize themselves to fight for gay rights and put pressure on the Religious Society of Friends to minute their support of gay and lesbian people. In the next era of Quaker involvement in gay rights, Friends would participate in some of the most important historic events in gay rights history and lead influential gay rights organizations.

## CHAPTER 4: QUAKERS AND THE GAY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Friends profess belief in non-violence - but surely the Friend who sits in judgment on another human being in his sexual way of life which does not harm another person, does triple violence if he will not engage himself to protect the conscience of the other: he does violence to the individual whose right to be different he refuses to defend because he does not wish to appear to “condone” what he disagrees with; he does violence to his own Friendly conscience; and he does violence to the cause of humane justice and rights for all human beings.<sup>155</sup>

-Mary S. Calderone

The earliest example of Quaker engagement with a gay rights group in the United States appears to be a meeting on June 15th, 1961 in San Francisco between Jan Marinissen (1928-2002), a staff member of the AFSC (the same Quaker organization that fired Rustin after he was arrested for public sex), about half a dozen San Quentin prison officials, and Don Lucas, a representative from the Mattachine Society and business manager for the *Mattachine Review*.<sup>156</sup> Marinissen was not a Quaker, but rather an ordained United Church of Christ minister, and yet as an AFSC staff member, he represented Friends, both at this meeting and later when gay rights organizers were forming coalitions of religious communities and homophile groups. His active involvement in gay rights organizations and contributions to their work must have supported the development of more relationships between Quakers and gay rights groups

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<sup>155</sup> Calderone, 1973.

<sup>156</sup> Bay Area Corrections Clearinghouse. 15 June 1961. Archives of the American Friends Service Committee.

in the late 1960s. Additionally, Marinissen fits in the tradition of pacifist Friends, like Marvel, whose experience in prisons during World War II led to protecting men arrested for gay sex from the injustices of the criminal justice system. Before immigrating to the U.S. and joining the AFSC, Marinissen experienced terrible prison conditions while incarcerated in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands. His experience in jail deeply influenced his lifelong career supporting prisoner's rights and the reintegration of prisoners into society after their release. He was employed by the AFSC San Francisco office seven months before the meeting with Lucas and the San Quentin staff to help prisoners find employment after incarceration.

The meeting was part of an AFSC project called the Bay Area Corrections Clearinghouse. Led by Marinissen, the purpose of the Bay Area Corrections Clearinghouse was to convene conversations between prison administrators, law enforcement authorities, social service agencies, and prisoners themselves. The presence of the Mattachine Society at one of these Clearinghouse meetings was an extraordinary event. Lucas described the Mattachine Society for the criminal justice officials at the meeting as “a non-profit, non-partisan, educational, research, and social service corporation ‘providing true and accurate information leading to solution of sex behavior problems, particularly those of the homosexual adult.’”<sup>157</sup> They had recently started a campaign against laws which prohibited gay and lesbian sexual behavior. Marinissen had invited Lucas to describe the implications of legislation which criminalized “transvestitism except for theatrical purposes, sodomy, exciting lust in minors, and oral sex perversion.” Lucas explained to the prison officials that anti-sodomy laws were

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<sup>157</sup> Bay Area Corrections Clearinghouse.

inherently discriminatory towards gay and lesbian people, as there were other extant laws against sexual assault and sex with minors. Furthermore, when gay and lesbian people were arrested for anti-sodomy laws at this time, they became registered ‘sex offenders,’ which meant they were obligated to notify neighbors and employers of their sex offender status, even if the crime committed was a misdemeanor. Lucas told the criminal justice officials that the law “has been misused to the extent that police could enter the home of the offender at any time” and “there is a thin line between such social gatherings and breaking the law which says that homosexuals cannot congregate in public places.”<sup>158</sup> By convening this meeting under purview of the AFSC, Marinissen could bring Quaker views to the table without having to identify as a Quaker himself.

He must have made a positive impression on Lucas, the business manager of the Mattachine Society’s flagship publication *The Mattachine Review*. No less than three months later, Marinissen spoke on a panel at the 8th annual Mattachine Society conference about the difficulty he experienced with helping formerly imprisoned people find employment, many of whom were charged with anti-cross-dressing and anti-sodomy laws.<sup>159</sup> In 1964, a few years later, he was asked to represent Quakers with his AFSC colleague Orville Luster at an important gathering of religious leaders and gay rights activists known as the Mill Valley Consultation.<sup>160</sup> He was instrumental in organizing the Mill Valley Consultation, he gave one of its keynote speeches, and he likely invited

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<sup>158</sup> Bay Area Corrections Clearinghouse.

<sup>159</sup> Don Lucas collection of Mattachine Society audio recordings (MSS MEDIA 0029). Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

<sup>160</sup> “Brief of Injustices Published by CRH in September, 1965 (14 pages)”, The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, LGBTQ Religious Archives Network.

Marinissen. The Mill Valley Consultation, at which Luster was the only African-American delegate, led to the formation of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual (CRH), a federation of clergy from various Christian traditions dedicated to promoting gay rights. Since liberal Quakers do not have paid clergy, it was reasonable and appropriate in the Quaker tradition for an AFSC staff person to represent Friends in ecumenical organizations. Marinissen would continue to support the work of the CRH for many years, including serving as the leader of its Orientation Committee.

The *Mattachine Review* and the CRH took a special interest in TQVS, which may or may not have been a result of Marinissen's relationship with Lucas, engagement with *Mattachine*, or involvement in the CRH. According to an official report of the CRH consultation, the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) included quotations from TQVS on a list of 70 statements, known as "demolition fuses," aimed at dislodging traditional "four-walled" thinking about gay sex as sinful.<sup>161</sup> Toward the end of the Mill Valley Consultation, the delegates collectively charged The National Council of Churches with "making a statement along the lines of that which was made by the Quakers in England."<sup>162</sup> Later, the CRH quoted TQVS at length on flyers they passed out at the California State Fair and sent a printed copy of TQVS to the San Francisco mayor.<sup>163</sup> In the first newsletter of the Southern California Council on Religion and the Homosexual, a subdivision of the CRH, Quakers were identified as the only religious group to support

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<sup>161</sup> "Address by Billie Talmij to the Consultation", The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, LGBTQ Religious Archives Network.

<sup>162</sup> "Official Report of the Consultation Written by Rev. Donald Kuhn", The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, LGBTQ Religious Archives Network.

<sup>163</sup> "Flier Passed Out by CRH Members at the California State Fair in 1965", The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, LGBTQ Religious Archives Network.

gay people. At the time of the Mill Valley Consultation, The *Mattachine Review* had already reprinted TQVS in three installments.<sup>164</sup> Since Marinissen had a positive and ongoing relationship with Lucas, the business manager for the *Mattachine Review*, he may have been responsible for helping Lucas obtain his first copy of TQVS.

The first Quaker to become a leader of a gay rights organization was James B. Osgood (1932 - 2003), who also used the pseudonym Jim Bradford to conceal his identity when writing or speaking for public audiences about homosexuality. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was common for gay men and women working for homophile groups to use pseudonyms to steer clear of the threat of imprisonment, eviction, public ignominy, and loss of employment. In the summer of 1965, Bradford was elected to serve as Vice President of Mattachine Midwest and within a few months he would become the organization's President. Bradford was central to the development of the group which grew to over one hundred and thirty members in attendance at their second meeting. He supported the creation of a newsletter, forged an alliance with homophile groups in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. by affiliating Mattachine Midwest with the East Coast Homophile Organization (ECHO), and he advanced a concern in the Mattachine Midwest for the criminalization of homosexuality and police surveillance of gay and lesbian communities in Chicago. Mattachine Midwest was formed, after the rise and fall of two former Mattachine-like gay rights groups in Chicago, and shortly after a brutal police raid on a Chicago gay bar. According to St. Sukie De La Croix, a historian of Chicago gay history: "After Jim Bradford became president in November 1965, Mattachine Midwest took a more activist turn, primarily targeting an out-of-control

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<sup>164</sup> "Mattachine Review", San Francisco chapter of the Mattachine Society, reprinted most of the report over four issues--April through July 1963. LGBTQ Religious Archives Network.

Chicago police force.”<sup>165</sup> In August 1966, Bradford wrote in the President’s Corner about police entrapment in public restrooms for a special issue of the *Mattachine Midwest’s* newsletter on the topic. At this time, Bradford estimates, the *Mattachine Midwest’s* newsletter had over two thousand readers. In 1967, he wrote a letter to the editor for *Vector*, a gay magazine produced by a San Francisco based homophile group, decrying the ways conservative gay men ridicule the hippie movement. He highlighted that hippies were far more accepting of gay people than followers of John Birch, an anti-communist ultra-conservative. His views highly contrast the investment in respectability that Isherwood’s characters claimed was so central to Quaker approaches to homosexuality. “If we identify with conservatives in a pitch to look respectable,” wrote Bradford, “we are merely deluding ourselves.” Bradford illustrates a distinctively Quaker view on gay liberation which contends that freedom from oppression for gay and lesbian people is linked to the eradication of war and inequality. He writes,

Let us always remember that we are human beings and homosexuals before we are Americans or political partisans. If we live as brothers to all men [sic] we realize this and see that peace is the gift of those who live it, and is alien to those neo-fascists who pile up riches while children die of hunger and American-made bombs half a world away.<sup>166</sup>

Bradford was shaping the *Mattachine Midwest* to be different from the homophile groups on the east or west coasts. His intention was to create an organization that would refuse to appease the temperaments of people and institutions that sought to oppress gay and lesbian people. In May 1968 Bradford wrote, “I intend to comment regularly on events in the news as they tie in with the homophile movement. This will no doubt irritate some

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<sup>165</sup> De la Croix St Sukie and John D’Emilio. *Chicago Whispers : A History of Lgbt Chicago Before Stonewall*. University of Wisconsin Press 2012.

