Introduction

Few religious groups in America have provoked such mixed and extreme reactions as the Religious Society of Friends. Commonly known as Quakers, since their inception in the 1650s and their energetic pursuit of dissenters' rights, they have been scorned and celebrated by popular and scholarly observers alike. While some commentators have derided them for arrogance, hypocrisy, and the subversion of social and political institutions, others go as far as to say that the Quakers "invented" America and credit them with originating much of what is right and just in this country.[1] Interestingly, others still have dismissed them as irrelevant to the larger questions of American political life or simply taken no notice.

Yet as anyone with a passing familiarity with American history might observe, in one way or another, for better or worse, Quakers have been an important force. They were ubiquitous and "peculiar," as they described themselves, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; it is well-known that Quakers caused significant difficulties for Massachusetts Puritans and that Pennsylvania was a Quaker colony. Although they blended into American culture more in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, very little probing of the more recent past reveals them to be equally present; many, for example, are aware that Friends had a prominent role in the social reform movements of the Antebellum period. Beyond that, at the very least, it would be hard to find an American today unfamiliar with the Quaker Oats man, contrived image though it is.

But even with this significant presence, few scholarly works have undertaken to show precisely what Quakers have contributed to American political culture and how they accomplished it. Despite the grandiose claims, both negative and

[1] See, for example, Joseph Smith, *Bibliotheca Anti-Quakeriana: A Catalogue of Books Adverse to the Society of Friends* (London, 1873; rpt. New York: Kraus, 1963). In the twentieth century, commentary has tended toward the other direction. See, most recently, David Yount, *How Quakers Invented America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007). A fuller discussion of the popular reception of Quakerism appears in the following chapters.

positive, there has been at the same time a curious neglect of the intricacies of Quaker theologico-political thought that has kept many of the arguments superficial, implausible, or merely limited.

That Quaker constitutionalism is the subject of a formal analysis challenges conventional approaches to the study of Quakerism and Anglo-American political history. In the first instance, a common anachronism committed by contemporary scholars, and what has undoubtedly contributed to the absence of Quakerism from the political historiography, is to consider religion and politics as though they were separate and distinct realms of thought and action. In discussing Quaker thought, I borrow the term "theologico-political" from Spinoza. This term signifies the interrelatedness of the religious and the political that has shaped Anglo-American thinking even beyond the First Amendment. When Spinoza wrote his *Theologico-Political Treatise* (1670), he did so as an objection to this relationship. This has led some scholars to argue that he was the first liberal democrat.[2] Whatever Spinoza might have been, his treatise is not best viewed whiggishly as a harbinger of things to come, but rather for what it was, a commentary on his present, in which few could conceive of a secular political world. It is only in this context that we can understand how Quakers and other men of their time understood theology and ecclesiology as largely indistinguishable from political theory and civil structures. While at times throughout this study I speak of them separately, this is an artificial device used for the sake of a comprehendible discussion and does not reflect the actual way people of the time thought. Quaker theories on church and state emerged simultaneously. The only sense in which religion preceded politics occurred when they looked for the ultimate justification for their political theory; then they turned to God.

Among scholars sensitive to the historical relationship between religion and politics, the neglect of Quakerism stems from another source – confusion about the genealogy of Quakerism. There has been a largely unarticulated tension in the literature about whether they were Anabaptists or reformed Calvinists; or, rather, toward which side of their family tree they tended.[3] For different reasons, placing them too firmly on one branch or the other has had the consequence of making them appear irrelevant to political history.

When scholars have considered Quakerism as a variation of Anabaptism, they have cultivated a myth that that they were quietists. Some claim that, after a period of enthusiastic proselytizing in their founding years, the Society retreated inward and disengaged from the world. Quaker historians, such as W. C. Braithwaite, have argued that, after their initial intensity, there was eventually an "indifference to public life which persecution and nonconformity with

[2] Hillel G. Fradkin, "The 'Separation' of Religion and Politics: The Paradoxes of Spinoza," *The Review of Politics* vol. 50, no. 4, Fiftieth Anniversary Issue: Religion and Politics (1988), 603–27.

