

Change in the Quaker Business Environment 1800–1948

by

Nicola Sleafwood

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School of Philosophy, Theology and
Religion

College of Arts and Law

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Abstract

This thesis assesses change in the Quaker business community in Britain over the long period 1800–1948. It establishes a model for defining a Quaker business to assist in future research, and seeks to query notions of business success. I use a range of sources and methods and a largely chronological approach to draw out different strands of change over time. My earliest primary sources are the books of discipline of the Religious Society of Friends, which guided and regulated behaviour in its early history. By combining an analysis of the discipline around business with a consideration of Quakers' business activities and the practice of the discipline, I show the impact on the Society and its reputation of Quaker interactions with new business forms and speculation in the early to mid-nineteenth century. I use a local case study of the Birmingham business community at this time to further demonstrate this, and to highlight the strength of Quaker business networks, locally and nationally, and how this trusting relationship benefits business.

My conviction that, based so much on personal faith, religious business history is also personal means that I highlight the cases of particular individuals, including Joseph Gibbins in the early nineteenth century, and the stories of two cousins and the family business they enter as young men in the late nineteenth century. These latter individuals, William Arthur Albright and John William Wilson, and the story of their firm and their differences draw out further loci of change. These are principally changes in company form and its associated importing of external management, and the devastating impact of World War I on the Quaker business environment. Throughout my thesis I bear in mind theological change in Quakerism and I argue that this change combines with the decline in the application of the discipline and leads to its replacement with a conversation which continues into the mid-twentieth century, but is ultimately inconclusive.

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¹ Sally has provided paid help with spelling and punctuation; formatting and sorting of footnotes and endnotes for consistency and order; ensuring the thesis follows the conventions of grammar and syntax in written English; shortening long sentences and editing long paragraphs.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Ian Apps (1950–2023),
who always loved and believed in me.

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List of Abbreviations

LSF, Library of the Society of Friends

WAAS, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service

WC, Wolfson Centre, Library of Birmingham

1. Introduction

This thesis has emerged from a research idea suggested and funded by the Quakers and Business group, who were seeking to establish how the Quaker business environment changed over the twentieth century, with a perception that fewer Quakers were successful in business by the end of the twentieth century than at its opening.¹ The Quakers and Business group has funded this work, but within this remit I have had full scope to determine the direction of the research myself. I approach this as someone with an understanding of Quakerism and as a theist, fascinated by ethics and personal motivators in decision making, and how these are reflected in practice.

Early in my research I discovered two key factors in change in the Quaker business environment. The first of these, the impact of changing legal structures and their use in the nineteenth century, and concurrent changes in the Quaker disciplinary rules and process, drew my time period to much earlier than was originally intended. These changes were pivotal in foregrounding the shifts that happened in the early twentieth century. The second was my discovery that, with the Quaker commitment to pacifism, World War I became a flashpoint of sorts for many Quaker firms, which could make or break a firm's Quaker status. This second discovery led me to consider in detail what makes a firm Quaker and to construct a flow chart model for defining a Quaker business. These factors combined to mean that by the mid-twentieth century, alongside other contextual changes, visible Quaker firms were few and far between, hence my thesis time period ends with the last Quaker Employers' Conference in 1948.

¹ Quakers and Business, accessed 15 May 2023, <https://www.qandb.org/>; personal correspondence with Timothy Phillips, May 2023.

This chapter sets the scene for my thesis and justifies my approach. I begin by justifying my purpose in a section on the rationale behind my thesis and relevant fact in this connection. Next, I provide a review of the literature of most importance to my research and argument. I then outline my methodology and sources in order to explain my approach. Finally, I include a discussion of and analytical model for defining a Quaker business and who we consider to be Quaker, distinguishing hereditary or nominal Quakers from those who seem to have maintained their faith and practice. This last section is crucial to my thesis: without some boundaries around who and what is 'Quaker', I believe it is incredibly hard, if not impossible, to analyse broader change and decline in the Quaker business community.

1.1 Rationale

This thesis investigates the drivers of change in the Quaker business community in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and seeks to establish which were the most important factors within this. I chart how the Quaker business world and those within it changed from the start of the nineteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century. I demonstrate that although their networks largely remained strong, from the early nineteenth century Quakers were engaging in new business forms and speculation, largely to the detriment of their interests and those of the Society. By charting the interaction between this behaviour and their discipline, in the context of theological change and the broadening of access to incorporation, I show that trust in Quaker businesspeople and their firms began to be undermined. Moving on to the twentieth century, I argue that growing political change inside and outside of the Religious Society of Friends formed a wedge between businesspeople and other Quakers, and that, largely due to the Peace Testimony, World War I was a time of significant business rupture and

disruption for many Quaker businesses which, combined with theological liberalisation, changed the Quaker business outlook permanently. After Quakers moved from a discipline and fixed ethic in business to merely having a conversation, the inconclusiveness of this meant that by 1948 few distinctively Quaker firms remained visible.

Throughout my thesis I endeavour to consider notions of success and how they fit with Quaker values: when we think or talk of 'successful' Quaker businesses, are we thinking simply of commercial success, or success in promoting Quaker values in business, or success in terms of treatment of employees and the community, or more than one of these? At the heart of this I demonstrate a growing tension between commercial success 'in the world' as Quakers became increasingly wealthy and began taking on public and professional roles in the nineteenth century, and Quaker values and the discipline. I demonstrate this growing tension as Quakers' businesses grew and as they increasingly engaged with new forms of business other than the partnership, before but even more after changes in company law in the middle of the nineteenth century.

My thesis shows how this tension was also heightened by World War I, when the practice of the Quaker Peace Testimony in business was tested. I analyse how the books of discipline developed in parallel with the changing business context in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From this I argue that ultimately the increasingly worldly activities Quakers took on, in campaigning, politics, and social reform, brought them either directly or indirectly (through close exposure to wealthy contacts of other denominations, for example) into conflict with the discipline and its practice in their businesses. In turn, and partly under the direction of influential Friends in business, the discipline was weakened and eventually no longer practised at all. By the end of World

War I Quakers were no longer distinct in business, and their discipline had been replaced by an identity crisis and a consequent conversation, spearheaded by the Cadburys and Rowntrees, who sought, as highly commercially successful business families, to direct the agenda.

How successful were Quakers in business? Undoubtedly there were successful Quaker businesses both commercially and later in terms of their provision for employees, but Ann Prior's evidence and my own here for the Quaker business community demonstrate that failure was by no means uncommon.² What is more, there were many Quaker firms which we no longer hear about today because they were not extremely successful, not large, not particularly innovative in terms of welfare or philanthropy, or some combination of these. Many were, as far as we can tell, simply ordinary. That is certainly not to suggest that Quakers did not have a relative advantage in business, as Andrew Fincham has demonstrated.³ It is simply to note that no system could ensure success, and no group of people within which almost everyone engaged in commerce in its early history would be without less successful examples. I demonstrate here that the advantage afforded by various factors persisted until around the mid-nineteenth century.

Within the moral landscape of Quaker businesses, I argue that Albright and Wilson sits somewhere in the centre – it is neither a moral exemplar (such as Rowntree's and Cadbury's are purported to be), nor a business which abandoned its Quaker values at the first possibility of great wealth through incorporation to become a company rather than a partnership in the mid-nineteenth century or earlier. Albright and Wilson's timeline sits

² Ann Prior, 'Friends in Business: The Interaction of Business and Religion within the Society of Friends 1700–1830' (unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University, 1995).

³ Andrew Fincham, 'The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success, (1689-c.1755)' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2021), accessed 2 February 2023, <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/11389>.

very well within the scope of my thesis, being established in 1856, but having its roots earlier, and existing as a Quaker firm until 1915 (and longer as a business generally). This combination of factors therefore led me to the conclusion that an in-depth study of this business, with reference to others and to the national Quaker context, would be the most fruitful avenue to follow in my research.

Generally, the only concrete business records accessible to me have been for medium-sized or large Quaker firms, such as Clark's and Albright and Wilson. In all of these cases there was a reason why each firm would not work as a main case study. In the case of Clark's, I was unable to access the management or Board minutes for the firm, though I did glean some helpful information. In two further cases, for one reason or another my enquiries simply were not met with success. This is a further reason for choosing Albright and Wilson. It is also a reason why I could not access records for smaller businesses; unfortunately, these are very difficult to trace on the whole, unless perhaps one can find a family member.

1.2 Thesis Structure

The overall structure of this thesis is chronological. This is to follow changes that affected the Quaker business community in the order of their occurrence, and to create a sense of change over time. The time periods covered within each chapter vary considerably depending on the function of the chapter: Chapter 2 covers the longest period at 100 years (1800–1900) and Chapter 4 covers the shortest period, at just 4 years (1914–1918). Within each chapter the structure and length also vary depending on its function.

Chapter 2 (1800–1900) provides an account of three Birmingham Quaker business families, including an introduction to the Albrights and Wilsons and their firm

which is my major case study in this thesis. This is followed by thematic sections on intermarriage, civic life and politics, geographical distribution in the West Midlands. This foregrounds the largest and most significant part of the chapter which then demonstrates how Quakers interacted with and influenced the changing legal business environment and how this contributed to the erosion of trust. These sections (2.5 and 2.6) cover the railways, business forms, the discipline and investments, and their impact on firms.

Chapter 3 (1900–1914) introduces key figures in Albright and Wilson, and considers broader social change in terms of socialism, trade unions, and Quaker MPs, and social change within the Religious Society of Friends. It considers the development of the Peace Testimony in the context of theological revival, London Yearly Meetings in 1911 and 1912, approaches to business from Seebohm Rowntree, Edward Cadbury, and Edward Grubb.

Chapter 4 (1914–1918) is largely an in-depth case study of Albright and Wilson during World War I, considering in detail the effect on a Quaker business of the outbreak of war and a government order to make munitions. It highlights the importance of key figures in senior governance in defining a business, and the divisive effect of war on a Quaker firm, reinforced with reference to other businesses.

Chapter 5 (1918–1948) provides an analysis of the Quaker Employers' Conferences in 1918, 1928, 1938, and 1948 to consider Quaker thought on business by the mid-twentieth century. It also looks at the outlook for Albright and Wilson after the war.

Chapter 6, my conclusion, draws together the key themes across the period and highlights my original contribution, as well as observing associated implications and avenues for further research.

1.3 Literature Review

In the field of academic religious business history generally, David Jeremy's introduction to *Business and Religion in Britain* was the most useful starting point for me, though his book *Capitalists and Christians* has also been very helpful.⁴ These two works helped me to formulate questions around religion and its interplay with capitalism which have shaped my thesis. While on further reflection I have come to see that the statistical analysis of Quaker representation in *Capitalists and Christians* is arguably somewhat misleading due to its sample size (based solely on Cadbury's among Quaker firms),⁵ this does not negate the broader insights provided by Jeremy into a consideration of the faith of those managing and directing large firms. Reading these works also confirmed to me that there has not yet been a thorough review of the various factors affecting specifically Quaker business success in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, thereby making this project worthwhile. Articles and chapters published since these works, and examined below, have not had the scope to provide an overarching assessment as I do here.

1.3.1 General Works on Quakerism

Elizabeth Isichei's research in *Victorian Quakers* around Quakers' theology, influence, and political engagement forms a foundation for my chapter on the nineteenth century.⁶ It is divided into two parts, one simply concerning the Quakers, and one concerning the Quakers and society. The first section provides reliable information about the relaxation of Quaker discipline which has underpinned my further research around

⁴ David Jeremy, *Capitalists and Christians: Business Leaders and the Churches in Britain, 1900–1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); David J. Jeremy (ed.), *Business and Religion in Britain*, Business History Series, vol. 5 (Aldershot: Gower, 1988).

⁵ See Section 1.5 for further consideration of this text.

⁶ Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

the related conclusions I draw here. The second section, with its evidence well referenced and gathered from reliable primary sources, has particularly informed some assumptions underlying my research, including that as the nineteenth century wore on Quakers were, as far as we can tell, almost always politically associated with the Liberal Party. Isichei argues that over Victoria's reign the Quakers had shifted from being a 'peculiar people', separated from the world by their theology and policies of endogamy and simple dress, to a religious group with broader social responsibilities.⁷

In *Victorian Quakers*, Isichei paints a picture of growing conformity to the world among Quakers over the course of the nineteenth century, describing how as regulations which separated and distinguished Quakers from others were removed, so was 'a hedge between Friends and the rest of society'.⁸ She describes other changes and how 'by the 1840s, the characteristic outlines of Quaker puritanism are already beginning to disappear'; this helps to dispel John Child's notion of Quaker puritanism, at least beyond the mid-nineteenth century.⁹

Thomas Kennedy builds on Isichei's work and goes further, convincingly arguing that 1860–1920 was a period of transformation within Quakerism.¹⁰ Kennedy outlines this transformation to social policy from philanthropy, and from traditional to modern scientific thought, against a background of evangelical theology. As Kennedy focuses on broader Quaker change in the period on which I concentrate here, and since his work is well referenced and justified, it has been a key reference throughout my thesis. However,

⁷ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, 280.

⁸ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, 147.

⁹ John Child, 'Quaker Employers and Industrial Relations', *Sociological Review*, 12, no. 3 (1964), see Section 1.3.3 for more on Child; Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, 155.

¹⁰ Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism 1860–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Kennedy does not give any significant time to Quakers and business in his work. Instead, his book has helped me to place businessmen mentioned in passing or in other contexts, and to situate them in a broader movement. It has therefore been invaluable.

Brian Phillips' PhD thesis argues that over this period Quakerism became increasingly allied with national causes, patriotism, and Empire.¹¹ He suggests that 'For late nineteenth and early twentieth-century British Quakerism,... [the] extraordinary development of a European peace establishment provided an irresistible entree into precisely the sort of sphere of respectability and even gentility to which many leading members of the Society of Friends craved access.'¹² By a European peace establishment Phillips means official organisations including aristocrats, nobles, and princes working for peace, in contrast to the socialist, labour movement.¹³ Kennedy observes that Phillips' explanation of the Society's sudden change (as Phillips sees it, which Kennedy questions) to a radical stance during World War I is somewhat flimsy, and here I would tend to agree with Kennedy, who evidences the build-up more thoroughly and highlights other elements.¹⁴

However, I would argue that Phillips' and Kennedy's perspectives on the peace movement are not necessarily contradictory; rather, they can coexist. Their evidence demonstrates the two strands to the peace movement within Quakerism, although Kennedy's is broader. Phillips' argument is however largely borne out here in the case of the Quaker business 'elite': many influential wealthy businessmen with social status and

¹¹ Brian David Phillips, 'Friendly Patriotism: British Quakerism and the Imperial nation, 1890-1910' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1989).