<sup>166</sup> Bradford, Jim. Letter to the Editor, *Vector*. November 1967, pp. 15.

people, because there are, unfortunately, a number of homosexuals who have not profited from their own painful brushes with the law.” The more Bradford pushed the Mattachine Midwest into direct conflict with the police, and aligned his vision for gay liberation with the hippie movement, the more Quakers were seen as carrying an affinity with radical leftist groups of the 1960s.

Bradford often spoke about how his gay rights activism and his Quakerism were deeply intertwined. He recalls that the 57th Street Meeting in Chicago continuously offered their support to his work with Mattachine Midwest. Sitting next to Valerie Taylor, another co-founder of Mattachine Midwest (who would join the Religious Society of Friends later in life), Bradford told a radio interviewer that the first Mattachine meeting he attended in New York City felt like a Quaker business meeting. He appreciated the order and seriousness with which the Mattachine members conducted their work and it reminded him of Quaker business practices. Furthermore, Bradford spoke about how his Quaker theology was directly linked to his gay activism:

. . . we must look within and we must see what we think is right and act on this and don't take the President's word for it. Don't take Mayor Daley's word for it. Don't take anybody else's word for it. Intro [*sic*], through introspection, take your word for it and then go out and preach this. Because this is the way to liberate people. This is a way to get, what is it? The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man into the streets and it's meaning rather than just some word above the altar.<sup>167</sup>

Like the authors of TQVS, Bradford employs classic Quaker rhetoric to chastise the ‘hireling churches’ for their apostasy, meanwhile valorizing Quakerism as a more effective religion for promoting gay rights. In 1968, two Bradford attended the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO), when Frank Kamey

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<sup>167</sup> Bradford, Jim. Interview with Stud Terkel. *Making Gay History*. Feb. 19th, 1970.

received support for the phrase “Gay is Good,” patterned off of “Black is Beautiful” from the civil rights movement in the same era. Bradford’s views on the evolution of the word “Quaker” must have had some impact on how the NACHO delegates wanted to reclaim the word “gay.”<sup>168</sup>

Bradford deserves recognition for courageous drawing attention to his sexuality at a time when coming out was risky, if not dangerous. In 1965, he published a letter to the editor in *Friends Journal* using his given name, and while he did not speak directly about his sexuality, he did cite TQVS as an important progressive perspective on morality, one that he contended was worth more attention in the Religious Society of Friends.<sup>169</sup> About six years later, in another letter to the editor titled “Towards a Quaker View of Homosexuality,” Bradford became the first Quaker to openly identify as gay in a major Quaker periodical. He let Friends know that he was associated with Mattachine Midwest and that “much loving Quaker concern has been poured” into his gay rights activism from the 57th Street Meeting. He also reminded Friends of their historical experience of defending the human dignity and rights of oppressed minorities:

Friends traditionally have asked what they could do to help when problems have been presented to them. We can speak out when we hear about instances of police harassment or firings or other acts of bigotry. Most Friends are horrified when Jews or blacks are let go or evicted, but many people are accustomed to hearing about mistreatment of homosexuals without seeing the parallel.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> North American Conference of Homophile Organizations. August 12th - 17th, 1968. Gerbert/Hart Library.

<sup>169</sup> Osgood, James. *On Testimonies: Temperance and Peace*. *Friends Journal*, vol. 11, no. 2., 15 January 1965, p. 42.

<sup>170</sup> Bradford, Jim. *Towards a Quaker View of Homosexuality*. *Friends Journal*, vol. 17, no. 8, 15 April 1971, p. 229-231.

He encouraged Quaker Meetings to speak out against this injustice, openly express their acceptance of homosexual members, and demonstrate their support of gay rights by participating in more protests and direct actions. In closing, he pleaded for Friends to condemn President Nixon, an evangelical Quaker, for refusing to engage with the report his administration had commissioned by Evelyn Hooker on Homosexuality.<sup>171</sup>

Bradford's letter received numerous reactions in subsequent letters to the editor in *Friends Journal*. The first response affirmed Bradford's claim that Friends should express sympathy and care for those that suffer at the hands of state-sanctioned violence, but cautioned Friends against disobedience to Christian teachings about gay and lesbian sexuality. Other letters applauded Bradford's courage and called for the Religious Society of Friends to join the growing movement for gay rights. Two more Friends came-out as gay in *Friends Journal*, one by his actual name and another cleverly with the pseudonym: A. Bradford II.<sup>172</sup> A small group of Friends, all gay white males, used these articles to find one another and form an informal community of gay Friends. The affection gay rights activists had for TQVS, the relationships Marinissen and Osgood formed with homophile groups, and the increasing visibility of gay Friends generated the right conditions for Quakers to become more actively involved in gay rights activism.

### **Quakers and Stonewall**

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<sup>171</sup> Hooker's 1969 report, a culmination of research conducted during her tenure at UCLA in the decades prior, is credited with challenging the notion of homosexuality as a mental health disorder.

<sup>172</sup> A. Bradford II. *Letters to the Editor*. *Friends Journal*, vol 17, no. 11, 1/15 June 1971.

In 1969, the Stonewall riots exponentially accelerated the development of positive relationships between Quakers and gay rights activists.<sup>173</sup> The bar man at Stonewall, Fred E. Tree, told reporters of the Guardian newspaper that Quakers gave medical treatment to injured rioters in nearby Washington Square Park during the riots and “that’s why the Quakers still march at Pride every year and get a huge cheer.”<sup>174</sup> Another reason that Quakers participated in the Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade, the first large-scale march for gay rights in the United States, is that Quakers were invited by gay rights leaders to be involved. Three hours before the parade began, two Friends from the Quaker Project on Community Conflict addressed over one hundred “marshals,” people who had been tasked with protecting the marchers, with instructions on what to do if violence occurred. Donn Teal reports that the Quakers told the marshals not to wear jewelry, watches, or anything valuable that might be confiscated by the police. They should continually remember their responsibility to the welfare of all the marchers, even when they themselves are in danger. The Quakers also engaged the gay rights activists in a form of training they had successfully used in the civil rights movement: role playing. One parade marshall volunteered to perform the part of the violent bystander. “Cocksucker!” he yelled at another member. The Quaker trainers explained what

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<sup>173</sup> The abbreviated summary of events which happened at Stonewall in 1969 is as follows: a police raid sparked a spontaneous act of rebellion to police regulation of gay and lesbian behavior which spread over multiple days in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City. The riots were at once filled with camp, with protestors singing “We are the Stonewall girls/ We wear our hair in curls/ We wear our dungarees/ Above our nelly knees!” to incredible violence. On the first night of Stonewall, bar patrons threw coins at police and attempted to light the bar on fire while police were still inside. Reports speak about parking meters being uprooted, stones (or bricks?) were thrown and several nights of protests, involving thousands of people, followed.

<sup>174</sup> Quoted in Walters, Joanne. “Stonewall Inn regulars applaud Obama amid monument plans: ‘It’s about time.’” *The Guardian*. May 8th, 2016.

typically comes next: “They back away. Size one another up. The larger of the two lunges, falls on the other gay.” The Quakers ask the role playing individuals to pretend to tackle one another and they instruct the other marshals to “surround” and “smother” them. A pile of bodies carefully placed on top of one another serves to demonstrate the efficacy of this tactic. The two actors relax and release their grip on one another in order to break free from the larger pile.<sup>175</sup> Training the parade marshals is one of many examples of Quakers teaching gay activists about the value of non-violence during acts of protest and civil resistance. In October of 1970, for example, just a few months after the Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade, Quakers would be invited again to train gay activists leading up to demonstrations they had planned at the upcoming Democratic National Convention.<sup>176</sup>

### **The Committee of Concern**

After Stonewall, a group of gay Friends established what was sometimes affectionately referred to as a “gay Quaker commune” in Sumneytown, PA. These Friends were part of the New Swarthmore movement, an experiment started by young adult Friends at a gathering in Clinton Hill, New York in 1969. The New Swarthmore movement was about living a lifestyle of radical simplicity, opposition to war, and revitalizing the practices and principles of early Friends. They named themselves after Margaret Fell’s home, Swarthmore Hall, where the first generation of Friends in the seventeenth century operated social services to support the persecuted Quaker community and prepared traveling ministers to spread the teachings of Quakerism. They generated

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<sup>175</sup> Teal, Donn. *The Gay Militants*. St. Martin’s Press: 1995, 321.

<sup>176</sup> Teal, 259.

their income from apple picking over the summer and the social change work that each of its members chose to pursue through the rest of the year from a shared fund.<sup>177</sup> The New Swarthmoor movement shows the elegance with which Quakers were able to participate in a larger “hippie” rebuke of the Vietnam war, and how some young adult Quakers demonstrated appreciation for nature and living off of the land as many other counter-culture groups did at the time. The New Swarthmoor movement, however, was distinct from other groups in the ways its members thought deeply about Quaker history and Quaker interpretations of the Bible.