[3] The only work that confronts this problem head on is Melvin B. Endy's "Puritanism, Spiritualism, and Quakerism," in Mary Maples Dunn and Richard Dunn, eds., *The World of William Penn* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 281–301.

the practices of the world gradually fostered."[4] Following them, others such as Christopher Hill maintain that after 1660, "[t]he Quakers turned pacifist and abandoned any attempt to bring about by political means a better world on earth."[5] This alleged quietism has not been seriously examined since by most political historians who usually consider Quakers as a whole to be, as Garry Wills has categorized them, "withdrawers" from government and civil society – a corporately exclusive sectarian group that shuns engagement with the world to preserve its own purity.[6] Until relatively recently, the perception of Quakers as apolitical has discouraged attempts to investigate their political theory. Naturally, a quietist group would have no need to formulate a theory of a civil constitution or civic engagement. In her seminal work on Anglo-American political thought, therefore, Caroline Robbins writes that Quakers can be "safely neglected" in the study of constitutionalism. "Their continued existence," she says, "was a reminder of a demand for greater liberty, but they took no great part in political agitations of any kind."[7] Most subsequent

[4] William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 314; Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1964), 251; W. C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1919), 179; H. Larry Ingle, "Richard Hubberthorne and History: The Crisis of 1659," *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* vol. 56, no. 3 (1992), 189–200, 197.

[5] Christopher Hill, *The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley* (Oxford: The Past and Present Society, 1978), 55; also see Christopher Hill, *Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (New York: Viking, 1984), 130. Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), 68; Blanche Weisen Cook, et al., eds., *Peace Projects of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1972), 15. A sort of quietism was certainly an important aspect of Quaker thinking, but explaining it simply as withdrawal does not take into account the political expressions of this stance. Nor was this stance ubiquitous throughout the Society of Friends in the eighteenth century. Richard Bauman describes three main modes of Quaker political behavior that existed – sometimes in tension with one another – in mid-eighteenth century Pennsylvania: religious reformers, worldly politicians, and "politiques," those who were a mixture of both. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the so-called quietists as political leaders on their own terms. Although Quakers participated in politics in diverse ways, Bauman's analysis presupposes an underlying unity that is important for the purposes here – the idea of a government and society based on Quaker principles. They simply took different approaches to reforming civil society in different periods. See Richard Bauman, *For the Reputation of Truth: Politics, Religion, and Conflict among the Pennsylvania Quakers, 1750–1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971).

[6] For more on the category of "withdrawer," see Garry Wills, *A Necessary Evil: A History of the American Distrust of Government* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999). There was a point at which some Quakers did indeed withdraw from office holding; however, this fact does not define all Quakers or their entire relationship to government and politics.

[7] Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 222. This statement may not be representative of her later thought. In 1979 she contributed a brief essay to discussion on the *West Jersey Concessions and Agreements* of 1676/77, the first Quaker constitution, in which she wrote that the *Concessions* "naturally reflected Quaker ideology" and remains "the clearest expression of the liberal aspirations of mid-century revolutionaries" (Caroline Robbins, "William Penn, Edward Byllynge and the Concessions of 1677," in *The*

work on early modern politics has followed this assumption. Although there are many studies of the influence of the political world on Quakerism and their practical politics in Pennsylvania,[8] there are few studies on the relationship of Quaker theology to their political thought,[9] fewer still on the significance of their thought and practice for the American polity,[10] and none on their collective understanding of a constitution.[11]

West Jersey Concessions and Agreements of 1676/77: A Roundtable of Historians, Occasional Papers No. 1 [Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1979], 17–23. 19, 23). Those following her earlier thought include Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 327; Boorstin, *The Americans,* 68; J. G. A Pocock, "Interregnum and Restoration," in *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 155; Wills, *A Necessary Evil*.