¹² Phillips, 'Friendly Patriotism', 153.

¹³ Phillips, 'Friendly Patriotism', 145-149.

¹⁴ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 262.

ambitions were patriotic and supportive of Empire, and these men were often influential in the Society of Friends well into the twentieth century.

In tying together links between Quaker business families, Charles Edward Gurney Pease's personal research into the genealogies of Quaker families, provided online and in private correspondence with me, has been immensely helpful to me in piecing together or confirming links, and aided in my demonstration of the degree to which the circles of what became a Quaker business 'elite' remained small and linked by marriage well into the twentieth century.¹⁵

1.3.2 General Works on Business History

Described by Franco Amatori and Andrea Colli as 'the world's leading business historian', Alfred Chandler's influence on the business history world is well established; the current era in business history is often referred to as post-Chandlerian and he is 'the scholar who gave academic and scientific status to business history'.¹⁶ Chandler's work focused predominantly on large industrial managerial businesses such as General Motors in the United States. His argumentation, particularly in *Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism*, was very much in favour of the development of big business.¹⁷ As far as Britain is concerned, Chandler was critical of the lack of planning of organisational change within its businesses, and he considered its many family businesses to be an

¹⁵ Charles Edward Gurney Pease, Quaker genealogy files, accessed 20 March 2023, <http://www.pennyghael.org.uk/gedcom.htm>; Charles Edward Gurney Pease, personal correspondence.

¹⁶ Franco Amatori and Andrea Colli, *Business History: Complexities and Comparisons* (London: Routledge, 2011), 7.

¹⁷ Alfred D. Chandler and Takashi Hikino, *Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

obstacle to its business and economic success.¹⁸ While I bear Chandler's theory in mind, Roy Church has shown the differences between the US and British business environments,¹⁹ and Colli and Rose agree, describing the 'real difficulties in applying Chandler's ideas outside the United States and to sectors where competitive advantage is more reliant on the quality of information flow than simply on technology and capital intensity'.²⁰

1.3.3 Quaker Business History

Several 'popular' books have been published which touch on Quaker business history. None of these is referenced with footnotes and therefore their claims need to be approached with caution.

Arthur Raistrick's work, *Quakers in Science and Industry*, published in 1950, on early Quaker industrial exploits and success (between 1650 and 1800), paints the history in a favourable light and repeats many unexamined suggested reasons for Friends' success, such as their exclusion from the 'professions'.²¹ It also focuses on an earlier period than I do here. Although he was an academic, this work is unfootnoted and contains no bibliography. His claims have also have now been drawn into question by Andrew Fincham's recent PhD thesis.²²

¹⁸ David J. Jeremy, *A Business History of Britain, 1900–1990s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 184; Andrea Colli, Carole Howorth, and Mary B. Rose, 'Long-Term Perspectives on Family Business', *Business History*, 55, no. 6 (2013), 842–843.

¹⁹ Roy Church, 'The Limitations of the Personal Capitalism Paradigm', *Business History Review*, 64, no. 4 (1990), 703–710.

²⁰ Church's thought is referred to in Jeremy, *A Business History of Britain*, 186. See also Andrea Colli and Mary Rose, 'Family Business', in Geoffrey Jones and Jonathan Zeitlin, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Business History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 199.

²¹ Arthur Raistrick, *Quakers in Science and Industry: Being an Account of the Quaker Contributions to Science and Industry during the 17th and 18th Centuries* (York: Sessions, 1950), 338–339.

²² Fincham, 'The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success', 18.

James Walvin argues that early Quaker success was due to trust between Quakers, discipline in terms of endogamy and around business activity, and their mutual support and networks. He covers a broad period up to 1914, but does not nuance this, for example he does not recognise the change in the discipline around business in the nineteenth century.²³ He suggests that 'Quaker commercial success could contain the seeds of its own downfall: just as it lured new generations of prospering employers away from the austere world of the Society of Friends, so it could drive a wedge between master and worker by the sheer scale of production.'²⁴ However, Walvin does not provide concrete or original evidence for this claim. The evidence I provide here is that the situation was a lot more complicated and nuanced than Walvin suggests. Walvin does include some footnotes in his book; however, these are scant and he includes little original evidence.

In *Chocolate Wars*, Deborah Cadbury describes the history of Cadbury's and Rowntree's in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in particular (with a focus on Cadbury's), and suggests both a change in ethics and the undermining of this by the shareholder public company structure in the case of Cadbury's.²⁵ However, she does not footnote her sources, so many of her claims are difficult to verify. Further, in focusing on Cadbury's, *Chocolate Wars* does not highlight the varied and potentially highly damaging ultimate impact of World War I on Quaker firms as I do here, nor does she interrogate the firms' Quaker nature and the change in this over time.

In *Quakernomics*, Mike King considers with some nuance the factors which drove change in the Quaker business world across the broad period from 1700 to the twentieth

²³ James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals* (London: John Murray, 1997), 208.

²⁴ Walvin, *The Quakers*, 115.

²⁵ Deborah Cadbury, *Chocolate Wars* (London: Harper Press, 2010).

century. He suggests factors such as the legal changes in the nineteenth century, the 'Fading of the Quaker Ethic', 'increasingly unforgiving commercial rivalry', and the tendency of successful Quaker businesspeople or their successors to resign their membership to become Anglican and Conservative.²⁶ However, partly because of the broad span of the book, and because of its polemical and popular nature, King does not provide detailed or well-referenced evidence for his argument, but rather sets out to establish an approach to business for the current context.

King has also had a chapter about Quaker businesses and their interactions and approaches to the state published in *Quakers, Business, and Corporate Responsibility*.²⁷ He makes the assumption that Left and Right can be divided along big state/small state lines, and this seems flawed as the division is far from straightforward.²⁸ He also sets up his chapter by aligning George Cadbury with Karl Marx and John Bright with Milton Friedman, which lacks accuracy and nuance, and even he concedes of Cadbury that in practice 'paternalistic socialism had little in common with Marxist socialism'.²⁹ Given this, and the fact that his purpose differs from my own, I therefore largely disregard this argument here.

Richard E. Threlfall, whose father Richard Threlfall was Albright and Wilson's key engineer, has written an account as an insider of the business at this time, as he followed

²⁶ Mike King, *Quakernomics: An Ethical Capitalism* (London: Anthem, 2014), 112–113. On the latter reason see also David Burns Windsor, *The Quaker Enterprise: Friends in Business* (London: Frederick Muller, 1980), esp. 71.

²⁷ Mike King, 'Honey I Shrunk the State', in N. Burton and R. Turnbull (eds), *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility: Lessons and Cases for Responsible Management* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 79–94.

²⁸ Nicola Sleafwood, 'Review of *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility* (Cham: Springer, 2019)', *Quaker Studies*, 24, no. 2 (2019), 352.

²⁹ King, 'Honey I Shrunk the State', 81.

in his father's footsteps by working for the firm.³⁰ This has proved helpful in providing some factual details which have not otherwise been readily available through the archives. However, as an insider account it demonstrates clear sympathy to the firm and those within it. Further, while he notes William Arthur Albright's and Henry Lloyd Wilson's resignations, Threlfall does not refer in great detail to the pacifist dilemma, which leads to him not acknowledging its impact on the business and its future direction. Threlfall also has little interest in Quakerism or in the ethics of the firm and its owners and managers, but rather focuses on its commercial activities.

Specific to Quakerism, and in terms of more academic work, Child's article from 1964 is the first relatively recent academic consideration of Quaker businesses and their success in the twentieth century. In his article, Child argues that three factors 'go some way towards explaining the increasing "accommodation" of Quaker precepts to business objectives which is... the most evident and important development in Quaker employers' attitudes after the earlier 1920s.'³¹ These are decreasing pressure from other Quakers on Quaker businesspeople after around 1920, the emerging divorce of ownership from control, and Quaker interest in management during the interwar years, combined with commercial difficulties. I argue here that there was in fact decreasing pressure on Quaker businesspeople from other Quakers from far earlier than this, from around the 1860s, when evidence suggests disowning for business misconduct tailed off.³² Similarly, I show via Albright and Wilson that for some Quaker firms the divorce of ownership from control began earlier, at the end of the nineteenth century.

³⁰ Richard E. Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making 1851–1951* (Oldbury: Albright and Wilson, 1951).

³¹ Child, 'Quaker Employers', 299.

³² See Section 2.6.4.

The recent work of Mairi Maclean, Gareth Shaw, Charles Harvey, and Alan Booth alongside that of Michael Rowlinson demonstrate the truth of Child's assessment of the importance of Quakers in the development of British managerial thought.³³ This therefore suggests that Quaker businesspeople themselves played a role in bringing an end to the era of the Quaker-owned and -controlled family business, through promoting the employment of usually non-Quaker external managers. Child's work has informed and underpinned some later considerations of Quaker industrialism, such as that by Sigmund Wagner-Tsukamoto.

Child's understanding of Quaker approaches to business seems to lack justification in places. He identifies four precepts of the Quaker social conscience, with the implication that these are taken from the 1918 Foundations of a True Social Order (Table 1). The four ethical criteria Child identifies as relevant to business and the Eight Foundations are outlined in Table 2.

³³ Mairi Maclean, Gareth Shaw, Charles Harvey, and Alan Booth, 'Management Learning in Historical Perspective: Rediscovering Rowntree and the British Interwar Management Movement', *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 19, no. 1 (2020), 1–20; Michael Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management by Cadbury', *Business History*, 30 (1988), 377–395.

Table 1 1918 Eight Foundations of a True Social Order³⁴

- i. The Fatherhood of God, as revealed by Jesus Christ, should lead us toward a brotherhood which knows no restriction of race, sex or social class.
- ii. This brotherhood should express itself in a social order which is directed, beyond all material ends, to the growth of personality truly related to God and man.
- iii. The opportunity of full development, physical, moral and spiritual, should be assured to every member of the community, man, woman and child. The development of man's full personality should not be hampered by unjust conditions nor crushed by economic pressure.
- iv. We should seek for a way of living that will free us from the bondage of material things and mere conventions, that will raise no barrier between man and man, and will put no excessive burden of labour upon any by reason of our superfluous demands.
- v. The spiritual force of righteousness, loving-kindness and trust is mighty because of the appeal it makes to the best in every man, and when applied to industrial relations achieves great things.
- vi. Our rejection of the methods of outward domination, and of the appeal to force, applies not only to international affairs, but to the whole problem of industrial control. Not through antagonism but through co-operation and goodwill can the best be obtained for each and all.
- vii. Mutual service should be the principle upon which life is organised. Service, not private gain, should be the motive of all work.
- viii. The ownership of material things, such as land and capital, should be so regulated as best to minister to the need and development of man.

Table 2 John Child's Ethical Criteria in Quaker Business³⁵

- i. A dislike of the exploitation and profit of one man at the expense of another
- ii. A traditionally puritan view of the 'stewardship of talents', stressing the value of hard work, lack of waste, the careful organisation of resources, and a personal renunciation, all for the service of others
- iii. A tradition of egalitarianism and democratic relationships
- iv. An abhorrence of conflict between men

³⁴ *Quaker Faith & Practice*, 5th edn, 23.16, accessed 4 September 2014, <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/23-16/>. I consider the Eight Foundations further in Section 5.4.

³⁵ Child, 'Quaker Employers', 294.

It is easy enough to imagine that the first of these has been extrapolated from the third, fourth, and eighth of the foundations. The service element of the second of these criteria can also clearly be found in the seventh foundation. However, it is hard to see how Child came to determine the bulk of his second criterion. While at some point in the nineteenth century many employers may have had ‘a traditionally puritan view of the “stewardship of talents”’, from my own research and that of others such as T. A. B. Corley it is clear that there was rarely considerable personal renunciation among Quaker employers.³⁶ While hard work may have been valued by Quaker employers, if anything the Foundations warn against this by exhorting that ‘no excessive burden of labour [be put] upon any’.³⁷

Of Child’s third criterion, egalitarianism is evident in Quakerism past and present, and can clearly be seen in the third foundation. However, Quaker religious practice has been defined by consensus decision making rather than by democracy or the will of a majority, and democracy has no mention in the Foundations. Finally, Child’s fourth criterion also seems to go far beyond the Eight Foundations. While peace has always been at least somewhat important to Quakerism, this is not synonymous with a lack of conflict.

Sigmund Wagner-Tsukamoto suggests that the reason that Quaker businesses such as Cadbury’s and Rowntree’s had limited success between 1900 and 1940 was because of the incompatibility of their ethics with value pluralism and the operations of

³⁶ See for example the homes and lifestyles of the directors such as those at Albright and Wilson and Cadbury’s among other firms: T. A. B. Corley, ‘How Quakers Coped with Business Success: Quaker Industrialists 1860–1914’, in David J. Jeremy (ed.), *Business and Religion in Britain* (Aldershot: Gower, 1988), 164–187.

³⁷ From the fourth Foundation, found within the present-day *Quaker Faith & Practice* at 23.16, accessed 1 September 2014, <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/23-16/>.

the market economy.³⁸ While acknowledging that the Quakers themselves did not know the reason for their business failure, he very simply puts it thus: 'Institutional economics here explains that the implementation of Quaker ethics failed because institutional structures and mechanisms of the market economy were ignored.'³⁹

Clearly, Wagner-Tsukamoto here sets up 'institutional economics', which he takes to be synonymous with the liberal free market economy, as an unquestionable, and unquestionably correct, entity. He also arguably misunderstands Quaker ethics,⁴⁰ accepts Child's work without question,⁴¹ and neglects to acknowledge the nuance of the situation. What is more, Wagner-Tsukamoto does not go into detail about the Quaker firms, and his grounds for assessing failure within Cadbury's and Rowntree's between 1900 and 1940 are not stated. Therefore, while his conclusion about Quaker ethics and institutional economics being incompatible may not be inaccurate, I would also tend to agree with Nicholas Burton, Donncha Kavanagh, and Martin Brigham that Wagner-Tsukamoto's position is a simplification.⁴²

In terms of Wagner-Tsukamoto's misunderstanding of Quaker ethics, Jackie Leach Scully has carried out research into Quakers' responses to ethical dilemmas in the age of liberal Quakerism in Britain.⁴³ She had expected, as Wagner-Tsukamoto seems to have

³⁸ Sigmund Wagner-Tsukamoto, 'Contrasting the Behavioural Business Ethics Approach and the Institutional Economic Approach to Business Ethics: Insights from the Study of Quaker Employers', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 82, no. 4 (2008), 835–850.