Geoffrey Kaiser (b. 1945) was a New Swarthmoor young adult Friend who also gained experience in anti-war and civil rights movements before he got involved in Quaker gay rights activism. He was raised by a Quaker mother and an Episcopalian father, both Republicans, who had stopped associating with Quakers when their meeting took a stance against the Korean war. After a few years, Kaiser went back to the meeting as a teenager and he was deeply involved in the activities of the Young Friends of North America (YFNA), an autonomous, self-directed Quaker association that encouraged progressive social thought and activism.<sup>178</sup> Through YFNA, Kaiser traveled widely among Friends and became involved in the Black Civil Rights Movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and many other social movements of the 1960s. He eventually helped establish a New Swarthmoor community in Sumneytown, PA, which in the tradition of other New Swarthmoor communities, was given a name: Three Flowers (for

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<sup>177</sup> Fiske, Edward B. “Quaker Commune is Seeking Nonviolent Social Change.” *The New York Times*. 6 April 1972.

<sup>178</sup> “Geoffrey Kaiser & Bruce Grimes | Profile”, LGBTQ Religious Archives Network.

the faith, hope, and love of I Corinthians 13). Around 1970, Kaiser invited members of the Three Flowers community, including two gay couples, to worship in a cabin he had purchased along a nearby creek.<sup>179</sup>

Another important person in the Three Flowers community was Lee Butler (b. 1943) who had extensive experience in the civil rights movement and significant connections to leftist groups, two aspects of his background that would shape his approach to gay rights activism in the name of Friends. In 1965, he was mentored by Rustin when he participated in the Summer Community Organization and Political Education (SCOPE) project in Atlanta sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Butler said: “Every time Bayard Rustin introduces someone or just talks I go wild.”<sup>180</sup> The positive opinion Butler developed of Rustin might have persuaded him to live more openly as a gay Quaker. Butler once said that despite knowing he had homosexual desires from a young age, he decided to remain celibate while working for civil rights in the South. It is quite possible that Rustin convinced Butler to refrain from sexual activity due to his own falling out with civil rights leadership and the Quakers years before.

After a year of organizing, Butler became increasingly uncomfortable with the role White Northerners were playing in the Black civil rights movements. He turned down an offer to continue working for the SCLC and moved to Philadelphia. Butler took an interest in the Janus Society, an early homophile organization based in Philadelphia,

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<sup>179</sup> “History of Unami Meeting.” [https://www.unamiquakers.org/Groups/383372/The\\_History\\_of.aspx](https://www.unamiquakers.org/Groups/383372/The_History_of.aspx) Accessed 15 May 2023.

<sup>180</sup> Larry Scott Butler Papers. SFHL-RG5-315. Swarthmore Friends Historical Library.

and its founder Clark Polak. He had his first sexual experience with Polak and through the Janus society, Butler became more involved in gay rights activities. In 1970, he joined the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), and a few months after marching in the Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade, Butler served as an official delegate for the GLF at the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention (RPCC). Organized by the Black Panthers, and supported by a broad coalition of activists from the Black Power Movement, Asian American Movement, Chicano Movement, American Indian Movement, Anti-war movement, Women's Liberation, and Gay Liberation movements, one of the goals of the Convention was to unify factions of the radical left in the United States.<sup>181</sup> Butler's style of clerking the first Quaker gay rights group in Philadelphia years later carries the hallmarks of someone who was trained by Black civil rights leaders and the radical left. Someone who understood the importance of building coalitions.

In 1970, the same year as the Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade, the group of gay Friends that had learned about one another through *Friends Journal* decided to meet in Butler's livingroom. Bradford and Ron Mattson (1936-2012)—a Quaker pastor from Minneapolis who had recently come out to his congregation—had asked Butler to hold a meeting in his home when many members of the informal network of gay Friends were expected to be in Philadelphia for an AFSC gathering. At that first meeting, the group laid plans for another gathering of gay Friends at the next FGC gathering in Ithaca. They advertised the gathering of gay Friends in the *New Republic*, a leftist periodical, as well as in *Friends Journal*, asking gay Friends to send their contact information to Butler's address in Sumneytown, PA. The group then met at Race Street Meetinghouse,

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<sup>181</sup> "Larry Scott Butler | Profile", *LGBTQ Religious Archives Network*.

where Butler was a member to make more detailed plans. When Butler requested to reserve a meeting space in the Meetinghouse, he was asked the name of the group, but they did not have one. It was through a stutter that he uttered the closeted name: “The Committee of Concern.”<sup>182</sup> The group actually liked the name because it helped them preserve anonymity for its members. Similar to Bradford’s reasons for using pseudonyms, the group that formed the Committee of Concern were concerned about the consequences of being out in a world that often caused them harm.

At this second meeting of the Committee of Concern, the group made plans for the first national meeting of gay Friends at the upcoming FGC summer gathering. Butler told a group of Friends in New York that he felt there needed to be a specifically Quaker fellowship because Friends had,

shared values and attitudes which were not greatly understood, nor could they be fruitfully discussed, in circles of homosexual people who were not Quakers. For example, non-Friends were not likely to understand or be able to usefully discuss various pastoral concerns that arise in Quaker meetings vis-a-vis homosexually oriented members. Friends who did not drink and who wore plain dress did not feel drawn to bars and other gathering places of homosexually oriented people.<sup>183</sup>

Kaiser sat on the organizing committee for FGC and he knew how to make arrangements so that members of the Committee of Concern could obtain housing next to one another in the same building.

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<sup>182</sup> “Ron Mattson | Profile”, LGBTQ Religious Archives Network, accessed May 09, 2023, <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/profiles/ron-mattson>.

<sup>183</sup> Seeger, Daniel. “Resume of New York Yearly Meeting’s Committee on Homosexuality Meeting.” 14 March 1972, RG2/NYy/640. Swarthmore Friends Historical Library.

## **Yearly Meeting Committees on Homosexuality**

Shortly before the gay Friends were meant to gather at FGC, gay Friends from New York City disrupted the business proceedings of the New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) with a request for a statement in support of gay rights. The NYYM responded by crafting a minute of support for the decriminalization of gay sexuality and asked Friends to consider it for approval at the next summer gathering. The minute in its original form reads as follows:

We note with sadness that homosexual acts are still considered criminal in many states. We believe that sexual expression in private and between consenting adults is a matter of personal morality and therefore outside the proper domain of legislation. Therefore, sexual acts in private between consenting adults should be removed from all criminal sanctions.

Homosexuals suffer serious discrimination in employment and housing. We believe that civil rights laws should be extended to provide equal opportunities for homosexuals, just as they now forbid discrimination on the bases of race and religion.

We urge Friends to support legislation to implement these concerns.<sup>184</sup>

The one-year deferral of approval for the minute gave individual Friends and Monthly Meetings in NYYM time to consider and reflect upon the implications of approving the first Quaker minute of support for gay rights. They formed an ad hoc group called the NYYM's "Committee on Homosexuality," (NYYMCH) and their charge was to study homosexuality as well as reflect on the experiences of gay and lesbian Friends in Quaker communities. The NYYMCH could also revise the minute before it was presented for approval the following year. The design of the NYYMCH was loosely modeled upon the group in Britain who wrote TQVS but was the first of its kind in the United States. A few months after the committee was formed, the clerk of NYYM formally expressed

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<sup>184</sup> Seeger.

enthusiasm in Friends Journal for the committee's work and gratitude to the gay Friends who expressed their concerns at the NYYM's business proceedings.

The first convener and chairperson of the NYYMCH was Daniel Andrew "Dan" Seeger (born c. 1934), a Friend with an esteemed reputation for his strong commitments to pacifism. During the formation of the NYYMCH, Seeger was on staff in the AFSC New York City office working primarily with students at Columbia University. He was an 'agnostic Quaker,' meaning he regularly attended Quaker worship and professed Quaker values, but stated ambivalence about a personal God. He was well-known in liberal Quaker society for defending his pacifism during a Supreme Court trial. In 1958, Seeger's application for conscientious objector status was rejected because he did not believe in a "Supreme Being" as the law had stipulated. In 1965, the Supreme Court ruled in *United States v. Seeger* that his conviction was mistaken, because Congress, in its statutory language, "did not intend" to use "the usual understanding" of "Supreme Being," but rather an interpretation that extended to Seeger's "compulsion to follow the paths of goodness."<sup>185</sup> Henry Weitzer (1929-1985), a Quaker from Morningside Monthly Meeting and a member of the Gay Activist Alliance also joined the committee early on. He offered to visit Monthly Meetings to speak about gay rights, but the committee asked him not to engage with Monthly Meetings until they had a better understanding of their purpose and goals. Nonetheless, he found opportunities to practice direct forms of activism with the GAA in New York City.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> "Excerpts from Ruling on Conscientious Objector," *The New York Times*. 21 January 1964. pp. 26

<sup>186</sup> In December of 1971, Weitzer spoke at a New York City Council hearing in support of Bill 475, an LGBT anti-discrimination bill. In November of 1971, he also denounced homophobic interpretations of Sodom and Gomorrah at a New York City Council Meeting.