[8] Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Pennsylvania, 1682–1763* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1948); Gary B. Nash, *Quakers and Politics: Pennsylvania, 1681–1726* (Princeton, 1968; rpt. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993); James H. Hutson, *Pennsylvania Politics, 1740–1770: The Movement for Royal Government and Its Consequences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972); Alan Tully, *Forming American Politics: Ideals, Interests, and Institutions in Colonial New York and Pennsylvania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); and Tully, *William Penn's Legacy: Politics and Social Structure in Provincial Pennsylvania, 1726–1755* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

[9] A useful work by Herman Wellenreuther discusses of the influence of Quaker theology and ecclesiology in Pennsylvania government: *Glaube und Politik in Pennsylvania, 1681–1776: Die Wandlungen der Obrigkeitsdoktrin und des* Peace Testimony *der Quäker* (Köln: Böhlau, 1972). This study presents in impressive detail the difficulties Quakers confronted in reconciling their political authority with their peace testimony. Richard Bauman gives an analysis of various forms of Quaker political engagement in Pennsylvania as based on their different understandings and expressions of Quaker principles in *For the Reputation of Truth*. Other studies examine the political thought of William Penn, but with little or no attention to his Quakerism. See Edwin Corbyn Obert Beatty, *William Penn as Social Philosopher* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939); Mary Maples Dunn, "William Penn, Classical Republican," *PMHB* vol. 81 (1957), 138–56 and *William Penn: Politics and Conscience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967). A work that begins to address the religious aspects of Penn's political thought is Melvin B. Endy, *William Penn and Early Quakerism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973).

[10] The only work on this is Tully's *Forming American Politics: Ideals, Interests, and Institutions in Colonial New York and Pennsylvania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). A work that seems as though it will engage a discussion of Quaker political theory and its implications for America is E. Digby Baltzell's *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia: Two Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Class Authority and Leadership* (New York: The Free Press, 1979). However, he purports to analyze Quaker conceptions of government by saying that theirs were purely negative and therefore made no substantive contribution to American political culture. A brief but important corrective to this thesis is put forth by Stephen A. Kent and James V. Spickerd, "The 'Other' Civil Religion and the Tradition of Radical Quaker Politics," *Journal of Church and State* vol. 36, no. 2 (1994), 374–87. This piece addresses a few of the constitutional innovations of Quakers and the importance of Quaker antiauthoritarianism for American political culture.

[11] Richard Alan Ryerson gives us a glimpse into William Penn's constitutional thought, but he not does extend his analysis to the rest of the Society, nor does he address the theological

Robbins's assertion that Quakers can be neglected depends, of course, on how one defines "political agitations." If they are understood exclusively as armed revolts or violent riots, then she is correct. For most of their existence, Quakers have been pacifists, refusing to engage in armed warfare even to defend their own colony of Pennsylvania. It is likely that one of the main reasons for their exclusion from American political historiography is their stance as conscientious objectors in the Revolution and the specter of Loyalism this conjured up in the minds of their critics then and since. But, as we shall see, although revolution, mob action, and other sorts of violent behavior were an important part of early modern political culture, they were not the only extra-legal mode of redressing grievances.[12]

Ironically, despite the assumption of Quaker quietism, another common misunderstanding of Quakerism is that it is simply a radical form of Puritanism.[13] Among early modern religions, Puritanism has received the most attention from political historians. To be sure, Quakerism arose during the Puritan Revolution, and there are some important theological and temperamental characteristics that Quakers shared with Puritans. The most important trait for this study is political aggression, a quality wholly lacking in most expressions of Anabaptism. Because so much attention has gone to the political influences of reformed Calvinism on Western political thought, it then seems that, by extension, Quakerism has also been treated. But when scholars define Quakerism in this way, they obscure any separate contribution. Although this study does not

underpinnings. See Ryerson, "William Penn's Gentry Commonwealth: An Interpretation of the Constitutional History of Early Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* vol. 61, no. 4 (1994), 393–428. Only once have I come across the term *Quaker constitutionalism* outside of my own work. In less than three pages on the theological foundations of Pennsylvania, Barbara Allen describes with remarkable accuracy – although perhaps attributing too much to Penn – several of the fundamental premises of Quaker theologico-political thought. See Barbara Allen, *Tocqueville, Covenant, and the Democratic Revolution: Harmonizing Earth with Heaven* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 51–53.