³⁹ Wagner-Tsukamoto, 'Contrasting the Behavioural Business Ethics Approach', 843.

⁴⁰ Wagner-Tsukamoto, 'Contrasting the Behavioural Business Ethics Approach', 836; see immediately below for more on this misunderstanding.

⁴¹ Wagner-Tsukamoto, 'Contrasting the Behavioural Business Ethics Approach', 838.

⁴² Nicholas Burton, Donncha Kavanagh, and Martin Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law: A Case Study of a Quaker Business', *Management & Organizational History*, 14, no. 4 (2019), 329.

⁴³ Jackie Leach Scully, 'Virtuous Friends: Morality and Quaker Identity', in Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins, eds., *The Quaker Condition: The Sociology of a Liberal Religion* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 107–122.

assumed, that much like the approach of other religions, Quaker ethics would be deontological, or based on a principle with moral authority which derives from their theology.⁴⁴ However, 'virtue ethics proved to be the major strand in most Quakers' moral processing... [where] the cultivation of specific virtues or excellences... should lead to moral behaviour.'⁴⁵ Integrity and truth are specifically referred to here as 'Continuity of inner and outer life' and as 'central to the Quaker concept of *testimony*, one of the cornerstones of living as a Quaker'.⁴⁶ Scully cites this as a significant reason why Quakers tend to choose virtue ethics over other ethical systems. Whereas deontological or consequentialist approaches are act based, virtue ethics 'distinctively prioritise what it is about a *person* that leads her to choose one course of action'.⁴⁷ This focus on personhood makes sense in light of the growing individualisation within liberal Quakerism as it was developing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴⁸ It also fits with the rejection of doctrine, and ultimately of a list of rules/discipline around business practice.

Corley's article 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success: Quaker Industrialists 1860–1914' is one I have borne in mind throughout my work on this thesis.⁴⁹ Corley divides Quaker businessmen into three categories: those who stayed 'plain', those who became 'worldly' and those who resigned.

While Corley's categories are arguably somewhat simplistic, much of his work and suggestions in this article have indeed been very thought-provoking and helpful to me

⁴⁴ Scully, 'Virtuous Friends', 109.

⁴⁵ Scully, 'Virtuous Friends', 111.

⁴⁶ Scully, 'Virtuous Friends', 115.

⁴⁷ Scully, 'Virtuous Friends', 115.

⁴⁸ See Section 3.3.1.

⁴⁹ Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success.'

here. His implication is that by businesspeople 'staying plain' he means those who literally continued to subscribe to the Quaker injunction to dress and speak plainly.⁵⁰ However, he does not seem to fully carry through on this or be entirely clear about his methods for determining his categories, besides resignations, which are fairly easy to monitor through Monthly Meeting records. Corley also accepts Child's four ethical criteria without question. There is certainly more than a grain of truth to Corley's proposed categories, though these categories do not take account of the nuance usually found within businesses, as a close study such as that here of Albright and Wilson and its personalities demonstrates.

Of the period 1860–1914, Corley judges of Quaker businessmen that 'to most of them low wages and long hours were not seen as taking undue advantage of labour. Like most other entrepreneurs, they believed that those factors were dictated by the market... Capitalism was entirely compatible with the tenets of Quakerism, the problem then being how best to conduct oneself as a capitalist.'⁵¹ My thesis casts further doubt on the compatibility of Quakerism and capitalism.⁵²

Edward Milligan's *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers in Commerce and Industry 1775–1920* has been a wonderful resource to have to hand throughout my thesis research, by providing considerable detail, amassed through his time working with

⁵⁰ This had been made optional in 1860.

⁵¹ Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success', 169.

⁵² See particularly Chapter 2 from Section 2.5 onwards.

Quaker sources, on the key life events and inter-relations of many Quaker businesspeople through my period.⁵³

Between 1987 and 2005 Rowlinson has written a PhD thesis, various articles, and a review (of Walvin's book above) about Cadbury's and Quaker employers.⁵⁴ His article about Edward Cadbury and scientific management uses considerable archival evidence from the firm and Cadbury's own works to demonstrate that Cadbury's was an early adopter of a form of scientific management, and that this has been overlooked otherwise. It also highlights decisions around pay and union action which call into question the firm's ethical basis. Given the evidence I tend to agree with this, and go into more detail about the distinctions and nuance below.⁵⁵

In 'The Invention of Corporate Culture: A History of the Histories of Cadbury', Rowlinson and John Hassard argue that by the Victorian period Quakers' business culture and practice were little different from those of other businesspeople of the time. Rowlinson's PhD thesis also argued similarly six years previously.⁵⁶ The evidence presented here suggests that Quakers maintained oversight of their members' business affairs during the early and mid-Victorian period, and consequently had a reputation for

⁵³ Edward H. Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers in Commerce and Industry 1775–1920* (York: Sessions, 2007).

⁵⁴ Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management by Cadbury'; Michael Rowlinson and John Hassard, 'The Invention of Corporate Culture: A History of the Histories of Cadbury', *Human Relations*, 46, no. 3 (1993), 299–326; Michael Rowlinson, 'Review of J. Walvin, *Quaker Employers*', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 6 (1998), 163–198; Michael Rowlinson, 'Historical Research Methods', in Richard A. Swanson and Elwood F. Holton III, *Research in Organizations: Foundations and Methods of Inquiry* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett Koehler, 2005), 295–311.

⁵⁵ See Section 3.3.5.

⁵⁶ Michael Rowlinson, 'Cadburys' New Factory System, 1879–1919' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Aston, 1987), accessed 25 February 2023, <https://publications.aston.ac.uk/id/eprint/12213/>.

honesty during this time, but I concur with the assertion that otherwise there was little difference in the outward workings of the ethics of Quaker business practices in this era.⁵⁷

Rowlinson and Hassard show that in the case of Cadbury's at least, the evidence suggests that the firm only began publicly emphasising the importance of the Quakerism of its founders and promulgating a selective and sometimes altered narrative around the firm in the 1920s and 1930s. For example, they demonstrate that the celebration of the centenary itself was based on a dubious date which did not coincide with the founding of the firm, and that George and Richard, rather than John, are promoted as 'founders' because their policies and practices more obviously fit with a Quaker ethical agenda.⁵⁸ They also suggest that George Cadbury's Liberal politics, as much as his faith, may have been responsible for his business practices.⁵⁹

On the evidence of the growing conversation around business ethics that I identify here, I agree with John Kimberley, who notes in his PhD thesis that the revival of Quakerism which took place from around 1895 to 1920 strengthened the cohesion and focus of Quaker employers from the early twentieth century onwards.⁶⁰ I would also argue that the decline of the discipline contributed to this, as I demonstrate below, principally in Sections 2.6.3 and 3.3.1. In contrast to Rowlinson and Hassard, Kimberley suggests that this and the Employers' Conferences demonstrate the significance of

⁵⁷ For example, in the Victorian period there is no evidence Quaker firms pursued welfare policies as the Cadburys and Rowntrees did later.

⁵⁸ Rowlinson and Hassard, 'The Invention of Corporate Culture', 309 and 311.

⁵⁹ Rowlinson and Hassard, 'The Invention of Corporate Culture', 321.

⁶⁰ John Kimberley, 'Edward Cadbury – Paternalistic Employer or Quaker-Inspired Pathfinder of British Industrial Relations Pluralism and Women Workers' Champion?' (unpublished PhD thesis, De Montfort University, 2020), accessed 25 February 2023, <https://dora.dmu.ac.uk/handle/2086/21155>, p. 39. Surprisingly Kimberley does not reference Kennedy's detailed work on the revival.

Quaker faith in business.⁶¹ However, I would suggest that the revival supports Rowlinson and Hassard's argument: in an atmosphere of growing concern around business ethics among Quakers, there was a greater need for Quakers to defend and define their businesses and those who could portray their businesses in a positive ethical light did so, which is why we hear so much about Cadbury's and Rowntree's in literature on the subject, and so much less about others such as Albright and Wilson. Of course, there are other possible factors in directing the narrative, like the broadly public-facing nature of Rowntree's and Cadbury's.⁶² This is part of my motivation for redressing the balance here by focusing on a firm which was quite different in this regard. Rowlinson and Hassard's is well-demonstrated research which I bear in mind.⁶³

Andrew Fincham and John Kimberley have both recently written book chapters on Cadbury's in the same volume, in which they comment on Rowlinson's work.⁶⁴ In contrast to Rowlinson, and like Kimberley, Fincham argues for George Cadbury's spiritual life as a key driver of his ethical values in business. Kimberley argues against most of Rowlinson's suggestions about Cadbury's, before somewhat disjointedly referring to George Fox's journal for Quaker business values, and arguing for the notion of covenant as a tool for considering Cadbury's and other Quaker businesses. Both Fincham and Kimberley largely dismiss Rowlinson's critiques of Cadbury's.

⁶¹ Kimberley, 'Edward Cadbury', 179.

⁶² As opposed to firms like Albright and Wilson which sold chemicals to a relatively small number of clients.

⁶³ See particularly Chapter 3 where I consider Quakers in politics and George Cadbury in particular.

⁶⁴ Andrew Fincham, 'Cadbury's Ethics and the Spirit of Corporate Social Responsibility', in N. Burton and R. Turnbull (eds), *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility: Lessons and Cases for Responsible Management* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 41–58; John Kimberley, 'Towards a Set of Quaker Business Values', in Burton and Turnbull, *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility*, 25–40.

Fincham suggests that one of Rowlinson's articles written with Hassard unfairly uses a Marxist lens to propose that Cadbury's has retrospectively invented its Quaker culture and overemphasised its importance.⁶⁵ Fincham also claims that this article contains factual inaccuracies, without stating where these lie. My sense is that he may feel that his evidence on the specific factors which he identifies and which he convincingly argues in his thesis enabled and bolstered Quaker business in the early Quaker period may constitute a Quaker business culture. However, his evidence is for a much earlier period, and does not cover the extent to which employers made the most of their Quaker identity as their firms grew.

In his PhD thesis Rowlinson puts forward many of the facets of his argument later formalised through publication.⁶⁶ He considers the Employers' Conferences to be driven by Cadbury's and Rowntree's and as promoting their own image of Quaker employment practice.⁶⁷ Rowlinson's thesis demonstrates Cadbury's employment of American consultants from 1912, to assist with the development of policies such as piece work and efficiency more generally,⁶⁸ which is one factor in his argument that Quakerism was not a main driver of policy. He also argues that Cadbury's was so wedded to welfare and Bournville that this was to the firm's detriment in the second half of the twentieth century.⁶⁹

Kimberley's PhD thesis argues that for Edward Cadbury, and for the Cadbury firm as a whole in the early twentieth century, the Quaker faith was a key driver of business

⁶⁵ Fincham, 'Cadbury's Ethics', 49; the article in question is 'The Invention of Corporate Culture'.

⁶⁶ See footnote 54 in this chapter.

⁶⁷ Rowlinson, 'Cadbury's New Factory System', 85.

⁶⁸ Rowlinson, 'Cadbury's New Factory System', 223-224.

⁶⁹ Rowlinson, 'Cadbury's New Factory System', 276-277.

practice and policy. However, while many of the claims in his thesis are not inherently problematic and may have been well researched and thought through, many are not referenced and are unsupported by concrete evidence.⁷⁰ That Cadbury's is the sole example makes Kimberley's conclusion around Quaker faith and business practice not generalisable, and my evidence here casts further doubt on it.

Related to this, Kimberley has also written a journal article, 'Employee Relations and the Quaker Employers Conference of 1918: The Cadbury Company'.⁷¹ In this he argues that the 1918 conference reflected themes and practices already under consideration or being implemented in Quaker firms, and uses Cadbury's as a case study, with supporting evidence from Rowntree's. This is problematic because those firms were two of the highest-profile and most exemplary 'Quaker' firms,⁷² and both families were well represented in and had roles in the organisation of the conference; I would therefore suggest that caution should be employed when taking them as examples. Specifically, Kimberley's suggestion that Edward Cadbury's consideration of 'Organization' is comparable to a consideration of profit sharing at the conference seems weak to me and overstated (he does not mention profit once in the chapter, for example).⁷³

Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham wrote a journal article, and Kavanagh and Brigham a book chapter, in 2019 arguing that nineteenth-century changes in company

⁷⁰ Kimberley, 'Edward Cadbury'.

⁷¹ John Kimberley, 'Employee Relations and the Quaker Employers Conference of 1918: The Cadbury Company', *Quaker Studies*, 24, no. 2 (2019), 229–248.

⁷² Quotation marks here denote that they were especially well known for being Quaker, and are therefore often seen as representative.

⁷³ Kimberley, 'Employee Relations', 245; Edward Cadbury, *Experiments in Industrial Organization* (London: Longmans, Green, 1912).

law undermined the success of Quaker businesses.⁷⁴ Kavanagh and Brigham also wrote a book chapter in 2018 suggesting this, but focusing more on arguing that Quakers contributed to management practices early in their history and have been ignored for political reasons (though the argument here is hard to follow).⁷⁵ Although in the journal article and 2018 book chapter the authors reference my 2017 book chapter for other purposes, they do not acknowledge my clearly subtitled argument to this effect in the same book chapter, or my reference to this in my conclusion.⁷⁶

In their article, Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham use Corley's case study of Huntley and Palmers to consider the impact of nineteenth-century changes in company law on a Quaker firm.⁷⁷ While I agree with several of the principles of their argument, in essence that changes to company law in the nineteenth century were detrimental to Quaker business prospects (as I observed in 2017), their choice of case study is curious when examined in greater detail. It is also very difficult to verify their sources as they do not provide in-text referencing or page numbers for their analysis of the story of the firm.⁷⁸

To demonstrate this, Corley noted in 1988 in his chapter on Quakers who 'stayed plain':

⁷⁴ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law', 317–336; Donncha Kavanagh and Martin Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company: Uneasy Bedfellows', in N. Burton and R. Turnbull (eds), *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility: Lessons and Cases for Responsible Management* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 111–128.