Before the first meeting of the NYYMCH in 1971, Seeger ordered copies of TQVS and distributed them to each member. They agreed to study TQVS and the dialogue between Friends in response to Bradford's coming-out in *Friends Journal*. In the months immediately following the formation of the NYYMCH, the clerk of NYYM received heated complaints from Friends and she shared some of these with the NYYMCH. Letters to the editor in *Friends Journal* also continued to express concerns about the growing approval of gay sex and same-sex partnerships among Friends in NYYM. The NYYMCH discussed these letters but decided to put more of their attention on reading literature by sex education experts and other churches about homosexuality.<sup>187</sup> In addition to TQVS, they were particularly interested in a pamphlet titled "Homosexuality," published by SIECUS, the national sex education organization for which Mary S. Calderone (1904-1998), a Quaker and esteemed sex education expert, was the Executive Director. Calderone was the ideal spokesperson for this new conversation in American Quakerism. She was a sex educator with a distinguished career who had dedicated her life's work to upending "the unhealthy atmosphere of suspicion, guilt, and fear that surrounded" talk about human sexuality. She was the first female Medical Director of Planned Parenthood, where she successfully convinced the American Medical Association (AMA) to abolish its policy of limiting the distribution of information about birth control to patients. In 1964, she left Planned Parenthood to found the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). As the first Executive Director of SIECUS, she became a nationally recognized expert on sex education and

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<sup>187</sup> The NYYMCH also read "The Same Sex" published by the Division of Christian Education of the United Church of Christ. *The Homosexual and the Law* by Roger S. Mitchell and *Homosexual Behavior Among Males* by Wainwright Churchill were recommended, and Weitzer purchased copies of the latter for all the committee members, but they were not required reading.

was highly sought after by school administrators, teachers, physicians, social reformers, and parents seeking access to information about best practices for teaching about sexuality.<sup>188</sup> She was also a Christ-centric Quaker with sophisticated biblical literacy, strong religious convictions, and her voice carried significant weight among Friends.<sup>189</sup>

Leading into 1972, the NYYMCH was gaining clarity about the focus of their work. They wanted to learn about “new laws proposed in the N.Y. legislature,” “the matter of the the attitudes and practices of Friends Meetings regarding their own homosexual members,” and “Friends attitudes toward sexual practices (hetero-sexual) which depart from the traditional pattern of faithful monogamous marriage.” The group began to think more deeply about how they might engage with Monthly Meetings before they were expected to approve the minute proposed at the Yearly Meeting the previous summer. They decided to form a packet, including copies of TQVS, and the letters to the

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<sup>188</sup> Griffith R. Marie. *Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics*. First ed. Basic Books 2017.

<sup>189</sup> The NYYMCH was not the only Quaker group at this time trying to make change in the Society of Friends. In 1971, San Francisco Monthly Meeting also began to put pressure on the Pacific Yearly Meeting to consider adopting a minute of support for gay rights. At a November 1971 business meeting, San Francisco Friends developed a minute saying they were “aware that there is great diversity in the relationships which people choose to develop with each other . . . We believe that the sane [sic] standards of judgment in matters of morality and acceptable behavior which apply to heterosexual persons should be applied to homosexual persons . . . The same principle should apply when we consider requests from homosexual persons for the use of the Friends Center for participation in Meeting responsibilities, for marriage under the care of the meeting, etc.” Quaker support for gay rights had significant scope and depth by 1971 and the role the Friends played in gay rights activism deserves more representation in gay history. From the early work of the AFSC staff with homophile groups, to advocacy for gay rights from the San Francisco Monthly Meeting, to support for Mattachine Midwest from Friends in Chicago, to the NYM’s formation of the NYYMCH. Friends from coast to coast were getting involved in gay liberation like they had never done before and it was not only unprogrammed Friends who were leading the cause. It was also Christ-centric Quakers like Ron Mattson, the Quaker pastor from Minneapolis, who had helped organize the first meetings of the Committee of Concern. A member of the NYYMCH, Rossiter Seward, was also a Quaker pastor, and he occasionally offered his church for meetings of the NYYMCH. The history of Quakers and gay rights during the early 1970s challenges enduring assumptions that support from the religious left for gay rights exclusively came from those who were less biblically-oriented and lived in cosmopolitan environments.

editor in Friends Journal in response to Bradford's coming-out. They mailed the packet to all the NYYM's Monthly Meetings and they encouraged the NYYM bookstore to sell copies of TQVS at the next annual gathering.<sup>190</sup>

In March of 1972, Butler and Kaiser were invited to speak to the NYYMCH, not as members of the "gay commune" they had formed in Sumneytown but rather on behalf of the Committee of Concern, who had recently published an advertisement in Friends Journal asking gay and lesbian Friends to send their contact information to Butler for coordinating their gathering at Ithaca college. The NYYMCH, was figuring out at this time what they wanted to do in response to the minute about gay rights that was proposed at the last NYYM annual gathering. Their mandate was to address the NYYM about the minute under consideration to support gay rights and the inclusion of gay people in the NYM. By March 1972, the NYYMCH was "in unity" (a Quaker term for consensus) in their support of the minute but they also wished to revise it in a way that would "not sanction individualism and moral relativism" and instead "emphasize civil rights for homosexuals."<sup>191</sup> The NYYMCH did not want to get caught in the same web of accusations from Friends about "moral relativism" that had ensnared the authors of TQVS.

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<sup>190</sup> Around this time, the San Francisco Quakers were putting their support behind legislation proposed by Willie Brown that would decriminalize gay sex as well as prohibit employment and housing discrimination towards lesbian and gay people. According to a *Virginia Gayzette* article from January 1972, a group of Southern California Quakers had declared that "the behavior of adults in their homes was of no concern to anyone else, and they had called for "changes to California's Penal Code which is known for unfair treatment to homosexuals." See: *The Virginia Gayzette*, vol. 2, no. 2, Roanoke College Digital Collections. Contributed by: Gay Alliance of the Roanoke Valley.

<sup>191</sup> Seeger, Dan. "Minutes of the New York Yearly Meetings Committee on Homosexuality." 29 January 1972. RG2/NYy/640. Swarthmore Friends Historical Library

This meeting between the NYYMCH and the plain dressed Friends from Sumneytown also included Calderone, Seeger, Seward, Chris Downing, a religious studies professor at Rutgers, and George Nicklin, a professional psychiatrist. It was a rare occurrence for Quaker specialists in so many different fields to speak together about homosexuality. The minutes of the NYYMCH reveal an exciting dynamism in the group as they talked about the psychological, social, cultural, legal, spiritual, and emotional dimensions of gay experience. They discussed Freud, the Bible, and state laws against homosexuals within the same meeting. Calderone's views were consistently given special credence. She impressed upon the group that their work contained important implications for Quakers and the world. She had said to them a few months earlier that: "the way individual Friends deal with the question before us will be a very profound test of their essential Quakerism. Will Friends be able to respond to the essential dignity and worth in every human being to the extent that they feel comfortable extending civil rights and religious rights to persons of homosexual orientation?"

By the time Butler visited the NYYMCH on behalf of the Committee of Concern, in March of 1972, the group had built more trust with one another, gathered information from Quaker educators, psychiatrists, professors, and ministers in their fold, and they had developed a greater sense of purpose for their work. Three of the NYYMCH members had given presentations at Monthly Meetings with positive responses from Friends, except one meeting which said they felt challenged by questions "of morality or mental health beyond civil rights." The NYYMCH also began a dialogue with the Friends Council on National Education (FCNL), a Quaker lobbying organization in Washington D.C. The NYYMCH did not dwell on questions of sickness, crime, or sin, at least not as

much as the authors of TQVS, because they felt that it was more important to stay focused on civil rights. Their focus on gay rights may have been about following in due course with the instructions they were receiving from Friends during their visits, but more likely it resulted from the contacts that Seeger, the committee's convener, was making with gay activists in New York City.

Around the time that Seeger invited Butler, a GLF representative, to speak with the NYYMCH, he had started a dialogue with Bruce Voeller, a member of the GAA who would later establish the National Gay Task Force. Voeller pushed the NYYMCH, through his correspondences with Seeger, to pivot towards a more radical approach to gay rights. For example, Voeller said to Seeger that GAA members had studied the "Homosexuality" pamphlet from SIECUS, and rejected its insinuation that homosexuality should be reduced, eliminated, or overcome.<sup>192</sup> Calderone responded to Voeller's critique by clarifying that the pamphlet had merely described the lives of heterosexual people as being easier than the lives of homosexual people, but a comparison did not mean to imply that homosexuality should be cured. Regardless, the relationship between Voeller and the Quakers was positive and would grow over time. Voeller put the members of the NYYMCH on the GAA mailing list and he would continue to provide them with reading materials, including a list of laws against gay and lesbian people.

The relationship between Quakers in New York and the GAA intensified after Weitzer participated in an important action. In September 1972, Weitzer joined other GAA activists in a 'zapp' on the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC). The TLC required that gay taxi drivers provide a letter from a psychiatrist that

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<sup>192</sup> Seeger, Dan. "Minutes of the New York Yearly Meetings Committee on Homosexuality." 24 February 1972. RG2/NYy/640. Swarthmore Friends Historical Library

they were fit to drive a vehicle. To resist this policy, Weitzer and his GAA collaborators snuck a lavender couch into the Taxi and Limousine Commissioners office while dressed as delivery men, only to change into robes to imitate psychiatrists. They proceeded to scribble on clipboards while they offered the commissioner various cures for homosexuality, going so far as to suggest that he might consider a lobotomy. Meanwhile, dozens of GAA members held placards and marched in a picket line in front of the building. The TLC leadership agreed to meet with the activists and soon after repealed the policy.

As the work of the NYYMCH progressed, its members began to speak to more Quakers in NYYM about gay rights with a wider diversity of theological views. Weitzer was given permission to address Friends at the NYM's Institute for Peace, and Seward spoke with the Representative Committee of NYM. When a Friend from Poughkeepsie accused the NYYMCH of not giving adequate thought to "the moral and spiritual implications of the whole problem," Seeger distributed copies of Bible-verses to committee members produced by the concerned Friend.<sup>193</sup> The Friend from Poughkeepsie was invited to their next meeting and spoke at length about how homosexuality is evil and contrary to the Will of God. The NYYMCH listened with respect, but decided not to incorporate his homophobic views into their redrafting of the NYM minute.