[12] Most studies of dissent and protest in America, especially early America, focus on the violent expressions of mobbing and rioting. See, for example, William Pencak, Matthew Dennis, and Simon P. Newman, eds., *Riot and Revelry in Early America* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2003); Wayne E. Lee, *Crowds and Soldiers in Revolutionary North Carolina: The Culture of Violence in Riot and War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001); Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America,* Interdisciplinary Studies in History (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996); John Phillip Reid, *In a Rebellious Spirit: The Argument of Facts, the Liberty Riot, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1979); Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of the American Opposition to Britain, 1765–1776* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1991).

[13] Many major works, both by Quakers and non-Quakers, have put forth this interpretation. See, for example, Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 130, 134, 177–78, 208–09; and, among others, the most influential study of early Quakerism, Barbour's *The Quakers in Puritan England*, 2, passim. See also James F. Maclear, "Quakerism and the End of the Interregnum: A Chapter in the Domestication of Radical Puritanism," *Church History* vol. 19 (1950), 240–70. For a detailed refutation of this interpretation, see Melvin B. Endy, "Puritanism, Spiritualism, and Quakerism."

undertake a detailed comparison of Quakerism and Puritanism, it demonstrates that on several key points, Quaker theology and practice were importantly different from reformed Calvinism. Insofar as these two religious systems differed, so did the political theories and institutions that grew from them.

Quakers were therefore neither Anabaptists nor reformed Calvinists. They were torn between their Anabaptist roots, which inclined them to reject government, office holding, civic engagement, and war, and the Calvinism at their nascence that drove them into the political arena. This dualism in Quakerism is something that Friends have always tried with varied success to balance. Consequently, there is a certain schizophrenia about Quakerism – a people militant at times in their insistence on peace and extreme in their moderation. Throughout this study we see Quakers both as individuals and as a body struggling to reconcile this and other competing and sometimes-contradictory aspects of their identity.

This study has three overarching purposes – to describe Quaker constitutional theory; to identify the practical expressions of this theory; and to explain the thought and action of Founding Father John Dickinson within this tradition, using him as the best, though imperfect exemplar of it in early America.

In the late-seventeenth century, the Religious Society of Friends originated a unique theory of a civil constitution and a philosophy of civic engagement that they practiced and actively disseminated beyond their Society for the next three hundred years. Their political thought and action was inextricably connected to their theology, the form and function of their ecclesiastical constitution, and appropriate behavior within their faith community, all of which this study will engage in detail. The most important practical expression of this theory was peaceful resistance to government to effect constitutional change. Of the possible methods of peaceful protest, civil disobedience was the most extreme. It is thus a main theme of this work. The study follows the development and use of this method and others by Quakers in Interregnum and Restoration England, through the American Revolution with Dickinson as its foremost advocate, and, in an epilogue, up to its articulation by Martin Luther King, Jr., in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. In doing so, it offers the first exposition of Quaker constitutional thought, the first discussion of the Quaker foundations of American civil disobedience, and the first coherent analysis of John Dickinson's political thought.

The most familiar concept in this study, civil disobedience, warrants some attention at the outset. Although since the 1960s it has become a widely accepted form of civic engagement, it is often misunderstood. Scholars and the public alike confuse it with other modes of dissent, both violent and nonviolent, which is not surprising, since the various forms of resistance overlap. Thus a few words by way of definition of civil disobedience and a brief overview of its relationship to Quaker constitutional theory are in order.