⁷⁵ Donncha Kavanagh and Martin Brigham, 'The Quakers: Forgotten Pioneers', in T. Peltonen, H. Gaggiotti, and P. Case (eds), *Origins of Organizing* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2018), ch. 8.

⁷⁶ Nicola Sleafwood, 'The Birmingham Quaker Business Community, 1800–1900', in Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (eds), *Quakers, Business and Industry*, Quakers and the Disciplines, vol. 4 (Longmeadow, MA: FAHE, 2017), 213–241.

⁷⁷ Thomas A. B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits: Huntley and Palmers of Reading 1822–1972* (London: Hutchinson, 1972).

⁷⁸ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law', 323–328.

Works councils of various degrees of effectiveness came in at Crosfields in 1904, Cadburys in 1905, Huntley & Palmers in 1916, Clarks and Peek Frean in 1918 and Rowntrees (after a long period of informal consultation) in 1919. *Since by the dates given Crosfields, Peek Frean and Huntley & Palmers were no longer Quaker-run, general ideas on social questions rather than specifically Quaker principles must have promoted the improvements.*⁷⁹

This assertion that by the turn of the century Huntley and Palmers was essentially no longer Quaker is confirmed by the archivists of the Huntley and Palmers collection, who note on the company's website: 'Whereas George and his brothers had been educated at traditional Quaker schools... their sons attended middle-class schools and their grandsons were sent to Eton or Harrow. All the second generation Palmer children joined the Church of England and – except for George William Palmer – became Conservatives.'⁸⁰

In light of this information and using my definition of a Quaker business given here,⁸¹ Huntley and Palmers ceased being Quaker some time between 1892, when all seven sons had joined as partners, and 1897, when George Palmer died. I have established this using Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham's own timeline, derived from Corley, though examination of archival records would bring greater clarity. Nevertheless, I find it surprising, given they note the speed with which the firm incorporated a year after George's death in 1897, that they did not make more of the possibility of there having been a debate between the probably still Quaker George and the seven almost certainly

⁷⁹ Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success', 175; emphasis my own.

⁸⁰ Huntley & Palmers Collection, accessed 3 February 2023, http://www.huntleyandpalmers.org.uk/ixbin/hixclient.exe?a=query&p=huntley&f=generic_theme.htm&IXFIRST=1&IXMAXHITS=1&%3dtheme_record_id=rm-rm-people_content7.

⁸¹ See Section 1.5.

non-Quaker sons of the second generation around the idea of incorporation: it seems plausible that George had a (possibly ethical) objection to incorporation which prevented the sons from acting while he lived, even though he was no longer actively involved in the running of the firm. This highlights to me that George's death was likely the nail in the coffin of the firm's Quaker identity.

This considerably weakens Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham's use of the firm as a case study of the impact of incorporation on a Quaker firm: they do not stop to consider in detail what it is that makes a firm Quaker, and suggest that (despite having had no Quakers present in the firm for more than sixty years) the firm does not cease being 'Quaker' until it becomes completely subsumed as simply a division within Associated Biscuit Manufacturers in the late 1960s.⁸²

In their discussion, Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham state:

Our long, longitudinal case analysis shows that the quasi-legal (Quaker) logic was supplanted, from the late-nineteenth century, by a dominant legal logic, which created and operated a different set of rules of the game. The Quaker logic, which was quasi-legal in nature, was founded on maximizing socio-economic outcomes, family partnership was the preferred organizational form, and business practice was self-governed within the Quaker community.⁸³

While as I have stated I do not disagree with their conclusion, in the case of Huntley and Palmers this supplanting of logic would not be so surprising when the firm had no Quaker oversight (and had arguably ceased to be Quaker). Further, they provide little evidence for their assertion that the Quaker logic was founded on 'maximising socio-

⁸² Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law', 330.

⁸³ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law', 329.

economic outcomes' or that 'business practice was self-governed within the Quaker community'.⁸⁴ They later repeat their claim, stating 'our case analysis highlights that the socio-economic objectives of Quaker firm H&P was supplanted by economic and market objectives', again giving no clear indication as to what the original objectives were.⁸⁵ Further, Fincham's thesis has queried the extent of the self-governance and shown that while advices and general ethical standards existed, thorough oversight was variable and often minimal.⁸⁶

Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham suggest that there was a reduction in the 'quasi-legal' Quaker rules in the mid-nineteenth century, but do not provide any specific evidence for this, or business examples.⁸⁷ They also propose that through representing several individuals in one new body, corporations or companies were antithetical to 'a basic Quaker belief in the centrality of the individual', which seems hard to justify (and indeed they do not seek to justify it).⁸⁸ Their argument that 'Quaker businesses embraced... the legal and financial rules of the market, and... the Quaker families eventually lost control of the businesses they founded' is quite possibly accurate in the cases of some businesses, but is not best served by their choice of case study.⁸⁹

Similarly to Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham's journal article, Kavanagh and Brigham's chapter 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company: Uneasy Bedfellows' argues that the introductions of accessible incorporation and especially limited liability in the

⁸⁴ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law', 329.

⁸⁵ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law', 330.

⁸⁶ Fincham, 'The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success', 127-155.

⁸⁷ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law', 329.

⁸⁸ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law', 321. See also

⁸⁹ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law', 331.

mid-nineteenth century were ‘important, though largely overlooked’ reasons for the demise of Quaker businesses.⁹⁰ As with their other article with Burton, what Kavanagh and Brigham have not in fact referred to is the section of my 2017 book chapter entitled ‘The Business Environment and Legal Changes’, where I detail the likely difficulties the changes pose for Quaker businesses, as I do here below.⁹¹

The Kavanagh and Brigham chapter opens with an overview of Quaker commercial endeavours and success during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and maintains that a great many firms they list ‘lost their distinctive “Quaker” ethos’ in the late nineteenth century.⁹² While they do acknowledge Rowlinson and Hassard’s suggestion that Quakerism was not necessarily a key driver of ethos and that some businesses did not follow it, they do not attempt to pin down the nature of this ‘ethos’ more precisely.⁹³

After making a very similar central argument to mine in 2017 (that ‘the emergence of the joint stock company as the popular... mode of economic organisation in the second half of the nineteenth century was inimical to the Quaker approach to business’),⁹⁴ the chapter continues to outline the legal changes enacted by the British government in 1844 and 1855–1856 in helpful detail.⁹⁵ Kavanagh and Brigham here cite direct evidence from the Society of Friends between 1754 and 1858 to evidence Friends’ concern with honesty and honourable trade, and refer to disquiet about limited liability at London Yearly

⁹⁰ Kavanagh and Brigham, ‘The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company’, 111.

⁹¹ See Section 2.6.1.

⁹² Kavanagh and Brigham, ‘The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company’, 113.

⁹³ Kavanagh and Brigham, ‘The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company’, 113–114.

⁹⁴ Kavanagh and Brigham, ‘The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company’, 114.

⁹⁵ Kavanagh and Brigham, ‘The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company’, 115–119.

Meeting in 1918, though without a specific reference.⁹⁶ However, they do not provide evidence for some of their claims, for example that Friends were largely unconvinced by the pro-limited liability arguments in the nineteenth century,⁹⁷ or for Quaker views around profit.

Kavanagh and Brigham note that incorporation introduced a distinction between shareholders and management (a point I also made in my 2017 book chapter),⁹⁸ and that decision making by majority vote undermined traditional Quaker decision making by together gauging the spirit of a gathered body of people.⁹⁹ They provide some useful context to the 1890s wave of incorporations, and suggest that the Rowntrees attempted to continue as a specifically ‘*Quaker* family enterprise’ after incorporation, with no justification for this claim.¹⁰⁰ They further argue that the 1890s wave of incorporations was the initial factor in the decline of a Quaker business ethos.¹⁰¹ However, I argue in this thesis that while it was undeniably part of the picture, the earliest factors were almost certainly Quaker engagement in speculative forms of business and the decline in discipline within the Society of Friends itself.¹⁰²

Robert Fitzgerald’s *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution: 1862–1969* is a thoroughly researched academic account of the firm, charting its varied success over more than a century until its takeover by Nestlé in 1988, which is covered briefly in the

⁹⁶ Kavanagh and Brigham, ‘The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company’, 119.

⁹⁷ Kavanagh and Brigham, ‘The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company’, 119. See also Section 2.6.1 for evidence to the contrary.

⁹⁸ Sleafwood, ‘The Birmingham Quaker Business Community’, 237.

⁹⁹ Kavanagh and Brigham, ‘The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company’, 121.

¹⁰⁰ Kavanagh and Brigham, ‘The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company’, 123.

¹⁰¹ Kavanagh and Brigham, ‘The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company’, 123. The Quaker business ethos is again ephemeral here.

¹⁰² See Section 2.6.

epilogue.¹⁰³ While it has been useful in places here for detail, its purpose, as an overarching history of one firm, is very different from my own, and Fitzgerald does not consider the impact of Quakerism on the firm at length.

Mark Freeman provides a useful summary of ‘Quakers, Business and Philanthropy’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*.¹⁰⁴ This chapter covers a lot of ground and mainly focuses on the Rowntrees and their firm, in terms of the sections of relevance to my period, and therefore overlaps little with my work here. Freeman does well in highlighting the (often not direct) roles of women in business through referring to Sandra Stanley Holton’s book *Quaker Women*, though my experience of using largely business sources has been that the role of women as directors in business, aside from Alice Clark and later Dorothy Cadbury, has been lacking.

Karen Tibbals argues in her book chapter in *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility* that the Quaker liberalisation, revival, and the production of the Eight Foundations of a True Social Order by the Society of Friends in 1918 shamed and largely paralysed Quaker businesses.¹⁰⁵ However, her evidence for this is minimal and attendance at the Conferences which ran until 1948 indicates that employers were still seeking to engage. Tibbals’ suggestion that by the early to mid-twentieth century there was less scope (and indeed less ability, due to economic conditions) for welfare provision and innovation in the workplace is sounder, but her reasoning around shame and the impotence of employers generally somewhat undermines this.

¹⁰³ Robert Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution: 1862–1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁴ Mark Freeman, ‘Quakers, Business and Philanthropy’, in Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 420–433.

¹⁰⁵ Karen Tibbals, ‘Quaker Employer Conference of 1918’, in N. Burton and R. Turnbull (eds), *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 61–77.

1.3.4 Nineteenth-Century and Earlier Quaker Businesses and Context

Fincham's recent PhD thesis investigating Quaker business success in the earlier period of Quaker history (from 1689 to c. 1755) provides evidence that early Quaker business success was predicated on four factors.¹⁰⁶ These factors were Quaker education and apprenticeships, collective finance, a single network of stakeholders, and the oversight and effect of the Quaker discipline. Fincham argues that these factors and the 'secular utility' they created even attracted businesspeople specifically to the Society of Friends, reinforcing the effect. Here I bear this evidence in mind in assessing change in the Quaker business environment in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and consider how changes in some of these elements impacted Quaker businesses later.

Esther Sahle's PhD thesis and book have also covered Quaker business history during its early period (1660–1800), arguing that Quaker business ethics were 'not unique', and that it was Quakers' arbitration of commercial disputes which bolstered their success.¹⁰⁷ However, I take her conclusions with caution, since as Fincham has highlighted, her geographical remit is very broad and some of her data analysis methods seem to be inconsistent or incomplete.¹⁰⁸ Further, as with Fincham's work, Sahle's does not overlap at all with the period I cover here.

William H. Marwick provided a useful overview of 'Some Quaker Firms of the Nineteenth Century' in his article in the *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* in 1958.

¹⁰⁶ Fincham, 'The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success'.

¹⁰⁷ Esther Sahle, 'A Faith of Merchants: Quakers and Institutional Change in the Early Modern Atlantic, c.1660–1800' (unpublished PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 2016), accessed 9 December 2022, <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/3368>; Esther Sahle, *Quakers in the British Atlantic World, c.1660–1800* (Martlesham: Boydell Press, 2021).

¹⁰⁸ Fincham, 'The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success', 142–144.

This has offered a starting point for my research into Albright and Wilson, but provides only a brief overview of the activities of the firms it deals with.¹⁰⁹

Geoffrey Elliott's book *The Mystery of Overend & Gurney: A Financial Scandal in Victorian London* is a largely non-academic text written in a narrative-focused manner which tells the story of the Quaker firm and its key figures and dealings in the nineteenth century, focusing on its downfall and the build-up to this. While the text is detailed, its style and the fact that Elliott does not footnote references in the text make it of limited broader academic use. With regard to my question here, it does provide a key piece of supporting evidence for one aspect of Quaker business change more broadly; namely, that the use of discipline was changing in the nineteenth century. However, its remit in being focused solely on one firm is different from mine.

Maurice Kirby writes about the decline of the Quaker Pease family and their business dynasty in a chapter that is relatively academically rigorous.¹¹⁰ Kirby is one of relatively few scholars, along with Corley, to provide a detailed case study which actively considers the impact of Quakerism on a family firm. His assessment of the Peases puts them broadly in Corley's 'became worldly' camp of Quaker businesspeople and how they dealt with success.¹¹¹ However, Kirby provides nuance and detail, and proposes an underlying philosophy to the family and its firms, namely 'Peasocracy', which he considers to consist of 'doctrinaire political beliefs, an unquestioning faith in the virtues and progress of liberal capitalism, and a strong sense of dynasticism, [which] were as

¹⁰⁹ William H. Marwick, 'Some Quaker Firms of the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 48, no. 6 (1958), 239–259.

¹¹⁰ Maurice Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty: The Peases of Darlington, 1830–1902', in David J. Jeremy (ed.), *Business and Religion in Britain* (Aldershot: Gower, 1988), 142–163.