In the spring of 1972, the Meeting for Social Concerns of PYM had likely heard about the work being done by the NYYMCH when it stated that "there seems to be an increasing demand that Friends should recognize their responsibility to consider the

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<sup>193</sup> Seeger, Dan. "Minutes of the New York Yearly Meetings Committee on Homosexuality." 4 March 1972. RG2/NYy/640. Swarthmore Friends Historical Library

matter of homosexuality and to have care for the needs of those among us who are homosexually inclined.”<sup>194</sup> On April 8th, 1972, PYM formed its own Committee on Homosexuality (PYMCH) and put it under the care of the Family Relations Committee, however, it would not have its first meeting until after the summer of 1972.

In the months immediately preceding the annual gathering at Silver Lake, the NYYMCH continued to adjust the minute that was produced by the NYYMM the previous year. For example Weitzer received support for striking a sentence about disavowing sympathy for the seduction of minors or acts involving force or violence because a sentence like this might conjure up unjust stereotypes and images of homosexual people.<sup>195</sup> In June of 1972, copies of the new minute about gay rights were shared with Monthly Meetings. The NYYMCH received some feedback, but not many more changes were reported to have been made. The NYYM’s annual gathering at Silver Lake was happening soon. They had planned interest groups about various topics relating to homosexuality and they were going to present their new minute for approval.

Meanwhile, in August of 1972, the gay Friends who had been connected together through Butler, Mattson, and Kaiser, gathered for silent worship each of the days of the FGC annual gathering, as was the custom for all the dormitories, but what was significant about their worship experience was that many gay Friends had not worshiped with other openly gay Friends before. They report that they experienced the true sense of a “gathered meeting” and they frequently broke the silence of worship to express their

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<sup>194</sup> “Minutes of the Meeting for Social Concerns of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting” in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Records: Committee on the Civil Rights of Homosexuals (1972-1987). QM-Phy-725. Swarthmore Friends Historical Library.

<sup>195</sup> Seeger, Dan. “Minutes of the New York Yearly Meetings Committee on Homosexuality.” 14 May 1972. RG2/NYy/640. Swarthmore Friends Historical Library

vision for a fully inclusive Religious Society of Friends. Mattson, the pastor from Minneapolis, seems to have led the outpouring of tender vocal ministry. One Friend said that Mattson took the group “to the mountaintop, and together we saw the Promised Land,” effectively evoking one of Rev. Martin Luther King’s speeches and drawing a strong link between the civil rights movement and the gay rights movement.<sup>196</sup>

Complaints about the special housing accommodations for the gay Friends spread through the conference. The overseers of FGC abruptly and unusually called a special meeting, open to all, to discuss their concerns. Mattson was living as an openly gay man at the time and he agreed to speak on behalf of the Committee of Concern. He was a respected representative, a powerful orator with deep knowledge of Quaker faith, and while reports say that his words were well-received, the FGC leadership temporarily suspended the special housing policy for the gay Friends for one year.

Stephen Donaldson (1946 – 1996), also known as Robert Anthony Martin Jr, the name he was given at birth, was also disturbed by the ways human sexuality was discussed among Friends that year at FGC and he responded by taking actions that would set a new precedent for bisexual activism. Before Donaldson had any engagement with Quakers, his early contributions to the homophile movement—such as establishing the first gay student group on a University campus—gained him national recognition.<sup>197</sup> After

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<sup>196</sup> “Ron Mattson | Profile”, LGBTQ Religious Archives Network

<sup>197</sup> Donaldson tells us that he first interacted with gay rights leaders during a high school trip to New York city, when he slipped away from his class to visit the Mattachine Society office. He had to lie about his age because there was a pervasive stigma about homosexuals being pedophiles and Mattachine members were understandably nervous about dealing with minors. Donaldson would eventually develop meaningful relationships with many Mattachine members. When he was having problems with his family, it was the Mattachine community in New York and D.C. that would offer him support. For example, during the summer he spent with his mother in Florida before attending Columbia University, his mother caught him having a sex with a local ‘Cuban boy’ and she threatened to disgrace him by sending letters about his sexuality to his father and the university. Donaldson asked a social worker to call Columbia to ask if a

college, he pursued his lifelong dream of joining the navy where he began taking an interest in Quakerism.<sup>198</sup> While on a tour in Italy he met a Quaker couple in Rome, attended his first Quaker Meeting, and later formed a Quaker worship group in Naples. Shortly after returning from his service as a navy radioman in Italy, he settled in Washington D.C. and became an active attender at Langley Hill Meeting. In 1972, Donaldson attended FGC and he was furious about the exclusive focus on homosexuality in the discussions, spurred on and orchestrated by the NYYMCH. He organized a

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'known' homosexual could be admitted and the response he got, two weeks later, was that "he would be allowed to register, on condition that he undergo psychotherapy and not attempt to seduce other students." Feeling distraught and uncertain about his college decision, Mattachine members counseled Donaldson through this ordeal. Like Bradford, the leaders of the Mattachine Societies in New York and D.C. encouraged him to use the pseudonym Stephen Donaldson. Donaldson wanted to live as an openly bisexual man but he was concerned that his sexuality might harm his father's reputation, with whom he shared the name Robert Martin.

As a young Columbia student, Donaldson started to develop a relationship, often through letter writing, with Frank Kameny, the founder of the Mattachine Society in Washington D.C., and Dick Leitsch, the presiding President of the Mattachine Society in New York. He became very close to Kameny, traveling with him to Fire Island in the summer of 1966. Donaldson would say about Kameny: "Frank gave me a complete education both in homosexuality and in the homophile movement, instructing me also in how to respond to attacks from psychiatry, religion, the law, etc., etc. He largely shaped my gay ideology and continued to influence me even after I split with him ideologically in '68-'69." This split was likely about Kameny's insistence that the homophile movement needed to appear respectable, while others like Donaldson preferred more radical civil disobedience tactics to promote gay liberation. The courage Quakers have historically demonstrated in anti-war and abolitionist movements later appealed to Donaldson's radical left sensibilities and catalyzed his interest in the Quaker religion.

At Fire Island with Kameny in the summer of 1966, Donaldson met James Millham, another gay Columbia student who was living in the dormitory with his lover. In April 1967, Donaldson and Millham would charter the Student Homophile League at Columbia, the first student gay rights group in the United States. A year later, he was named treasurer of NACHO (the delegates voting in his favor instead of Bradford, the other candidate for the position), and a year later he successfully lobbied delegates at the Eastern Regional Conference of Homophile Organizations (ERCHO) to transfer their support for the annual Reminder Day protests in Philadelphia to the Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade in New York City. To be clear, up until this point in his activist career, Donaldson had not yet had any experience with Quakers. Nonetheless, his experience in gay rights organizing and his relationships with gay rights leaders are important because they would inform the kind of gay rights work he would do as a Friend.

<sup>198</sup> During this time, he continued to have sexual experiences with men, as well as many women, and although attempting to be discreet, ultimately drew the attention and ire of his fellow service members. A letter he wrote to a friend describing his homosexual experiences on the Navy base was found open on his bed. It was delivered to his supervisors without his consent and he was immediately issued a dishonorable discharge. Donaldson refused to accept the punishment. With support from two federal congresspersons, Donaldson eventually upgraded his punishment to a 'general discharge' in 1972. It changed again to an 'honorable discharge' as part of one of Carter's sweeping amnesty initiatives for veterans in 1977.

spontaneous workshop to discuss bisexuality, which he reports over 130 Friends attended. The participants of that workshop developed the Ithaca Statement on Bisexuality, which is celebrated today as the first public statement in support of bisexuality from a religious group. Donaldson would publish the Ithaca statement in *Friends Journal* and the *Advocate*, the most widely read gay magazine in America at the time. He would also chair an FGC committee on bisexuality until he cut his ties with the Quakers in 1977 to become a Theravada Buddhist monk.<sup>199</sup>

A month after the FGC gathering at Ithaca college, the NYM approved the first official Quaker minute of support for gay rights from a Yearly Meeting:

The New York Yearly Meeting is aware that there is great diversity in the relationships that people develop with one another. We suggest that the same standards under law which we apply to heterosexual persons should also be applied to homosexual persons. Homosexuals suffer serious discrimination in employment, housing and the right to worship. We believe that civil rights laws should protect homosexuals. In particular we advocate the revision (in the light of generally acceptable present-day scientific development), of all legislation imposing disabilities and penalties upon homosexual persons as homosexuals. Friends are urged to continue to examine these questions.<sup>200</sup>

The ways in which this minute specifically takes aim at discriminatory laws and legislation reveals the influence gay rights activists had on NYM Friends. One wonders if this minute might have looked different if Weitzer, a GAA member with experience antagonizing government and corporate officials, had not joined the NYYMCH. Or if Seeger had not put the NYYMCH into dialogue with Voeller, another important GAA member and rising gay rights leader.

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<sup>199</sup> See Martin Jr., Bob. "Concern Raised About Bisexuality." *Friends Journal* (September 1, 1972); and Martin, Robert. "Quakers 'come out' at conference." *The Advocate* (August 2, 1972).

<sup>200</sup> Found in Mattson, Ron. "Committee of Concern Newsletter." Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns Records. SFHL-RG4-091. N.d. Swarthmore Friends Historical Library.

After the summer of 1972, Philadelphia's Quaker gay rights committee, the PYMCH, began discerning the focus of their work. Many Friends from the Three Flowers community, such as Kaiser and Butler, were part of the PYMCH and they were feeling energized by their newly formed status as a Quaker monthly meeting, known as the Unami meeting. Butler served as the first clerk of the Unami meeting and the PYMCH. Under his leadership, the relationship between Philadelphia Quakers and the GAA grew even stronger.