Although the definition of civil disobedience has been in contention over the years, it is most generally accepted to be a public, nonviolent, submissive transgression of law. This is to say, it is an act performed out in the open; it

does neither physical nor mental harm to people or property; and the actor accepts the punishment for the act. Breaking the law in this case must also be intentional, not inadvertent. Finally, it must be committed with the intent to educate and persuade the general public to the position of the disobedient. The figures whom scholars consider to be the major thinkers on the matter and who have received almost exclusive attention, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., concurred with this definition.[14] Civil disobedience also presumes a number of other political requisites. There must be a democratic element of the system that assumes the people have a say in the laws. The act must be for the public good rather than private or sectarian interests. There also must be a substantial degree of stability in the polity. And, most importantly, for it to be legitimate, there must be a sense of moral obligation to the constitution and government. There is, in other words, no basis for dissent in anarchy.

There are also other forms of political resistance that are similar to, but not the same as, civil disobedience. Many of these have aspects in common with civil disobedience, but they leave out some elements. They include actions or nonactions that range from legal and peaceful to overtly violent and illegal, such as obstructionism, evasion, nonresistance, and revolution. Some specific examples are voting, disseminating political literature, boycotts, sit-ins and marches, rioting, tax evasion, manipulation of the legal system, withdrawal of financial or other assistance, bombing of public buildings, and overthrow of the government. For reasons that are fairly clear, these actions usually do not meet the criteria for civil disobedience – some of them break no laws,[15] some are violent and destructive, some are clandestine, and some show no sense of political obligation.

Civil disobedience can also be exercised by various means. It can be direct or nondirect action, persuasive or coercive. In direct action, the disobedient breaks the specific law he believes to be unjust. In nondirect action, he breaks laws that are not directly related to the specific injustice he is protesting, except perhaps symbolically, in order to disrupt the system and bring attention to his cause. Also, civil disobedience is a form of pressure, but that pressure can be manifested in different ways. It can be gently educative or persuasive when it seeks to convert the community to the position of the disobedient; or it can be coercive when it uses the body of the disobedient as a means to make people behave contrary to their inclinations. It cannot be violent. But, as will become clear, violence is a concept that can be broadly construed.[16]

[14] This definition describes the theory and action of King and Gandhi, but not, for reasons I explain in the epilogue, Henry David Thoreau. The classic statement is from Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from a Birmingham City Jail* (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, 1963).

[15] This is to say that they do not break contemporary American laws. In seventeenth-century England or other countries today with fewer civil liberties, many of these nonviolent forms of protest might have been or may be illegal, which would then allow them to fit into the category of civil disobedience.

[16] James F. Childress, *Civil Disobedience and Political Obligation: A Study in Christian Social Ethics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 27–32.

The scholarship on civil disobedience, most of which was produced in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, usually begins with Thoreau and ends with King.[17] Much of it takes little account of religion in general or, if so, demonstrates a serious ignorance of the history of peace churches and the origins of pacifism in America; and the scholarship is decidedly anemic without Quakerism.[18] It was Quakers who were the first practitioners of this technique. Rather than follow the lead of their Puritan cousins in challenging the government, Quakers took another tack and became more than just the mild-mannered advocates of religious liberty that they have been portrayed to be, but something other than revolutionaries. Since their beginning, they were among the most radical and best organized political groups in Interregnum and Restoration England. Not only did they take part in political agitations, but they were, as far as their contemporaries were concerned, a menace to civil government to rival any – even Ranters and Catholics. They are proof against J. G. A. Pocock's claim that there was a "disappearance of sectarian radical culture" after the Interregnum.[19] Moreover, they were among the