¹¹¹ Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty'.

essential ingredients in its evolution as Quakerism.’¹¹² Kirby’s mention of the impact of one of the firms’ conversion to a public company as ‘widening the gulf between capital and labour’ was a factor leading me to investigate the impact of changes in a business’s legal status on its Quaker status and success more broadly in the nineteenth century.¹¹³

James Taylor’s work in this field, *Creating Capitalism: Joint-Stock Enterprise in British Politics and Culture 1800–1870*, is largely alone in thoroughly revising the approach of past historians, and I therefore rely on his scholarship to a considerable degree;¹¹⁴ David Crowther confirms key points of Taylor’s argumentation,¹¹⁵ as does Frank Trentmann.¹¹⁶ Taylor shows that for historians of the early to mid-twentieth century, ‘the emergence of the joint-stock company in this period [1800–1870] was a straightforward case of economic necessity. As industry expanded, more capital was needed, and the joint-stock form, which permitted the capital of hundreds, or thousands, of investors to be pooled, was adopted as the most efficient means of meeting these needs.’¹¹⁷

However, in recent years this acceptance of the inevitability of the passing of these Acts, and the emergence of the free-trade, laissez-faire environment has been re-evaluated, both by Taylor and by others such as Trentmann.¹¹⁸ By engaging with attitudes

¹¹² Kirby, ‘The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty’, 144.

¹¹³ Kirby, ‘The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty’, 159.

¹¹⁴ James Taylor, *Creating Capitalism: Joint-Stock Enterprise in British Politics and Culture 1800–1870*, Royal Historical Society Studies in History, New Series V. 53 (London: Royal Historical Society, 2006).

¹¹⁵ David Crowther, ‘Limited Liability or Limited Responsibility?’, in David Crowther and Lez Rayman-Bacchus (eds), *Perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility*, Corporate Social Responsibility Series (Aldershot: Gower, 2004), 42–58.

¹¹⁶ Frank Trentmann, ‘Political Culture, Political Economy: Interest, Ideology, and Free Trade’, *Review of International Political Economy* 5, no. 2 (1998), 217–251.

¹¹⁷ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 1.

¹¹⁸ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*; Trentmann, ‘Political Culture, Political Economy’.

of the time, Taylor's approach 'uncovers a persistent and pervasive fear of and hostility to joint-stock enterprise which was by no means the preserve of a reactionary or self-interested few' in the early to mid-nineteenth century.¹¹⁹ Crowther highlights another example of work recognising this opposition.¹²⁰ Taylor shows that in the nineteenth century it was assumed that business engagement would be with an individual or very small group of individuals rather than a corporation.¹²¹ His sources are cultural and literary, broad and convincing, and he uses them to identify 'prevailing social attitudes and preferred social values'.¹²² In novels and plays, the 'extent to which aspects of the corporate economy featured indicates a preoccupation on the part of novelists, and readers, with these new and unfamiliar aspects of Victorian commerce'.¹²³

1.3.5 The World War I period

In terms of research into industry in World War I, Roger Lloyd-Jones and Myrddin John Lewis provide a helpful overview of the government's organisation of the industrial aspect of preparation for war, but do not provide an individual business case study or make any reference to Albright and Wilson.¹²⁴ I have been unable to find any detailed studies of individual businesses during World War I.

Of those who have written about Quaker pacifism prior to and during World War I, Kennedy gives a thorough analysis of the transformation which took place in Quakerism

¹¹⁹ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 3.

¹²⁰ Crowther ('Limited Liability', 45) highlights M. W. E. Glautier and B. Underdown, *Accounting Theory and Practice* (London: Pitman, 1994).

¹²¹ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*.

¹²² Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 14.

¹²³ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 14.

¹²⁴ Roger Lloyd-Jones and Myrddin John Lewis, *Arming the Western Front: War, Business and the State in Britain, 1900–1920* (London: Routledge, 2016).

from the late nineteenth century through to 1920, including the revival of the Peace Testimony and the significance of this for Quaker approaches to World War I.¹²⁵ Peter Brock confirms the importance of pacifism to Quakerism prior to World War I, although he seems to rely on Kennedy for his analysis of the period.¹²⁶ Elaine Bishop and Jiseok Jung deal with general shifts in approaches to the Peace Testimony, though they do not analyse these shifts with specific relevance to World War I.¹²⁷ The ‘White Feather Diaries’ gave a valuable insight into the views of individuals with links to Quakerism during the war. However, it did not touch upon conscience around business activities.¹²⁸

Other than my own work, there has been no research specifically on the ethical dilemmas, which arose due to their Peace Testimony, facing Quaker businesses during World War I.

1.4 Sources and Methodology

My specific methodology does not align with any of the main approaches proposed in the introduction to an edition of *Business History Review* devoted to methodology.¹²⁹ Because of the specifically religious nature of my research, it is impossible to relate it wholly to any general or mainstream business history approach. I write as a social historian, convinced that the answers to questions around perceived Quaker business decline lie in the views and actions of Quakers as people, and their values, in their broader context. My approach is driven by an assertion that religion is inherently personal, and

¹²⁵ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*.

¹²⁶ Peter Brock, *The Quaker Peace Testimony 1660–1914* (York: Sessions Book Trust, 1990), 294.

¹²⁷ Elaine Bishop and Jiseok Jung, ‘Seeking Peace: Quakers Respond to War’, in P. Dandelion and S. W. Angell, *The Cambridge Companion to Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 106–127.

¹²⁸ The White Feather Diaries have now been removed, however more information can be found here, accessed 15 May 2023: <https://quakerstrongrooms.org/2014/07/31/whitefeatherdiaries/>.

¹²⁹ ‘Debating Methodology in Business History’, *Business History Review*, 91, no. 3 (2017), 449–452.

therefore that the history of businesses built around or by those of a particular faith cannot be detached from the actors within the firm. I take an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on my past experience in the field of theology as well as in history, to add depth and context.

Those closest in approach to mine are scholars such as David Jeremy, T. A. B. Corley, and Maurice Kirby, whose research has focused on specifically religious businesses and their founders and owners, encompassing ethical questions.¹³⁰ The work of these scholars has inspired my approach here in terms of the questions I have asked and ultimately the direction and development of my thesis. Specifically, ethical questions around business, politics, and religion raised by Jeremy in the introduction to *Business and Religion in Britain* and encountered very early on in my thesis work are, I believe, key, to my research and any other similar work. Perhaps the most central of these which has influenced me here is Jeremy's question: 'What has been the response of executive management when invited to sacrifice or modify Christian principles in the interests of business?'¹³¹ This question is particularly crucial in the context of Quakers, business, and war, and has led to my development of a model for defining a Quaker business and for grappling with the importance of control in a religious business.

In contrast to other recent work by researchers in the area of Quaker business history, my findings here largely support many of Michael Rowlinson's much earlier assertions around the historical narrative of Cadbury's as largely the creation of George Cadbury in the twentieth century. I therefore differ in position to others such as John Kimberley and Andrew Fincham with regards to the history of Cadbury's as a firm,

¹³⁰ Jeremy, *Business and Religion in Britain*; Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success'; Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty'.

¹³¹ Jeremy, *Business and Religion in Britain*, 19.

supporting this with evidence gleaned by others such as Rowlinson, Kevin Dowd and John Bryson.

Abe De Jong, David Michael Higgins, and Hugo van Driel consider a single case study approach to business history ‘traditional’, and suggest that a more theory-driven, qualitative approach is often more appropriate or better.¹³² They argue that the traditional approach, focusing on one firm and largely ignoring theory and quantitative methods, is problematic because it is not generalisable to the level of the corporate economy.¹³³ However, my aim here is not to formulate a thesis generalisable to the corporate economy, but rather to shed light on specific Quaker business dilemmas and disruptors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I seek to understand the motivations and decisions of religious businesspeople and their firms, and this would not be possible through statistical analysis, for example.¹³⁴

My reason for largely using the established case study approach is my conviction that a focus on entrepreneurs themselves, in the context of their broader firm and its activities, is key in assessing a business’s specifically Quaker nature and its related ‘success’ in Quaker terms.¹³⁵ However, this sits alongside other approaches here: rhetorical history in its recognition that history necessarily takes an interpretive stance, and that narrative and seeking out connections between stories, communities and

¹³² Abe De Jong, David Michael Higgins, and Hugo van Driel, ‘Towards a New Business History?’ *Business History*, 57, no. 1 (2015), 5–29.

¹³³ De Jong, Higgins, and van Driel, ‘Towards a New Business History?’.

¹³⁴ De Jong, Higgins, and van Driel, ‘Towards a New Business History?’, 10, suggest that statistical analysis is a priority.

¹³⁵ De Jong, Higgins, and van Driel, ‘Towards a New Business History?’.

practice enrich learning also play a part.¹³⁶ The narrative in use here is driven by a desire to analyse ethics and power in a particular firm, rather than, for example, a founder-centered business-historical approach.¹³⁷

While Albright and Wilson is very much my primary focus, I do not consider the firm in isolation. Without reference to some other firms, it would be very difficult to form a thesis. However, my qualitative and in-depth analysis of mainly one firm, Albright and Wilson, adds nuance in a way that broader quantitative social science-based analysis would not facilitate. In order to assess religious business decline, it is actively helpful to analyse one firm in depth to test theories such as Corley's around this theme.¹³⁸ Using Albright and Wilson specifically serves to demonstrate how several of the primary factors in change in the Quaker business community between 1850 and 1950 (the impact of changes in company law, the Quaker revival or 'renaissance', and World War I) played out, interacted, and compounded one another in one particular context. While this would not have been the case for every Quaker firm, this case study serves my purpose in highlighting the variety of factors clearly.

Though my methodology is primarily qualitative, where I feel it adds something of concrete value in assessing the moral position of Quaker firms I do not shy away from using quantitative measures, for example in considering comparative rates of pay in the early twentieth century. Another way in which my approach does differ from the 'traditional' one is that I do actively engage with my method, and have borne research

¹³⁶ Christina Lubinski, 'Rhetorical History: giving meaning to the past in past and present' in S. Decker, W. M. Foster and E. Giovannoni (eds), *Handbook of Historical Methods for Management* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Press, 2023), 39.

¹³⁷ Michael Rowlinson, Stephanie Decker and John Hassard, 'A narrative of the historic turn in organisation studies', in Decker, Foster and Giovannoni (eds) *Handbook of Historical Methods for Management* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Press, 2023), 66-67.

¹³⁸ See Section 1.3.3 and Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success'.

questions in mind throughout my analysis, rather than seeking a solely descriptive approach. What is more, even De Jong, Higgins, and van Driel assert that:

Few, if any, would doubt the usefulness of single case studies which provide detailed descriptions of a firm, groups of firms, or an industry, over a specified time period. This approach is most applicable to theory-building... board minutes and correspondence... facilitate examination of motivations and exploration of causal relations. These cases are extremely valuable in the scientific process, particularly in the determination of causality.¹³⁹

I use a range of sources but have chosen two in-depth foci: the business Albright and Wilson, and the Quaker business community in Birmingham in the context of the national books of discipline in the nineteenth century. The two sit alongside one another, since Albright and Wilson's predecessor began as a Birmingham business before beginning to move just outside of Birmingham to Oldbury in 1850. Its directors remained fairly local and embedded in the Quaker community locally and nationally for some time.

My choice of Albright and Wilson as a business case study was driven by several factors. It is previously unstudied as a specifically Quaker firm. It is large enough to have held considerable records, which are stored in the Library of Birmingham and were readily accessible to me. The volume of these records and their variety were major factors in my choice. Another factor was that records are also readily available in the Library of Birmingham for the Birmingham Quaker Meetings which assisted me in tracking down members of the firm. That John William Wilson sat as an MP enabled me to gather further information about him to build up a profile from *Hansard*, and I did this for other MPs too. That John William can be contrasted to his Quaker predecessor William Arthur Albright

¹³⁹ De Jong, Higgins, and van Driel, 'Towards a New Business History?', 14.

in terms of their priorities and values also adds to the value of the case study. The volume 'Bull Street Friends I have known' by William Adlington Cadbury was crucial in enabling me to see the interconnectedness of Quaker business families including the Albrights and Wilsons locally.¹⁴⁰

Considering now my sources and methodology by chapter, the sources I use in this thesis vary considerably between chapters, as my approach to each chapter is slightly different. My opening chapters are focused somewhat more on bringing together existing, often secondary, sources, to create a picture of the Quaker business community and assess change more broadly. My chapters on World War I and the post-war context, on the other hand, principally employ primary business records and other contemporary sources to give a detailed account of change. In this way, I use a varied methodology across my thesis and its chapters, driven largely by the nature of the sources and my purposes.

Chapter two, on the nineteenth century and earlier Quaker business environment, focuses largely on changes in the legal environment societally and on the Quaker disciplinary framework.¹⁴¹ For my introductory foregrounding prior to this I use mostly secondary sources, principally genealogical records, accounts by local Quakers, a secondary business study, and a biographical dictionary of Quakers in business. Within my main focus I put this in the national context by analysing the books of discipline of the Religious Society of Friends over the course of the century, and combining this with data from Milligan's biographical dictionary and national Quaker magazines as well as other general secondary business sources and some Quaker Meeting records to draw a picture

¹⁴⁰ Wolfson Centre, Library of Birmingham (henceforth WC), SF 3/4/11/2, William A. Cadbury, 'Bull Street Friends I have Known'.

¹⁴¹ The latter is what Burton, Kavanagh and Brigham call 'quasi-legal' rules.

of the changes taking place.¹⁴² By bringing these sources together I create an account of the connections, relations and developments within the Quaker business community in a manner which has not previously been employed, tying together geographical and genealogical links with national legal changes inside and outside of the Society of Friends.

My third chapter uses different types of sources across its sections. It opens with a background using mainly secondary sources to highlight the industrial conditions of the time. I then principally use *Hansard*, the parliamentary record, and the letters of one Quaker MP to analyse the behaviour of a Quaker businessman in parliament. This chapter continues with the genealogical analysis I employed in my first chapter to demonstrate the enduring nature of Quaker business connections, and the analysis of the books of discipline. I then draw together the views of early twentieth-century Quakers on business through a close textual analysis of contemporary primary sources.