How the agreement was forged is unclear, one GAA member told an interviewer that "someone approached them and they agreed," but somehow a group of Quakers operating a mental health facility known as Horizon House on 12th and Lombard offered space for GAA meetings at a reduced rent.<sup>201</sup> Out of that space, the GAA would become one of the largest, mostly male, gay rights organizations in Philadelphia. They sponsored dances and social events, as well as "zaps" against anti-gay politicians and organizations. They also spoke out against police harassment and advocated for laws which protected lesbian and gay people from discrimination. Philadelphia's first gay pride march was held in the summer of 1972 and it was organized by GAA members who gathered at the Quaker owned-Horizon House, showing that Quakers once played a key role in the development of the first gay rights parades in two major U.S. cities.

In the fall and winter of 1972, Butler further settled into his new role as clerk of the PYMCH, following the NYMCH's model for gay rights organizing in the Religious Society of Friends, however, the PYMCH was more engaged with radical left gay rights groups and more inclusive of lesbian voices and concerns. Butler often gave reports at

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<sup>201</sup> Langhorne, Harry. Interview with Marc Stein. *Out History*, 2009.

PYMCH meetings about what kind of work was being done in groups like the Homosexual League, the GAA, and the Radical Lesbians. Occasionally, representatives from these groups would attend PYMCH meetings. The PYMCH read the very exact same reading list that was used by the NYYMCH—namely TQVS, the “Homosexuality” pamphlet from SIECUS, and *Homosexual Behavior Among Males* by Wainwright, but they added “Sappho Was a Right-On Woman” by Sidney Abbott to demonstrate their intention to include lesbian perspectives in their work.<sup>202</sup>

The PYMCH had a different mandate than the NYYMCH, understanding its role as one that was primarily about education; meanwhile, the NYYMCH was created to consider a minute about gay rights for approval at the NYM’s annual business meeting. The PYMCH dedicated most of its time in its first year to making a packet about homosexuality to be studied by Friends in Monthly Meetings, filling a small section of the Yearly Meeting’s library with books about homosexuality, and persuading Friends Schools to purchase books about homosexuality. The PYMCH had mixed success with these campaigns. A packet was composed including a film produced by the Unitarian Universalists and members of the PYMCH took the packet with them to give presentations about homosexuality for Monthly Meetings. Barbara Gittings, a resident of Philadelphia and a leader of the Daughters of Bilitis, received the business minutes of the PYMCH and she often traveled with its members to speak to monthly meetings. The Meeting for Social Concerns gave PYMCH \$100 to purchase books for the PYM library and Friends could check out these books from the PYM library for free. Most Friends schools in the Philadelphia area did not express interest in the work of the PYMCH and

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<sup>202</sup> “Minutes of the Committee on Homosexuality of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.” 27 September 1972. Larry Scott Butler Papers. SFHL-RG5-315. Swarthmore Friends Historical Library.

two schools (Westtown and Germantown Friends) said they were entirely opposed. The librarian at George School, however, requested a bibliography from Butler which he gladly provided. Butler was also working at this time as a social studies teacher at Friends Select. When the PYMCH visited local meetings in the Philadelphia area, it was often with video equipment Butler had borrowed from the Friends Select school. The PYMCH minutes also reference “a group of faculty” at Friends Select who were interested in using the UU film in their sex education program. Despite the contributions that certain Quaker individuals and Quaker groups had made to gay rights and inclusion in the Society of Friends, Quaker schools were conflicted about supporting gay and lesbian people. Butler would eventually be fired from Friends Select for sharing positive Quaker views about homosexuality with his students.

In the fall of 1972, at the same time that the PYMCH was consolidating its identity around gay rights and forging a deeper relationship with gay rights groups, the NYYMCH was changing its purpose. Like the authors of TQVS, the NYYMCH felt a need to expand the scope of their work to include the study of pre-marital sex, adultery, and divorce. They developed a new name, the New York Yearly Meeting Committee on Human Relationships and Sexuality and they took on a new project: the development of a minute for consideration by the NYM about pre-marital sex. The NYYMCH increasingly distanced itself from the gay rights movement and this was unbearable for a few of its members. At a 1973 meeting, Seeger reports that three members, including Weitzer, resigned from the group in response to the decision to table discussions “about homosexuality and the law.” A complete shift in focus for the group is also indicated by a

series of workshops they would facilitate at the NYM annual gathering in 1973 titled “A Quaker View of Marriage and Divorce.”<sup>203</sup>

In Washington D.C., Donaldson was about to make another monumental contribution to the advancement of gay rights, although this time under horrible and violent circumstances. In the summer of 1973, Donaldson joined a group of Quakers who had teamed up with members of the Community for Creative Non-Violence, to demonstrate at the White House. They performed ‘pray-ins’ on the grounds of the White House, which in the Quaker sense was a silent Meeting for Worship. On August 9th, Donaldson was arrested with six others for performing a pray-in at the White House in response to the bombs on Nagasaki. A few days later, he was arrested again for conducting another Meeting for Worship on White House grounds, this time to protest bombs falling on civilians in Cambodia. With the intention of punishing Donaldson for his perceived lack of patriotism, the prison guard captain set him up to be brutally raped by over 40 inmates. His body was so battered that he spent a week in a D.C. hospital for surgical repair of his rectum.<sup>204</sup> Donaldson decided to speak out about this experience, becoming the first leader of a homophile organization to direct significant media attention to male rape in prison. Remarkably, less than two weeks after his release, he described his experience to Quakers in *Friends Journal*:

Why was I called to such suffering? What did it accomplish? How can God lead me into such evil?...The damage for which I call the Lord most to account is that which has undermined my capacity for trust in human beings, for tenderness, for love; that which has ruptured my integrity and

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<sup>203</sup> Seeger, Dan. “Minutes of the New York Yearly Meetings Committee on Homosexuality.” 15 December 1972. RG2/NYy/640. Swarthmore Friends Historical Library

<sup>204</sup> Tucker (Stephen Donaldson), Donald. “The Account of the White House Seven”. In Scacco, Anthony M. Jr. (ed.). *Male Rape: A Casebook of Sexual Aggressions*. AMS Studies in Modern Society; Political and Social Issues. Vol. 15. New York, NY: AMS Press (1982). pp. 30–57.

my hopes for more open, honest relationships with my fellow human beings. These are losses which, a part of me wants to say, no God has a right to demand.<sup>205</sup>

Donaldson hired an attorney to file a civil suit against the Department of Corrections, but his Quaker meeting asked him not to seek legal retribution. It would be wrong to assume that Donaldson's Quaker Meeting cajoled him into dropping charges. Rather, Donaldson was increasingly articulating a pacifist ideology during this time and he did not want to subject others to the violence of the federal prison system.

Back in Philadelphia, the GAA was looking for more opportunities to benefit from their relationship with Friends. In June of 1973, Keith Clark from the Gay Health Consortium of Philadelphia visited the PYMCH and spoke about the need for a gay health center.<sup>206</sup> During that meeting, Clark persuaded Butler and Kaiser to approach the property committee of PYM about a vacant building on third street. On August 1st, 1973, the GAA opened the Eromin Center, a mental health service for LGBT people; the Gay Switchboard, which offered legal, counseling, and social worker referrals; and the Gay Coffeehouse, an important social and political organizing venue for the Philadelphia gay community in the 1970s in the building owned by PYM. The relationship between PYM and the gay community leaders at the Coffeehouse was largely positive, rooted in a landlord-tenant agreement. When disputes about how the space should be operated or paid for became a problem, the PYMCH was called in to moderate disputes. When the Eromin Center found a new location in 1974, the entities who were left behind did not

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<sup>205</sup> Martin, Bob. Letters to the Editor. *Friends Journal*. October 1st, 1974.

<sup>206</sup> "Minutes of the Meeting for Social Concerns of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting" 19 June 1973. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Records: Committee on the Civil Rights of Homosexuals (1972-1987). QM-Phy-725. Swarthmore Friends Historical Library.

agree on how the space should be used or shared. A lesbian group sent a request to the PYMCH to use the space for their social needs and political organizing work. Butler remarked at this time, “Whether because of their own disinterest or their need for separateness at this point, or whether because of our own (unconscious?) hostility, insensitivity and male chauvinism, women have not been coming to the gay coffeehouse in any great numbers. Perhaps a gay women’s center would be a better use for the building.”<sup>207</sup> Persuaded by Butler and the PYMCH, the Coffeehouse staff entered into a space-sharing agreement with the lesbian community leaders and a women’s only coffeehouse began operating on Wednesdays and Saturdays and continued to serve as an important space for community building and political organizing in the Philadelphia lesbian community until 1976.

*‘Human sexuality and the Quaker conscience’*

In the early months of 1973, gay Friends in New York and Philadelphia, as well as Friends from all over the U.S. connected to the Committee of Concern, were making travel preparations to hear Calderone’s Rufus Jones Lecture, “Human Sexuality and the Quaker conscience,” at Sandy Springs Meetinghouse. The Rufus Jones lecture was named after the great professor of psychology and philosophy at Haverford College and theologian, peace activist, and co-founder of the AFSC who mentored Rustin and Isherwood. The speaker for each year’s Rufus Jones lecture was selected by the Religious Education Committee of FGC and their voice was meant to speak on behalf and towards the ideas of Friends in many different liberal Quaker Yearly Meetings. During a gathering at Weitzer’s home in New York, the Committee of Concern discussed how they

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<sup>207</sup> “Notice for Meeting of Coffeehouse Staff.” 9 June 1974. Larry Scott Butler Papers. SFHL-RG5-315. Swarthmore Friends Historical Library.

might support gay Friends who were traveling from afar to attend the lecture and needed accommodations. The NYYMCH and PYMCH had started exchanging their business minutes with one another by this time, becoming very close to one another, and they discussed how to host a joint meeting of the committees in coordination with Calderone's lecture. The joint meeting never occurred, but it was clear that Calderone's address was going to be a big event for the gay Quaker community. Never before had a Friend spoken about homosexuality to an audience of Friends from many different Yearly Meetings and with the support of a national Quaker organization.