[17] For a fuller analysis of the tenets of civil disobedience, as well as the debate over the definition, see Harry Prosch, "Toward an Ethic of Civil Disobedience," *Ethics* vol. 77, no. 3. (1967), 176–192; Wilson Carey McWilliams, "Civil Disobedience and Contemporary Constitutionalism: The American Case," *Comparative Politics* vol. 1, no. 2 (1969), 211–27; Hugo Adam Bedau, ed., *Civil Disobedience: Theory and Practice* (New York: Pegasus, 1968); Howard Zinn, *Disobedience and Democracy: Nine Fallacies on Law and Order* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968); Childress, *Civil Disobedience*; Marshall Cohen, "Liberalism and Civil Disobedience," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* vol. 1, no. 3 (1972), 283–314; John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 322; Hugo Adam Bedau, *Civil Disobedience in Focus* (New York: Routledge, 1991). See also the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Symposium on Political Obligation and Civil Disobedience, Fifty-Eighth Annual Meeting, Atlantic City, NJ, December 27–29, 1961, the papers from which are: Richard A. Wasserstrom, "Disobeying the Law," *The Journal of Philosophy* vol. 58, no. 21(Oct. 12, 1961), 641–53; Hugo A. Bedau, "On Civil Disobedience," *The Journal of Philosophy* vol. 58, no. 21 (Oct. 12, 1961), 653–65; Stuart M. Brown, Jr., "Civil Disobedience," *The Journal of Philosophy* vol. 58, no. 22 (Oct. 26, 1961), 669–81. Many other works purportedly on the topic take an uncomplicated approach and, without setting forth a definition, mistakenly treat any sort of resistance to government as civil disobedience. One example is Mary K. Bonsteel Tachau, "The Whiskey Rebellion in Kentucky: A Forgotten Episode of Civil Disobedience," *Journal of the Early Republic* vol. 2, no. 3 (1982), 239–59.

[18] In *Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), Valeri Zigler explores the pacifist movement in Antebellum America, but without attention to its Quaker roots. Maurice Isserman finds that "American pacifism was largely an offshoot of evangelical Protestantism." *If I Had a Hammer . . . The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 127. Although he is right to argue that the peace movement of the early nineteenth century had a significant evangelical component, its progenitors acknowledged their debt to the two-hundred years of Quaker pacifism that had come before. See Peter Brock, *Radical Pacifists in Antebellum America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968). Of the few works that recognize Quakers, two are by Straughton Lynd, including *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966); and *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968).

[19] J. G. A. Pocock, "Radical Criticisms of the Whig Order in the Age between Revolutions," in Margaret Jacobs and James Jacobs, eds., *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 33–57, 33.

leaders in the early resistance movement against Britain in the Revolution. But they agitated without violence. They were *pacifists*, but by no means *passive*; as John Dickinson put it, they were turbulent, but pacific. In their own peculiar way, they instigated a most significant and effective kind of political agitation and were the first contributors to a distinctive mode of thought and behavior within the Anglo-American dissenting tradition. A Milton scholar writing in 1896 also noted this Quaker contribution and found that it "has never been sufficiently acknowledged."[20] His observation holds true still.

If Quakers were quietists or self-interested sectarians, their exclusion from this historiography on this subject would be warranted. But their protest always had a political purpose. The main form of protest with which Quakers are associated is conscientious objection, a form of dissent that is usually distinguished from civil disobedience. Scholars rightly argue that in order for protest to be properly defined as civil disobedience, the goal of the disobedient must be not only for the protection and salvation of his own soul but also for the well-being and reform of the political society in which he lives. They make a distinction between civil disobedience as a political protest and conscientious objection, or resistance required by faith.[21] About religious conscientious objectors, writes James Childress, "the agent is not trying to effect general social change, but rather to 'witness' to his personal values and perhaps to secure a personal exemption for himself. There is no effort at persuasion or coercion."[22] But of course, "witnessing" requires an audience – or a jury. In all their protests, Quakers witnessed before the court of public opinion with the intent to persuade non-Quakers to their position. It was a form of proselytizing. To be sure, they wanted to absolve themselves from any implication in ungodly activity; but at the same time their goal was to set an example for others to follow, to testify for God's law through social and political reform. This study will show that the Quakers' intentions were far from merely self-interested, either personally or for their Society – they were for the public welfare. Indeed, throughout much of American history, most outsiders were fully aware of the Quakers' intentions and bristled at them.[23]