In my fourth chapter I use an in-depth analysis of events at Albright and Wilson to draw out key issues facing specifically Quaker businesses during the period of World War I. I principally use primary sources, mostly from the extant collection left by Albright and Wilson at the Wolfson Centre for archival research at the Library of Birmingham. The chapter seeks to assess what happened among Quakers managing or directing businesses at the time of World War I, in the context of the Peace Testimony. I found fairly early on in my research that World War I was a likely disruptor within Quaker business history, and therefore in this regard my work is analytically driven and by no means a

¹⁴² Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary*.

straightforward corporate history.¹⁴³ Having said that, I also employ an ethnographic approach here, especially with regard to John William Wilson.

I largely used the catalogue at the archives to determine which boxes of data to consult for this chapter, and then looked through the box contents personally where possible to determine which items to look at further. My focus was on items relating to the directorship or management of businesses: for example my sources in relation to Albright and Wilson range from accounts and costings to hundreds of letters concerning anything from shareholdings to more personal matters, to business reports and annual reports, and, probably most important to me, Management Committee and Board minutes. In analysing the data, I was seeking both to get a general impression of the business's activities to familiarise myself with key people and activities, and for any information relating to Quakerism or Quaker principles and how this might have influenced the firm's direction.

Considering the Quaker business outlook beyond 1918 in my fifth chapter, I primarily use in-depth analysis of various primary sources. The chapter is split into two different sections in terms of the sources and focus. The first section analyses the minutes of several of the Quaker Employers' Conferences, held every ten years between 1918 and 1948, to consider attitudes, attendance, and change over time. In terms of attendance data, my approach here is quantitative as well as qualitative. The second section continues the approach of the previous chapter, focusing on detailed analysis of Albright and Wilson's management and Board documents from the immediate post-war period to develop the firm's story and outlook in terms of its Quaker status.

¹⁴³ Michael Rowlinson, John Hassard, and Stephanie Decker, 'Research Strategies for Organizational History: A Dialogue between Historical Theory and Organization Theory', *Academy of Management Review*, 39, no. 3 (2014), 250–274.

1.5 Defining a Quaker Business

Early in the process of my research it became apparent to me that I would need to define what is meant by a Quaker business, and to distinguish it from a business simply run by Quakers. Without questioning this and without producing a model to assist in definition, it is easy to assume that a business founded by a Quaker remained Quaker for some considerable and usually unspecified amount of time. At least, this seems to have been what has happened in much research around Quaker businesses until now. I am thinking particularly here of Kirby's and Corley's essays on Quaker business failure and how Quakers dealt with success, respectively, in Jeremy's *Business and Religion in Britain*, though other more recent examples exist, for example Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham's article examining Huntley and Palmers.¹⁴⁴

This is more an observation than a criticism, and the scholarship to which I refer has its own valid purposes. Nevertheless, clarity in this matter is helpful beyond my own remit here, and I hope it assists others. In this thesis, without some model by which to define a Quaker business, it would not be possible to assess Quaker business decline; how can one know whether Quaker businesses ceased to exist as Quaker firms if one does not have criteria upon which to make this judgement? And without some idea as to when businesses ceased to be Quaker, assessing Quaker business decline more broadly is impossible. Assessing business failure is more straightforward, but Quakers leaving firms and this leading to the firms ceasing to be Quaker, for example, is also crucial to this research as it could fundamentally alter a business and its direction.

¹⁴⁴ Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success'; Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty'; Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law'.

Underpinning this model is my assertion that the testimonies are a central part of making a business Quaker: there should be some accountability as to what being a 'Quaker' business means. In some sense, as will become clear in this thesis, this echoes the ideas of reputation and accountability among Quaker businesspeople in the early nineteenth century. It is not sufficient to simply be a Quaker running a business, that business should also act in a manner which is broadly compatible with the testimonies. The flow chart I have designed (Figure 1) enables a fairly rapid and simple assessment of whether or not a business is 'Quaker' at any given point in time.

However, the individual business context is usually a lot more complex when explored in detail, and the flow chart itself merits some explanation and clarification. This model is the product of years spent considering different businesses and what makes a business Quaker. In some sense a flow chart form could be considered to be too black and white and simplistic. I first considered associating a 'score' on different factors to a firm and its directors. However, I found this to be too subjective and complex. Hence I arrived at the model here, which should be fairly straightforward to employ in most cases with a little research around the firm and its management and governance.

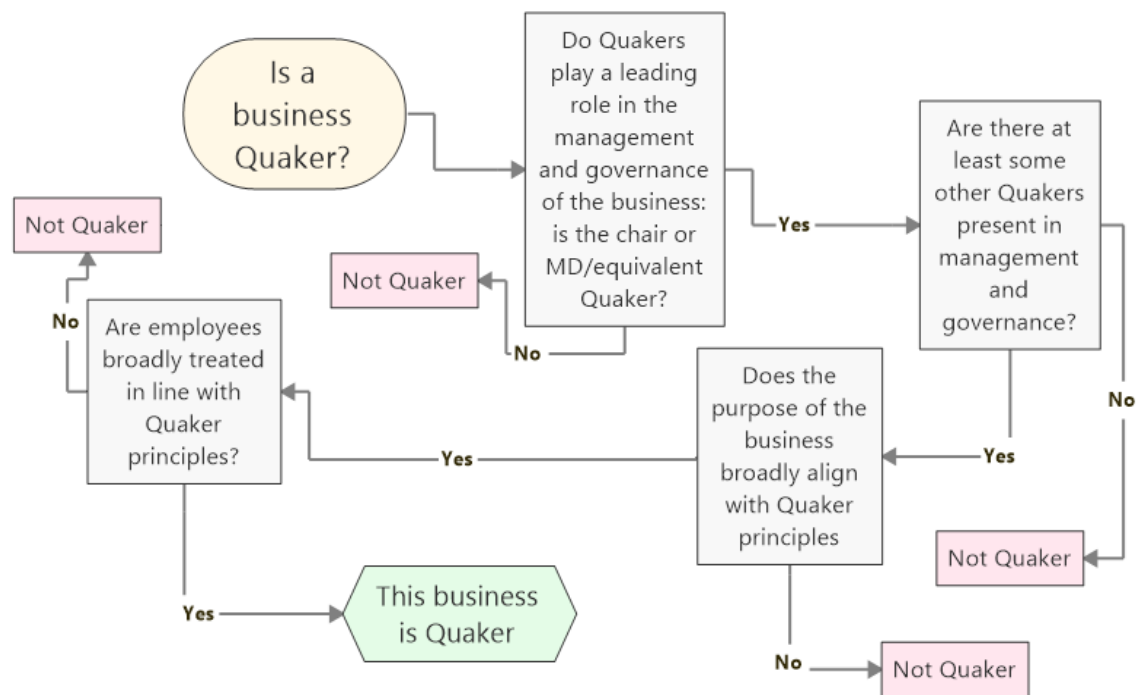


Figure 2 Defining a Quaker Business

It is important to remember that a business might cease being Quaker without that becoming obvious (especially at first glance) and not to make assumptions around this question. Particularly in terms of management and governance structure, each business is different. I have borne this in mind in the first question on the flow chart I have designed. An example of this difference relevant to my research here is that between two West Midlands firms which would have been familiar with one another: Albright and Wilson and Cadbury's.

In the case of Albright and Wilson, by 1896, four years after its conversion to a limited liability company, the governance structure of the firm had diverged from a simple Board of Directors to include the Board of Directors, which met monthly, and a Management Committee to oversee the day-to-day running of the firm, which met

weekly.¹⁴⁵ This form of structure could make it more difficult to establish the power balance within a business and whether or not it is Quaker. In practice, in the case of Albright and Wilson there was considerable overlap between these bodies. Table 3 gives an example from 1914.

Table 3 Membership of Board of Directors and Management Committee of Albright and Wilson, 1914

Board of Directors	Management Committee
William Arthur Albright (chair)	William Arthur Albright
George Stacey Albright	George Stacey Albright
John William Wilson	John William Wilson
George Edward Wilson	George Edward Wilson
Richard Threlfall	Richard Threlfall
John Eliot Howard Lloyd	John Eliot Howard Lloyd
Kenneth Henry Wilson	Kenneth Henry Wilson
John Francis Albright	
Henry Lloyd Wilson	

As is evident from Table 3, there were only two members of the Board of Directors who were not also members of the Management Committee (and who were therefore in effect non-executive directors). These two members were both younger brothers of the founding families who took some interest but, at least in the case of Henry Lloyd Wilson,

¹⁴⁵ WC, MS 1724, Weekly Minute Book 1896–1899, Box 62.

had other day-to-day affairs of their own. None of the female family members who held shares in the firm sat on the Board of Directors. The effect in the case of Albright and Wilson of having a slightly larger Board of Directors than Management Committee was increased and broader oversight of the firm's operations. I show below that Henry Lloyd's peripheral presence meant that he could support the chair, William Arthur, in the matter of conscience which arose for the leadership of the business in 1915. As is probably evident from his name, there was one key person present on both bodies at Albright and Wilson who was neither a member of the founding family nor a relative: Richard Threlfall.¹⁴⁶ His presence would be central to the operations and decisions of the firm, and ultimately to its definition as Quaker. Regardless, in the case of Albright and Wilson in 1914, the business passes the first hurdle in the flow chart since William Arthur Albright was certainly a practising Quaker, as was Kenneth Henry Wilson. As I show below, William Arthur attended local Quaker events and sat on the national Meeting for Sufferings at this time, and Kenneth Henry was active in his local Meeting.

By contrast, Cadbury's simply had one Board of Directors in 1914 which took the decisions around the day-to-day operations of the firm, though it operated as a Management Committee. It was composed of members of the Cadbury family only: Edward Cadbury, William Adlington Cadbury, George Cadbury Jr, George Cadbury, and Barrow Cadbury.¹⁴⁷ Of these, George Cadbury had revitalised the firm along with his brother Richard (deceased by 1914) in the late nineteenth century, and the other members are his eldest sons Edward and George and Richard's two eldest sons, Barrow

¹⁴⁶ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 152. John Eliot Howard Lloyd was a second cousin of John William and George Edward.

¹⁴⁷ Cadbury Archive, Mondelez International, Cadbury Board Papers 1914, Committee of Management Book 15.

and William Adlington. What is more, all of these family members were visibly Quaker and active in Meetings. The Quaker hold over the firm according to the first of the criteria on my flow chart is very strong and beyond doubt. This control is arguably further strengthened by the small number of people involved by comparison to Albright and Wilson, and the comparative simplicity of the structure.

There will be still other business structures which can be assessed on this basis, and this model also works for assessing business partnerships past and present. Of course, the second question in the flow chart about other Quakers in leadership is not applicable to very small firms such as sole traders and those which are a partnership between just two or three people. My reason for adding the second question is that a sole Quaker could be overridden in decision making and find it hard to embed a Quaker culture and Quaker values in a business without more Quakers being involved in governance and management. Therefore, these questions together are an attempt to ensure that there is a greater depth and accountability to Quaker values in a business.

This discussion and my flow chart also beg the question 'Who is a Quaker in business?' This has been a difficult question to answer, as it involves several factors and is by no means straightforward. I would suggest that it is somebody who is a member of the Religious Society of Friends, and who either demonstrates an active connection to a Meeting or does not persistently contravene any of the four testimonies to Equality, Simplicity, Peace, and Truth on a visible level. These testimonies have been elaborated to be 'Equality and justice', 'Peace', 'Truth and integrity', 'Simplicity and sustainability' by Quakers today, but I would suggest that they have their origins in this form in the early twentieth century, as I demonstrate below. However, Andrew Fincham has provided

evidence for the development of discipline and testimonies from the very earliest days of Quaker history.¹⁴⁸

On Equality, I would cite London Yearly Meeting in 1925, where it was asserted that 'Natural resources, property, credit and service would be socially organised for common advantage' under the system that the Church (meaning all Christians) should seek to further.¹⁴⁹ This minute also noted that 'we shall recognise how much the possession of wealth and of the power derived from wealth may blunt the sense of social justice in the owners', which reinforces the objection to financial inequality.¹⁵⁰ Further, gender equality is explicitly referred to as desirable by London Yearly Meeting in 1911 and 1925.¹⁵¹

Regarding simplicity, at London Yearly Meeting 1925 it was expressed that 'our attitude towards life should tend to free us from the bondage of material things, and make us concerned to give the first place to the things of the spirit'.¹⁵² This was reinforced even more evidently at the same Yearly Meeting where it was declared:

Simplicity does not mean ugliness or dullness. In such things as dress and furniture, no less than in word and deed, simplicity is of the very essence of both truth and beauty. A beautiful spirit creates beautiful surroundings; and a veritable peace and dignity of mind should take possession of those who live with what is beautiful.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Fincham, 'The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success'.

¹⁴⁹ *Christian Practice*, 1925, 136.

¹⁵⁰ *Christian Practice*, 1925, 136.

¹⁵¹ *Christian Practice*, 1911, 33–34; 1925, 18–19.

¹⁵² *Christian Practice*, 1925, 136.

¹⁵³ *Christian Practice*, 1925, 78.

Peace is the testimony for which there is the most evidence in the early twentieth-century Quaker books of discipline, being mentioned several times from 1911 onwards, both inside and outside the World War I period. The All Friends' Conference of 1920 put it thus:

It is not consistent for anyone to claim that their Christianity as a way of life stops them from war, unless they are prepared to adjust their entire life... If Friends are to *challenge* the whole world and claim the right to continue in the ways of peace while everybody else is fighting, they must reveal the fact *that they are worthy of peace, and that they bear in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus*.¹⁵⁴

This exhortation goes far beyond a mere objection to war, as do several others, including a 1911 exhortation to instruct others in the principles of peace.¹⁵⁵ Being involved in the manufacture of munitions in peace time, as Albright and Wilson was,¹⁵⁶ does not fit with these exhortations, and certainly one could not live truthfully or with integrity and proclaim peace to others while doing so.

Truth is the final Quaker testimony I refer to here. This was certainly in evidence explicitly by 1920, when it was noted in *A Word to All Who Seek Truth* that 'daily life and conversation... ought to be so sincere and honest, so pure and loving towards all, that they speak more loudly than any mere verbal expressions of our belief'.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Conference of All Friends, 1920, in *Christian Practice*, 1925.

¹⁵⁵ London Yearly Meeting 1911, in *Christian Practice*, 1925.

¹⁵⁶ I give more detail about this in Chapter 3.

¹⁵⁷ I further demonstrate the importance of truth to Quakerism in the Quaker discipline during the nineteenth century and beyond in Section 2.5.1.