From the standpoint of both her faith as a Quaker and her profession as a leading sex education expert, Calderone said in her historic speech that the primary reason Quakers must demonstrate acceptance of homosexuality is because human understanding of sexuality is limited and Quaker understanding of God's will—at least according to the Quaker belief in continuing revelation—is also limited. “The mystery of sex,” said Calderone, “continues to be greater than our capacity to comprehend it, no matter how much we learn about it. We engage in it, in often too frantic efforts to enjoy it but, more subtly, also to try to fathom its ever recurring power over us. Surely this power and its mystery relate to the mystery of God's relationship to us.”<sup>208</sup> For Calderone, therefore, it was against a fundamental premise of Quaker theology for any Friend to claim that their conscience spoke with more certainty, about sexuality among other things, than others. In past chapters, we explored how Friends felt called to protect gay and lesbian people from their religious convictions concerning pacifism and abolition, but Calderone claims it is

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<sup>208</sup> Calderone, 18.

the doctrine of the Inner Light, as understood in the liberal stream of the American Quaker tradition that insists that Friends remain open to the experiences of gay Friends.

Furthermore, Calderone spoke for a critical mass of American liberal Friends from different Yearly Meetings who were ready to say with conviction that gay sex and same-sex partnerships were not inherently criminal, immoral, or psychologically unsound. Hear Calderone address each of these in no uncertain terms when she said:

There is no question but that most homosexuals who come to psychiatric treatment do have problems, but then so do most heterosexuals who come to psychiatric treatment - and we should be realistic enough to understand that society's attitudes about homosexuality might be in the forefront of creating problems for homosexual individuals. Therefore, passing moral judgments or taking legal actions against homosexuals will simply add to these problems. Where anti-social sexual actions are concerned, treatment, whether in psychiatry or in law, should be on the same basis, whether the individual be homosexual or heterosexual. It is not only unjust but unrealistic to extend greater protection to the civil rights of heterosexuals for anti-social acts in the sexual area, than to homosexuals for the same or lesser anti-social acts. Following the same logic, persecution of an individual merely for *being* homosexual is morally and legally indefensible.<sup>209</sup>

As shown in this small excerpt of her speech, Calderone addresses many of the legal, cultural, and social problems which were also of concern to Marvel, Rustin, and the authors of TQVS. With expert exegetical dexterity and scathing specificity, Calderone asserted that a view of homosexuality as unlawful, sinful, or a symptom of sickness was inconsistent with the testimony of Friends.

During the summer following Calderone's lecture, FGC reinstated permission for gay Friends to meet and worship as a collective. The group was renamed from the closeted Committee of Concern to the Friends for Gay Concerns in 1974, the Friends Gay

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<sup>209</sup> Calderone.

and Lesbian Concerns in 1978, and the Friends for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FGLBTQ) in 2003. Through the decades, this group would work to become more inclusive of more diverse gender identities, a trajectory that is consistent with most gay rights groups that began with gay male leadership. In a business minute from 1999, FGLBTQ described its purpose as providing “a faith community” for LGBTQ+ Friends to “worship together, discern our corporate witness through Meeting for Worship with attention to business, share our individual journeys, celebrate our lives, heal old wounds, and draw sustenance from the Spirit for our work and life in the world.”<sup>210</sup> They have taken up various causes, such as promoting an updated version of TQVS, publishing a series of keynote speakers at their Mid-Winter gatherings from 1973-1993 in a volume titled *Each of Us Inevitable*, keeping records of same-sex and transgender marriages, and more recently they were invited by the Law firm Kramer Levin to serve as signatories on a court brief in support of marriage equality.<sup>211</sup> As a result of the strong relationships built between Quakers, gay rights activists and their organizations, as well as the work of gay Friends to promote the inclusion of gay and lesbian people in liberal Quaker traditions, the FGLBTQ has succeeded in building LGBTQ+ community among Friends for over 50 years.

Calderone’s Rufus Jones lecture, provides our end note to this account of Quaker support of gay and lesbian people in the mid-twentieth century. Her address feels like a suitable finale not only because Calderone was asked to speak on behalf of an important authority, the Religious Education Committee of FGC, but also because her clear defense

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<sup>210</sup> Friends for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns. “Minute.” 15 February 1999.

<sup>211</sup> See Leuze et al.

of gay sex indicates that a consensus had been reached in the liberal stream of Quakerism in support of gay and lesbian people. Quaker efforts to create greater inclusion in the Religious Society of Friends for gay and lesbian people were not completed by the time of Calderone's lecture. Liberal Quakers continue to fail to be welcoming spaces for LGBTQ+ people and Friends are still learning how to create a sense of belonging for LGBTQ+ people in their faith communities. Nonetheless, the story of Quaker involvement in gay rights during the late 1960s and 1970s shows that a small religious community can make a significant difference. May all other accounts of gay rights history acknowledge the contributions of Friends to creating a more safe, just, and peaceful world for gay and lesbian people.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

*We need in every community a group of loving troublemakers.*

-Bayard Rustin<sup>212</sup>

This project has been written in tribute to the thousands of gay and lesbian people who were targets of state-sponsored violence in the mid-twentieth century. Prior to 1962, gay sex was a crime in every state and most states would not repeal their anti-sodomy laws until the 1970s. Looking at all of the important events described earlier, it is evident that liberal Quakers from many different backgrounds carried a concern for how law enforcement and the criminal justice system sought to control and punish gay people. In the 1940s, Marvel—and the Quakers who oversaw the CRC clinic for men arrested for having sex or soliciting sex with men in public—understood the cruelty that law enforcement and the criminal justice system inflicted on the gay community. In 1953, Rustin’s arrest for gay sex permanently tarnished his reputation. A group of eleven British Quakers, largely in response to the Wolfenden report which denounced the criminalization of homosexuality, were the first religious group to publicly address the injustices faced by the gay community caused by the state. Around the same time, Marinissen started using the resources of the AFSC to connect homophile groups with prison officials. Bradford, the President of Mattachine Midwest, overtly challenged police entrapment of gay people in *Friends Journal* and queer publications. At a pivotal moment in gay rights history, Quakers helped heal injured victims of police violence during the Stonewall riots and trained gay rights activists in how to peacefully resist

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<sup>212</sup> Rustin, Bayard. “The Meaning of the March on Washington.” *Liberation*. October, 1963.

police retaliation at the first pride parade. The Yearly Meeting minutes in support of gay rights from the early 1970s all explicitly denounced the criminalization of gay and lesbian sexuality.

The persistence of Quaker antagonism towards law enforcement and the criminal justice system for criminalizing people for who they are spoke to Quaker involvement in anti-slavery and civil rights movements. Had the historic experience of abolition movements driven some Quakers to express an early witness to the criminalization of gay people? I have refrained from speculating in this project about the motivations for Quaker involvement in the gay rights movement, but certain themes and patterns in my research offer sound reasons for why Quakers may have been drawn to protect and support gay and lesbian people ahead of many other liberal religious traditions.

In addition to the historic experience of Friends in anti-slavery and civil rights movements, the research conducted for this project also suggests that Quaker opposition to violence may have been their prime motivation. Marvel experienced the aftermath of war, both abroad and in the United States, before he opened the CRC clinic, and Donaldson served in the navy before he shepherded the writing of the Ithaca Statement on bisexuality. The experiences these men had with state-sanctioned violence strengthened their pacifist beliefs, motivating them to eradicate violence in all its many forms, including violence towards gay people. Marvel also worked in a Paris gestapo operated prison and Donaldson suffered terror while in prison. They understood how the might of the state to regulate and punish soldiers and prisoners is reflected in the ways police, laws, and judges control and harm gay and lesbian people. Seeger was an experienced peace activist before he organized the NYYMCH that worked on the first

Quaker minute of support for gay and lesbian people, and Butler was an experienced civil rights activist before he clerked the PYMCH that drafted a similar minute and created space-sharing relationships between Quakers and gay rights organizations. The experiences these men had with anti-war and civil rights activism strengthened their religious conviction to affirm the light of God in everyone and motivated them to eradicate inequality in all its many forms, including state-sponsored discrimination towards gay and lesbian people.

Was it abolition or pacifism that convinced Friends to protect gay people from harm and discrimination? Rosemary Radford Ruether, a Catholic feminist theologian, tells us that Quaker approaches to pacifism and abolition should not be understood in isolation from one another, nor should they be disconnected from Quaker approaches to gender. Ruether's intersectional analysis of Quaker approaches to feminism, violence, and racial oppression pull us even closer to understanding why Liberal Quakers took an early stance in support of gay rights. A brief description of the historic Quaker approach to women's religious authority will help to frame Ruether's thesis about what lies at the intersections of Quaker feminism, pacifism, and abolition.