In each phase of their incarnation – from "grassroots" activists in England, to politicians in colonial Pennsylvania, and back to activists after the American Revolution – Quakers expressed all forms of nonviolent resistance with varying

[20] David Masson, *The Life of John Milton: Narrated in Connexion with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of His Time* (1896; rpt. New York: Peter Smith, 1945), 6: 587–88.

[21] See, for example, Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* in his definition of civil disobedience and conscientious refusal, 319–26.

[22] Childress, *Civil Disobedience,* 24.

[23] Indeed, Childress's statement should be qualified in a significant way. There are certainly some religious sects, including many of those who are in the Anabaptist tradition such as the Amish and Mennonites who fit this description. Like the Quakers, most conscientious objectors from the early Christians onward have used their position as a means of publicizing their convictions and converting others to their stance. Such is the fundamental proselytizing impulse in pacifism itself. See Devere Allen, ed., *Pacifism in the Modern World* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1972) and Peter Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).

emphasis on each tactic depending on the tenor of the situation. Sometimes the lines between their tactics blurred. It was not unusual that they used various techniques simultaneously, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish one form from another. Their spheres of action – social, religious, economic, and political – were also conflated. This is especially true where civil laws were either unclearly defined or undistinguished from social norms and customs. Beyond their political resistance, then, Quakers engaged in social resistance in which they did not necessarily break any laws but rather challenged entrenched behaviors and institutions. The punishments for these actions were often as bloody as those meted out by the state for civil disobedience, and Quakers embraced their martyrdom enthusiastically.

Thus, far from being "withdrawers" from political society, Quakers traditionally sought to make their religious convictions public in order to convince, or coerce when necessary and possible, non-Quakers to share their vision of the world and their mode of engagement with it.[24] Because of this concern for missionizing, Friends were also very savvy about how to use various media at their disposal to shape their perception by non-Friends. Accordingly, an important subtheme of this study is the Quakers' public image. We will see how Quakers manipulated their image and how, with the changing sociopolitical climate, the public perception of them evolved – albeit unevenly – from extremely negative to very positive. I argue that the shift in the public image of Quakerism indicates a degree of success in their missionizing.

Because political obligation, a commitment to preserving the constituted polity, is the foundation on which civil disobedience rests, the analysis here necessarily focuses on the Quaker understanding of a civil constitution.[25] The Quaker theory of a civil constitution demands respect for the constituted polity and its founding principles. The respect is premised on a belief that the power in the polity resides with the people – all the people – and that they are bound to participate in it according to the rule of law; that is to say, individuals should be governed by a process that is internalized in the individual, but might be enforced from without if necessary. They must contribute to the welfare of the polity through word and deed, and do so in a way that will preserve the harmony in the polity while furthering its ends. The Quaker theory is a mode of constitutional interpretation that values original intent and requires written codification of them, but recognizes that a paper constitution is merely an

[24] Throughout I will make a distinction between what I call *traditional* Quaker thought and activism and newer modes that did not comport with Quakers' historical behavior and theology as it arose in the mid-seventeenth century.

[25] A good deal of the work on political obligation was produced alongside the literature on civil disobedience. A few of these are Michael Walzer, *Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War, and Citizenship* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971); Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*; Bently LeBaron, "Three Components of Political Obligation," *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique* vol. 6, no. 3 (1973), 478–93; Karen Johnson, "Perspectives on Political Obligation: A Critique and a Proposal," *The Western Political Quarterly* vol. 27, no. 3 (1974), 520–35.