By using the term 'persistently contravene' in my proposed criteria for being a Quaker I mean to allow some flexibility: for example, as was the position of most Monthly Meetings after World War I with regard to the pacifist question, if someone colludes with militarism in war time, but then ceases this activity and is still desiring of membership in peace time, the Society of Friends was generally forgiving and allowed re-entry to those from whom it had removed membership privileges. War time is a fairly unique scenario for Quakers in this sense, in terms of understanding pacifism as a matter of personal conscience. On another matter there is the possibility that someone might express regret or repentance for contravention and visibly change, as was the necessary case for Quakers in business in the earlier years of the Society.¹⁵⁸ I am not suggesting that members in either of these positions be discounted as Quakers.

This ensures that someone whose name is on a list somewhere but for whom there is no evidence of Meeting participation, and who publicly and repeatedly (or over a considerable period of time) acted or spoke against Quaker beliefs, would not be considered a Quaker. It does also assume that someone who is committed to Quakerism will have formally joined and therefore be a member. Any tool for defining a Quaker will be imperfect, but is necessary to have in assessing whether a business is Quaker.

Somebody who is a member, but who does not attend a Meeting and clearly acts or speaks in violation of one of the testimonies (including through their business and its activities) with no indication of repentance or regret, would be not a Quaker, but a nominal or cultural Quaker. Here I use the former when I am certain of membership, but the latter when they are of Quaker heritage but I am not certain of their membership status and they have persistently violated a testimony. I have arrived at this

¹⁵⁸ Fincham, 'The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success'.

understanding partly through the complexities of the characters of those on the Board and Management Committee at Albright and Wilson – a far less researched and less clearly Quaker firm than Cadbury’s. Several of these were not straightforward Quakers in the same way as all the Cadbury directors were. The ‘or’ in my conditions for being considered a Quaker is also derived from this study of the Board and Management Committee: there is one person on both who is a member and demonstrates active attendance, but who is by association with the firm in clear contravention of the pacifist testimony. Here, despite this, his active attendance means that we cannot discount his Quakerism. I discuss this further below.¹⁵⁹ This has direct consequences in assessing whether or not the firm was Quaker.

In one of Arnold Rowntree’s letters which refers to John William Wilson, he throws into confusion the Quaker identities of two individuals: Arnold names both John William and Percy Alden explicitly as ‘Friends’, along with Joseph Allen Baker, who certainly was a Friend.¹⁶⁰ This is complicated in the case of Percy Alden, who was active in social work and the Friends Social Union, because while membership of the latter certainly implies that he was a Quaker, Thomas Kennedy casts doubt on this as he found no evidence to confirm it in membership records of the Society of Friends.¹⁶¹ I do not seek here to contribute to the discussion around whether or not Percy Alden was a Quaker; instead, I am highlighting the complexities around confirming definitively whether or not certain historical figures were in fact Quakers. This, then, has ramifications for the determination of whether or not certain businesses can be considered ‘Quaker’, which is a key factor in

¹⁵⁹ See Section 5.7.

¹⁶⁰ Ian Packer (ed.), *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree to Mary Katherine Rowntree, 1910–1918*, Camden Fifth Series, vol. 20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 69.

¹⁶¹ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 281.

examining Quaker business decline. I would suggest that in some cases best guesses will need to suffice in the amount of research time available.

Jeremy considers religious people in business between 1907 and 1955 in his book *Capitalists and Christians*. Jeremy's data is based on the 100 largest employing businesses in 1907, 1935, and 1955, and on their managing directors and chairmen. Here he comes to a different understanding around faith allegiance and how to define it. Jeremy understands 'adult religious affiliation' to include:

a very wide range of church linkages, ranging from national or local office-holding to benefactions, membership, simple attendance, or burial rites. It has to be construed, therefore, as indicating the religious preference that an individual business leader would have acknowledged when pressed by a recruiting sergeant or a hospital admissions staff.¹⁶²

Because Jeremy's data is based on such a broad definition, he himself cautions that it should be used 'with care'.¹⁶³ His purpose and the scale of his project mean that this understanding of religious affiliation is probably the only one which is viable; however, in the context of my far smaller and more nuanced study, my definition is more appropriate. Jeremy's broader definition will encompass many people who would not be included in my definition of a Quaker: for example, somebody who has a Quaker burial despite having otherwise distanced themselves from the faith potentially decades before, or someone who attends for a short time, or a businessperson who makes a donation but may also have done so to many other local religious organisations. While Jeremy asserts, and I do not dispute, that 'there is no way by which a historian can infallibly distinguish

¹⁶² Jeremy, *Capitalists and Christians*, 109.

¹⁶³ Jeremy, *Capitalists and Christians*, 109.

between active and nominal Christians', I maintain that it is important to formulate some form of definition in order to better understand Quaker business decline.¹⁶⁴

This different definition of affiliation, combined with Jeremy's very small sample size, goes a considerable way towards explaining why his data suggest a later decline in Quaker representation within business elites than I have found here. By Jeremy's small sample size, I mean that with regard to Quakers in business elites, he measures a drop from three to two individuals from 1935 to 1955, where this had remained stable at three between 1907 and 1935. I do not entirely dismiss this evidence, but suggest that this sample size is another reason for caution, and a glance at his appendix shows that in fact all of the Quakers in the business elite in 1935 and 1955 were Cadburys. Therefore, while these people were indeed Quakers by both of our definitions, Jeremy's data certainly do not aid in a broader analysis of Quaker business decline, based as it is entirely on one family and one (exemplary) firm.

The next question on the flow chart, about the purpose of the business broadly aligning with Quaker principles, is more straightforward. By principles I mean the testimonies: if a business exists to further, or at least does not work against, the values of Equality, Simplicity, Peace, and Truth, then I would suggest that it qualifies. I would also add the caveat of not discounting its being Quaker longer term if required by the government in war time to produce munitions or other war-related goods (though as I demonstrate many individual Quakers in business were either very uncomfortable with or resigned over this matter).

¹⁶⁴ Jeremy, *Capitalists and Christians*, 109.

Similarly, the final question on the flow chart about the treatment of employees is fairly straightforward: Are employees generally and visibly treated in a spirit which does not undermine equality, simplicity, peace, or truth? Overall, my flow chart is meant as a guide to assist others, and I intend it to be used with some degree of flexibility and discretion, particularly around the question of the Quakerism of individual people; other researchers can think this through more actively and seek to look into it more thoroughly where possible. However, I believe that this model furthers the cause of Quaker business research for the future.

In broader understandings of defining a Quaker business, and perceptions of Quaker business history in the twentieth century, Cadbury's and Rowntree's have been very prominent and therefore over-represented in scholarship and popular perception. However, Rowlinson's evidence about Cadbury's own role in this prominence and its association with welfare leads me to question entirely the basis of the perception of decline in Quaker businesses:¹⁶⁵ if the businesses perceived to have experienced decline were principally the moral exemplars, this obscures the broader history of Quaker firms. I seek to explore this further here by highlighting one less prominent firm and further questioning the perceptions which are still perpetuated by other scholars.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Rowlinson, 'Cadbury's New Factory System', 279; Rowlinson and Hassard 'The Invention of Corporate Culture'.

¹⁶⁶ E.g. Kimberley, 'Edward Cadbury'; Fincham, 'Made for Sharing: George Cadbury, "Industrial Betterment" and Salvation', *Quaker Studies*, 24, no. 2 (2019)

2. The Quaker Business Community, the Changing Quaker Discipline, the Railways, and Legal Changes: 1800–1900¹

Over the course of the nineteenth century Birmingham became a centre for Quaker business families and their businesses. The first part of this chapter focuses principally on three local business families, the Gibbinses, the Albrights, and the Wilsons, and their businesses.² I use the Gibbins family's business story as a prism through which to give an overview of business life generally in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. I then introduce the Albrights and Wilsons and provide their family trees, since their much longer story from the mid-century onwards, and the changes within it, threads through later chapters here. With reference to these families and their stories in the context of the broader community, the first part of this chapter highlights several factors which were influential in the lives of the Birmingham Quaker business community over the course of the nineteenth century: intermarriage, the draw of public office, and the dispersal of the community.

Following these family examples, the first section of the chapter concludes with three more thematic sections based largely on these examples and the Cadburys within the Birmingham community. The first focuses on intermarriage, showing how prevalent it was between business families and that it remained strong throughout the century. Another section on Quaker involvement in civic life suggests that as this increased it could

¹ The focus of the first section of this chapter grew from the biography of Birmingham Quakers by William Adlington Cadbury (1867–1957), 'Bull Street Friends I Have Known', which was completed in 1956. This first section (2.1 to 2.5) is a revised, and in some places extended, version of parts of my 2017 book chapter: N. Sleafwood 'The Birmingham Quaker Business Community 1800-1900', in S. Angell and P. Dandelion (eds) *Quakers, Business and Industry*, Quakers and the Disciplines, vol. 4 (FAHE, Longmeadow, MA: 2017), 213–241.

² Sections 2.1–2.4.

have been detrimental to businesses. The final thematic section is on the impact of the gradual geographical dispersal of the business community away from the town centre and across new Quaker meetings.

In the second part (Sections 2.5 and 2.6, divided by period), I provide a thorough analysis of the elements of the books of discipline relating to business over the century, and demonstrate the links between these and broader social, legal, and business changes, particularly the role of Quakers in the rise of the railways and the impact that had on the Quaker business environment and mentality. Drawing out the interaction between Quakers in business and their discipline, I highlight the decline of community oversight of business in the later century and the damage that likely did to Quaker business prospects. I demonstrate that in many cases the actions of Quakers in business undermined the implementation of the discipline of the Religious Society of Friends and the maintenance of a distinct Quaker business ethic.

2.1 Nineteenth-Century Case Studies: The Gibbins family and Albright and Wilson

2.1.1 The Gibbins Family

The Gibbins family were influential in the Birmingham Quaker business community in the nineteenth century. This is demonstrated by Joseph Gibbins senior being one of those from Birmingham Quaker Meeting who had investigated and disowned Samuel Galton junior in 1796 for being unrepentant in the manufacture and sale of guns.³ The family's business network had been expanding over the first decades of the

³ Eleanor Woodward, *Faith and disunity: Samuel Galton and the Quakers*, accessed 17 June 2023, <https://theironroom.wordpress.com/2015/03/23/faith-and-disunity-samuel-galton-and-the-quakers/>; See also Slepwood, 'The Birmingham Quaker Business Community', for further detail around this case.

nineteenth century, though that expansion seems to have been temporarily stalled by the death of Joseph Gibbins senior in 1811. Joseph Gibbins junior (1787–1870) took over his father's interests, becoming a partner in at least three separate banking endeavours established between 1802 and 1809, linked to and enabled by the metal business in Swansea.⁴

By 1806 Brueton Gibbins, another son of Martha and Joseph senior, had taken on ownership of a glass works in Aston,⁵ demonstrating that an adeptness for business life was common in this large Quaker family, as in others such as the Cadburys. His younger brother William had joined him in a partnership by 1818.⁶ This business lasted until at least 1835, since it can be found in a trade directory for that year.⁷

In 1821 Martha and Joseph Gibbins' daughter Martha had married Joseph Ashby Gillett, thereby joining these two Quaker banking families.⁸ What is more, with the marriage came for Joseph a loan of £5000 from the Gibbinses, with which he bought a partnership in Whitehead's bank at Shipston on Stour.⁹ This is a clear demonstration of the importance of intermarriage and financial support in the Quaker business world in the early nineteenth century: marriage often brought money, which was vital to advancing or beginning business endeavours.

⁴ Eric Hopkins, *Birmingham, The First Manufacturing Town in the World 1760–1840* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), 76; Emma Gibbins (ed.), *Records of the Gibbins Family* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1911), 13; Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 198.

⁵ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*, 21.

⁶ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*, 66; *Wrightson's Triennial Dictionary of Birmingham*, 1818, accessed 26 May 2023, <https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/WAR/Birmingham/bham1818-g>.

⁷ Wrightson and Webb, *The Dictionary of Birmingham* (Birmingham: Wrightson and Webb, 1835), accessed 26 May 2023, <https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4/id/218289>.

⁸ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*.

⁹ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 204.

By the mid-1820s and the depression these years brought, the banking business Joseph Gibbins shared with the Goode and Smith families was in trouble.¹⁰ This business seems to have been started in 1802.

In 1804 Joseph Gibbins senior had begun another banking business with Samuel Galton junior and his son.¹¹ It is curious and perhaps striking that Joseph entered business with the disowned man he had been sent to rebuke: the cultural links and business interests seem to have been more important to Joseph Gibbins than the possibility of rebuke from the Society of Friends. This bank, though, appears to have been experiencing difficulties too. The trouble for the banks was so serious that the failure and bankruptcy of Gibbins, Smith and Goode towards the end of 1825 had led to the ‘virtual suspension of banking services and trade disruption’ in Birmingham, and was only salvaged by the good fortune that the partners could liquidate other assets (for a loss).¹² There is also evidence that Joseph Gibbins junior was a partner in still other banks at this time, including a bank in Banbury with Joseph Ashby Gillett, to which he owed some £27,000 and which was rescued from failure by the community.¹³ Joseph Gibbins junior’s mother Martha reflects on the troubling situation regarding the banks, which ultimately led to bankruptcy for one of them, in a letter to her son William in March 1826:

¹⁰ Hopkins, *Birmingham*, 76.

¹¹ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*, 13. This is probably the bank identified by David Moss as Galton and James: David J. Moss, ‘The Bank of England and the Country Banks: Birmingham, 1827–33’, *Economic History Review*, new series, 34, no. 4 (1981), 541.

¹² Moss, ‘The Bank of England and the Country Banks’, 541–542. It is unsurprising that both banks experienced difficulty, given the number of banks in a similar position at this time, causing a run on the Bank of England, with 224 bankruptcies nationally in December alone: Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 121.

¹³ I do not have the means to ascertain to what extent this rescue involved other Quakers; Iain Frame, ‘“Country Rag Merchants” and “Octopus Tentacles”: An Analysis of Law’s Contribution to the Creation of Money in England and Wales, 1790–1844’ (unpublished thesis, University of Kent, 2012), 81–82, accessed 27 February 2023, <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/56147/>.