Positive Quaker evaluation of women's preaching, like pacifism and abolition, has its origins in the seventeenth century. It was pervasive among early Friends and shocked religious officials, who were all men. The equality of men and women was believed by early Friends to be one of the signs of the Second Coming of Christ, an indicator that the world was being healed from the disharmony between genders which resulted from original sin and humanity's fall from grace in the Garden of Eden. For most of Quaker history, the large Yearly Meetings sought to give witness to the equality of the

sexes by creating ‘separate but equal’ arrangements for men and women’s business meetings. In practice, however, this meant that they were never equal because men and women’s business meetings have historically focused on different tasks and responsibilities of varying levels of importance. Quakers have been more consistent in defending the equality of women’s and men’s spiritual gifts for preaching. In the seventeenth century, the assertion that men and women were equal through Christ marked Quakers as peculiar, different from other Christian traditions, and potentially dangerous. “In the seventeenth century the preaching, teaching, and witnessing of Friends evoked brutal responses from ecclesiastical and civil authorities . . . [And] some of the harshest attacks targeted the bodies of Quaker women, whose public acts were considered particularly obnoxious because they challenged the prevailing gender ideology of female physical weakness and intellectual inadequacy.”<sup>213</sup> Quaker women were imprisoned, beaten, stripped naked in public, accused of witchcraft, and executed.

Again, Quaker support of women’s spiritual authority, like pacifism and abolition, has never been uniform or consistent.<sup>214</sup> Notwithstanding, Ruether’s assessment of how the Quaker testimony of equality between men and women is linked to Quaker pacifism and abolition reveals something important about why Quakers defended gay and lesbian people in the mid twentieth century. In a 2002 article for the *National Catholic Reporter* titled “Feminism must rediscover pacifist roots,” Ruether wrote:

In the first feminist movement in 19th century America, it was widely assumed that feminism and peace were closely connected. This view was

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<sup>213</sup> Garman, Mary Van Vleck. “Quaker Women’s Lives and Spiritualities.” *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, ed. by Angell, Stephen Ward, and Dandelion, Ben Pink. First ed. Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 233.

<sup>214</sup> See Cazden, Elizabeth. “Quakers, Slavery, Anti-Slavery, and Race,” and Garman, Mary Van Vleck. “Quaker Women’s Lives and Spiritualities” in *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, ed. by Angell, Stephen Ward, and Dandelion, Ben Pink. First ed. Oxford University Press, 2013.

rooted in the Quaker theology of early feminists, such as Sarah and Angelina Grimke and Lucretia Mott. In this Quaker theology the original equality and harmony between men and women was broken by the “usurpation of power of some over others.”

From this original sin of usurped power flowed all forms of oppression and violence: slavery, male domination of women, and war. In this Quaker take on original sin, it was not women who were scapegoated for the sin of “disobedience,” but rather dominating men who were blamed for seizing unjust power over others.<sup>215</sup>

In Ruether’s understanding of Quakerism, the peace testimony is inherently a feminist enterprise because it seeks to interrogate, antagonize, and dismantle the twin sins of war and patriarchy. Ruether continues,

This did not mean that Quakers thought that women were simply innocents in this primal sin of dominating power. Women had been distorted into passive dependents and ruling class men into aggressive oppressors. Conversion meant a transformation of both men and women. Women were enabled to “stand upright on that ground which God has designed for us to occupy,” as Sarah Grimke put it in one of her 1837 letters “On the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women.” Men overcame the patterns of violence and abusive power for mutual partnership with women.

Ruether articulates well the emphasis in Quaker feminist thought on an inward transformation towards peacemaking. The cessation of violence alone does not completely conform to Fox’s vision of a world that had removed ‘the occasion for all wars.’ Rather, Quaker pacifism is also about conquering the patriarchal impulse within human beings to demonstrate dominance through violence. Locating within Quaker pacifism the intersectional nature of Quaker social reforms, she writes, “Liberating all peoples from slavery, blacks [sic], women, Indians [sic] and overcoming war, were linked together.” Thus, Ruether gives the focus we need to better see the reasons why

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<sup>215</sup> Ruether, Rosemary Radford. “Feminism Must Rediscover its Pacifist Roots.” National Catholic Reporter. 20 December 2002.

Friends first sought to be more inclusive of gay and lesbian people (internal reform) and support gay rights (external reform) as actualizations of the peace testimony and abolition.

I want to avoid asserting that there is an inherent drive, or essence, in liberal Quakerism towards benevolence for gay and lesbian people. The research for this project also showed that some Quakers in the liberal Tradition thought it was more important to uphold the reputation of Quakers and the reputation of pacifists than to be supportive of homosexuals. The Quakers shut down the CRC clinic when the Marvel was arrested for gay sex and Rustin was scorned by his Quaker mentor, Muste, for his arrest about a decade later. And some gay Friends, like Butler, were fired from their jobs at Quaker institutions for speaking openly about homosexuality. In all of these cases, Quakers distanced themselves from people when their unlawful sex was made public knowledge, at a time when it was unlawful for gay people to have sex with one another under any circumstances. The letters written to the editor in *Friends Journal* in response to Bradford's coming-out letter showed that Friends were deeply divided in their opinions about gay rights and the inclusion of gay and lesbian people in the Society of Friends. Quaker responses to TQVS were also contentious. The Committee of Concern was able to make special housing arrangements at FGC at first because one of their own served on the FGC planning committee, but when concerns housing a group of gay Friends together spread among FGC attendees, the Committee of Concern's request to share housing and worship together was (temporarily) revoked. The NYYMCH and the PYMCH never received unanimous support from Friends, but rather they had to continually educate and persuade Yearly Meetings to take a stand against the injustices that caused harm to gay

and lesbian people. Many gay Friends in the 1960s and 1970s protected themselves from insult and discrimination by pseudonyms when addressing Quaker audiences. In sum, the struggle to promote gay rights and the inclusion of gay and lesbian people in the Religious Society of Friends was made more challenging by strong opposition to homosexuality in liberal Quaker world. Which also makes the efforts of Friends described in this project that much more valiant and impressive.

A methodological strength of this project has been its focus on primary documents from the mid-twentieth century. Butler, Marvel, and Seeger's personal files were vital to the success of this project as were the business minutes of the CRC clinic meetings, pamphlets and epistles written by the Family Relations/Relationships Committees of the 1950s, and dozens of folders containing business minutes for the Committee of Concern, the NYYMCH, and the PYMCH. All of these materials were found at the Friends Historical Library archives at Swarthmore College. Due to the vast number of documents, the relationships between Quakers, and between Quakers and gay rights groups, was not always clear and the sequence of historical events was not always easy to discern. A triumph of this work has been the interpretation and synthesization of data from primary documents at the Swarthmore archives into a coherent historical narrative. A deeper examination of the Mattachine Midwest newsletters and the business minutes of 57th Street Meeting in Chicago will reveal more about the interconnections between Bradford's Quakerism and his gay rights activism. More analysis of the business meeting minutes for San Francisco Monthly Meeting and Pacific Yearly Meeting in the late 1960s and early 1970s will also account for lacuna in how the story of Quaker inclusion of gay and lesbian people has been told in this project. Future studies might

focus on the trajectory of Quaker support of gay rights in Britain following the publication of TQVS, the evolution of Quaker responses to gay and lesbian issues in the U.S. after 1973, and the development of Quaker views on homosexuality in parts of the world with large Quaker populations that were not examined in this project, such as in Africa and Latin America.

Scholars working in Quaker studies have written about the efforts, shortcomings, and failures of Friends to be more inclusive of people of color in the Quaker religion, but there is not a single academic text dedicated to understanding Quaker inclusion of gay and lesbian people in the liberal Quaker tradition. Additionally, while historians have paid tribute to the contributions that Bradford, Calderone, Marvel, and Rustin made to the advancement of gay liberation, past academic work has not emphasized the Quaker dimensions of these people's lives or explained the impact of their work on the Quaker world. Scholars of gay rights history have noted the importance of the CRC clinic for protecting gay men from imprisonment, and the role AFSC staff played in the CRH, the coalition of clergy and gay activists in California before Stonewall, however, the contributions made by Quakers who held leadership positions in homophile groups, such as Bradford, Donaldson, and Weitzer, are rarely featured in accounts of gay rights history.

Given that a group of Quakers were the first to write a positive and public evaluation of gay and lesbian sexuality from a religious perspective, with the publication of TQVS, this project challenges researchers of queer religious history to highlight the contributions that Quakers have made in challenging Christian attitudes towards homosexuality and the moralizing power of the Bible. In the field of Quaker Studies,

great attention has been poured into examining Quaker anti-slavery and abolition movements, Quaker support of women's rights, Quaker pacifism, and Quaker involvement in the civil rights movement, but the important role that Quakers played in the advancement of gay rights has not been told by Quaker scholars or historians of twentieth century Quaker history in any depth. This project has sought to make a meaningful contribution to scholarship by providing the first comprehensive account of Quaker involvement in gay liberation during the mid-twentieth century.

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## APPENDIX A

### LIST OF ACRONYMS FOR QUAKER ORGANIZATIONS

- AFSC American Friends Service Committee
- BYM Britain Yearly Meeting
- CFA Conference of Friends
- CGC Committee on Gay Concerns
- CRC Civilian Readjustment Center/Committee
- FGC Friends General Conference
- FLGBTQC Friends for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns
  
- FUM Friends United Meeting
- FWCC Friends World Conference of Churches
- HSC Home Service Committee
- LYM London Yearly Meeting
- MPC Marriage and Parenthood Committee
- NWYM Northwest Yearly Meeting
- NYYM New York Yearly Meeting
- NYYMCH New York Yearly Meeting Committee on Homosexuality
- PacYM Pacific Yearly Meeting
- PRM Penal Reform Committee
- PYM Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
- PYMCH Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Committee on Homosexuality
- QES Quaker Emergency Service
- QGH Quaker Group on Homosexuality
- SCYM Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting
- SEYM Southeastern Yearly Meeting
- YFCC Young Friends Central Committee
- YFM Young Friends Movement
- YFNA Young Friends of North America