Many and great have been the changes and trials of some since my last letter to thee. Little did I ever expect to see the commercial atmosphere so shaken; panic, consternation, and confusion spread around with unabating fury for a time; it seemed as if a terrible scourge had come to the rich and to the great... to check their desires for the accumulation of great wealth.¹⁴

Clearly Martha had some qualms about the compatibility of wealth and godliness and was not afraid to express these in writing to other members of the family.

However, in her comments on the situation, Emma Gibbins, daughter of Emma J. and Thomas, seeks to explain that:

It is said that none of the Banks with which the Gibbins Brothers and J. A. Gillett were connected would have closed their doors if it had been possible to convey cash by a more rapid means of transit than by driving... The Banks were all financially sound, and their doors reopened after two or three days.¹⁵

Whatever the truth of this claim to financial soundness, the family and the business dealt with this situation by publishing a statement of the business accounts in a Birmingham newspaper, demonstrating a surplus, and adding to the disclosure the value of their combined personal wealth with which the business partnership could be secured.¹⁶ This seems to have been designed to reassure the public and to restore trust, which was still hugely important in business partnerships of this period. What is more, it may well have satisfied the need Fincham identifies within the Quaker community in its earlier period to demonstrate contrition and secure the reputation of the Society of Friends, and thereby

¹⁴ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*, 181–182.

¹⁵ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*, 184.

¹⁶ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*, 184–185.

may have been why Joseph Gibbins seems to have avoided being disowned,¹⁷ though I would suggest the prominence of the family and their links to key businessmen with positions in the Monthly Meeting may have played a role.

In August 1826, however, Martha Gibbins wrote again of her concern about her son's desire for wealth in a letter to her daughter, Anne.¹⁸ She also refers to Joseph's enemies who placed 'heavy blame' on him in September 1826,¹⁹ suggesting that although Joseph was not publicly or officially disowned, some in the Society very much disapproved of his behaviour and he may have been shunned in some way.

Had Martha hoped that her son would cease his involvement in banking, she would have been disappointed to learn that Joseph started a new bank, Gibbins and Lovell;²⁰ moreover, after her death in 1827, in 1829 Joseph Gibbins junior oversaw Gibbins and Lovell's conversion into a joint-stock bank and became managing director of it under its new guise as the Birmingham Banking Company.²¹ This would have been one of the earliest conversions to the joint-stock form for banks, which only became legal in 1826, after the 1825 banking crisis, though at this time such banks still had unlimited liability, meaning that the directors remained personally responsible for the finances of the business.²²

¹⁷ I have checked Warwickshire North Men's Monthly Meeting minutes between November 1825 and August 1827, and they make no reference to Joseph Gibbins, despite two other disownments for insolvency in 1827. I have also checked the Quarterly Meeting Minutes. See also Fincham, 'The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success', 37, 139.

¹⁸ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*, 187.

¹⁹ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*, 189.

²⁰ Moss, 'The Bank of England and the Country Banks', has the date as 1826, but the archive record (immediately below) says 1825.

²¹ Lloyds Banking Group archives record description, accessed 26 February 2023, <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/bea02ebb-53e8-313d-9df2-fcbb8d6480ee>.

²² Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 121.

Joseph Gibbins was a member of the 'local aristocracy' according to the Bank of England agent and would also have attended Birmingham Quaker Meeting.²³ He certainly seems to have been prepared to take risks in business, and not to have heeded his family's concerns around the ethics of his activities as a Quaker. Nor did his business ventures stop there, as by 1841 he was almost certainly a director of the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway, along with his fellow Birmingham Quaker Charles Sturge, thus demonstrating a thirst for new speculative ventures.²⁴

Around 1835 the Gibbins family, along with several other businessmen, began to set up the Birmingham Battery and Metal business in Digbeth, part of Deritend, an industrial area on the eastern edge of the town centre.²⁵

There were thirteen proprietors in total, at least two of them being Gibbins men.²⁶ Thomas Gibbins (1796–1863) became the managing partner of the Birmingham Battery and Metal business when it was formally established in 1836.

Richard Tapper Cadbury's daughter Emma Joel (1811–1905) married Thomas Gibbins in 1837, and their daughter's collected letters by her family and others are illuminating. Earlier in 1837 Thomas Gibbins had moved into Digbeth House, to be joined by his wife in September when they married. The works sat directly next to the house,

²³ By local aristocracy I understand local people of status and influence rather than the more traditional sense of the term. The Quaker Lloyds who ran Taylors and Lloyds from 1765 and the leaders of four other non-Quaker banks completed the aristocratic set according to Moss, 'The Bank of England and the Country Banks', 541.

²⁴ This is assuming his name is spelt incorrectly as Gibbons, although I can find no record of a Joseph Gibbons in any Birmingham trade directory of the time. *Robinson's Railway Directory* (London: Railway Times Office, 1841), 19, accessed 26 February 2023, https://library.lse.ac.uk/collections/pamphlets/document_service/HE1_42/00000671/doc.pdf.

²⁵ The term 'battery' refers to the process of hammering metal into shape from sheets, for items such as pans, rather than to our understanding of it today. Arthur Rowntree, *The Birmingham Battery and Metal Company* (Birmingham: for private circulation, 1936), 32.

²⁶ Rowntree, *The Birmingham Battery and Metal Company*, 19.

and the building's location in Digbeth, near to the Bull Ring, brought its dangers: in 1839, for example, there was both a fire in the works and considerable rioting.²⁷

The account of Emma and Thomas's children about daily life in the house and the business in the collected letters and memories is full of detail:

Our father was an early riser, and... he used frequently to be in the office soon after 6 o'clock, and then came in later for breakfast.... From time to time the proprietors of the Battery Works met to hold their business meetings, and it was usual for them to dine in Digbeth House on these occasions. The dinners were a very formidable affair to the young housekeeper, who was unaccustomed to any entertaining outside the simple hospitality of Friends, whereas her husband, besides being fifteen years her senior, had lived abroad, and mixed in general society.²⁸

This account confirms an image of Quaker family businesses often being run from or near to the home during the first half of the nineteenth century. It also confirms the idea that in the era of the partnership the main partner, their family life, and their business were not clearly delineated.²⁹

However, in 1845, almost as soon as it became legally possible through the Joint Stock Companies Act 1844, the Birmingham Battery and Metal business became a joint-stock company³⁰ and changed its name to the Birmingham Battery and Metal Company. This created shareholders rather than solely partners, and was generally a process which allowed a greater number of investors to gain part ownership, without being so directly

²⁷ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*, 265.

²⁸ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*, 264.

²⁹ Hannah Barker, *Family and Business during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 156–157.

³⁰ Rowntree, *The Birmingham Battery and Metal Company*, 48. See Section 2.6.1 for more on these legal changes.

involved with the business. From this time more of the shares were bought by the company and the Gibbins family.³¹ So in this instance joint-stock status was used to reinforce the control of the Gibbins family over the firm with its thirteen original proprietors.

Thomas Gibbins remained manager of the Birmingham Battery and Metal Company until 1851, when he sought to retire and proposed that his nephew, George Barrow (1824–1899), take over as manager.³² After a period on trial George Barrow managed the business until 1864, when William Gibbins took over.³³

Emma Joel Gibbins attended the first statutory meeting of the Birmingham Battery and Metal Company Ltd in 1897, long after the death of her husband, and along with her sons Thomas Gibbins and Richard Cadbury Gibbins, George Barrow, another two family members and the secretary.³⁴ To have done so she must have been an engaged, respected woman, as it was very rare for women to attend meetings in smaller Quaker businesses at this time. With business dinners being held at homes earlier in the century, one can imagine that women like Emma may have had some indirect involvement or influence through their home life, but she largely stands alone by attending this meeting.

The story of the Gibbins family in the earlier nineteenth century highlights the number of new businesses being established at this time. It shows that Quaker morals around business interests were not straightforward, and could divide families. It also demonstrates the closeness of family, home, and business, as was typical in the earlier

³¹ Rowntree, *The Birmingham Battery and Metal Company*, 48.

³² Rowntree, *The Birmingham Battery and Metal Company*, 49; Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 35.

³³ Rowntree, *The Birmingham Battery and Metal Company*, 49.

³⁴ Rowntree, *The Birmingham Battery and Metal Company*, 57.

nineteenth century, as well as noting the impact of the beginnings of legal changes which would be taken up by more Quaker businesses as the century progressed.

2.1.2 An Introduction to Albright and Wilson

The history of the firm Albright and Wilson forms a key lens for my analysis of change in this thesis, and its later history is my primary focus in Chapter 4. Its origins lie in the mid-nineteenth century and I therefore give some background to the firm and its early history here, along with family trees for ease of reference.³⁵

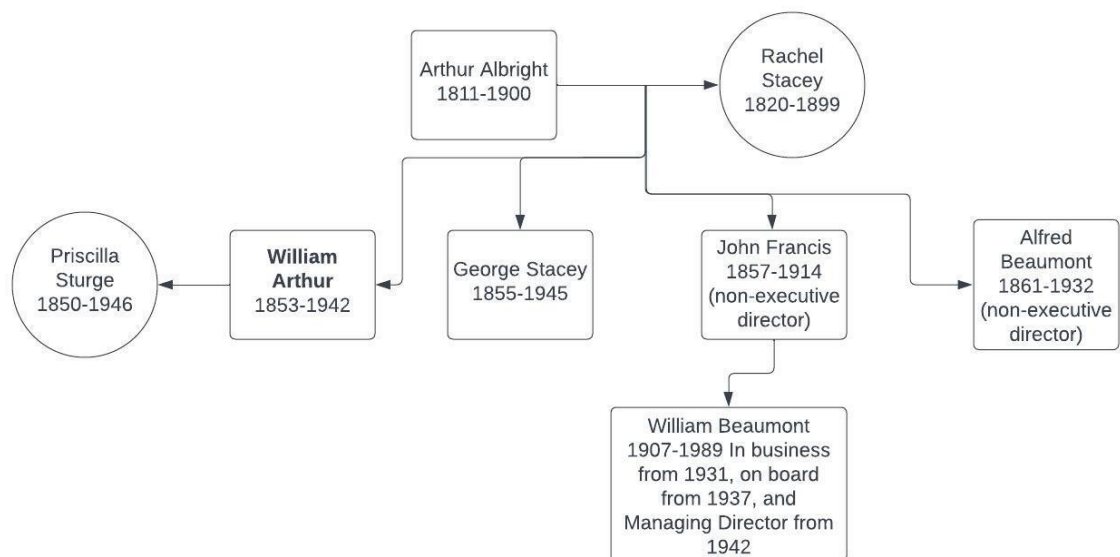


Figure 2 The Albright Family Tree

Arthur Albright (1811–1900) began life in Charlbury in the Cotswolds, the descendant of a Quaker father (William Albright 1776–1852) who was a grocer and

³⁵ The family trees in Figures 2 and 3 draw from those in Threlfall’s book and the information provided in Charles E. G. Pease’s genealogies, but I have optimised and expanded them to highlight business roles and intermarriage. Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 246–247; Charles Edward Gurney Pease, ‘Descendants of William Wilson’, accessed 25 April 2023, <http://www.pennyghael.org.uk/WilsonWilliam.pdf>; C. E. G. Pease, ‘Descendants of William Albright’, accessed 27 April 2023, <http://www.pennyghael.org.uk/AlbrightCharlbury.pdf>. I found the detail of William Beaumont Albright’s death date from probate records at <https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk>.

draper and a Quaker grandfather (William Albright 1745–1820) who was a draper.³⁶ At the age of 16 he undertook an apprenticeship with an uncle and was briefly an assistant at Southalls (manufacturing chemists) on Bull Street in Birmingham.³⁷ In 1840, he moved to Birmingham and joined J & E Sturge in their chemical business, which we encounter below. Here, he suggested and began the manufacture of phosphorus, mostly for use in matches.³⁸ He also joined Bull Street Quaker Meeting, attended regularly, and served there.³⁹

Around 1848 Arthur Albright married Rachel Stacey, herself the granddaughter of a Birmingham Quaker businessman. Her father George Stacey had been a Quaker pharmaceutical chemist in Tottenham.⁴⁰ At this point Arthur and his family moved to George Road, Edgbaston.⁴¹

By this point J & E Sturge, the Quaker business Albright worked for, had a factory in Selly Oak as well as their premises on Wheeleys Road, Edgbaston, opened in the early 1840s. This was where Arthur primarily spent his time.⁴² Edgbaston must have been a suitable place for the Albrights' home, as it was between Selly Oak and Birmingham. In the 1850 trade directory, besides this business, there are very few other industrial businesses in Selly Oak.⁴³

³⁶ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 4.

³⁷ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 4.

³⁸ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 3.

³⁹ Cadbury, 'Bull Street Friends I Have Known', 1.

⁴⁰ Cadbury, 'Bull Street Friends I Have Known', 53; Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 416.

⁴¹ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 16.

⁴² Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 13.

⁴³ *Post Office Directory of Birmingham, with Staffordshire and Worcestershire* (London: W. Kelly, 1850), accessed 26 May 2023, <https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4/id/339983>; Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 13, also confirms this.

Around 1850 the Sturges and Arthur Albright began buying some land in Oldbury, to the north-west of Birmingham, and moving phosphorus production there.⁴⁴ This move was driven by proximity to another key chemical business, Chance and Hunt, a subsidiary of Chance Brothers, who were Anglicans and entered their social circle.⁴⁵

By around 1855 Arthur Albright and the Sturges had parted ways in business, with Arthur retaining the Selly Oak and Oldbury works.⁴⁶ And in 1856 he formed a new partnership with John Edward Wilson, another Quaker whom he had met through Quaker networking, thus highlighting the importance of networks to business.⁴⁷ John Edward had probably come to Birmingham to join Arthur in business, and was very involved in Birmingham Meeting in Bull Street too, becoming an elder.⁴⁸ Links with J & E Sturge were maintained, with the Sturges probably supplying one product for some years.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 32–33.

⁴⁵ Janet Christine Sullivan, 'Paying the Price for Industrialisation: The Experience of a Black Country Town, Oldbury, in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2014), 307.

⁴⁶ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 16–17.

⁴⁷ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 45–46; Pease, 'Descendants of William Wilson', 191–196.

⁴⁸ Cadbury, 'Bull Street Friends I Have Known', 82.

⁴⁹ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 34.

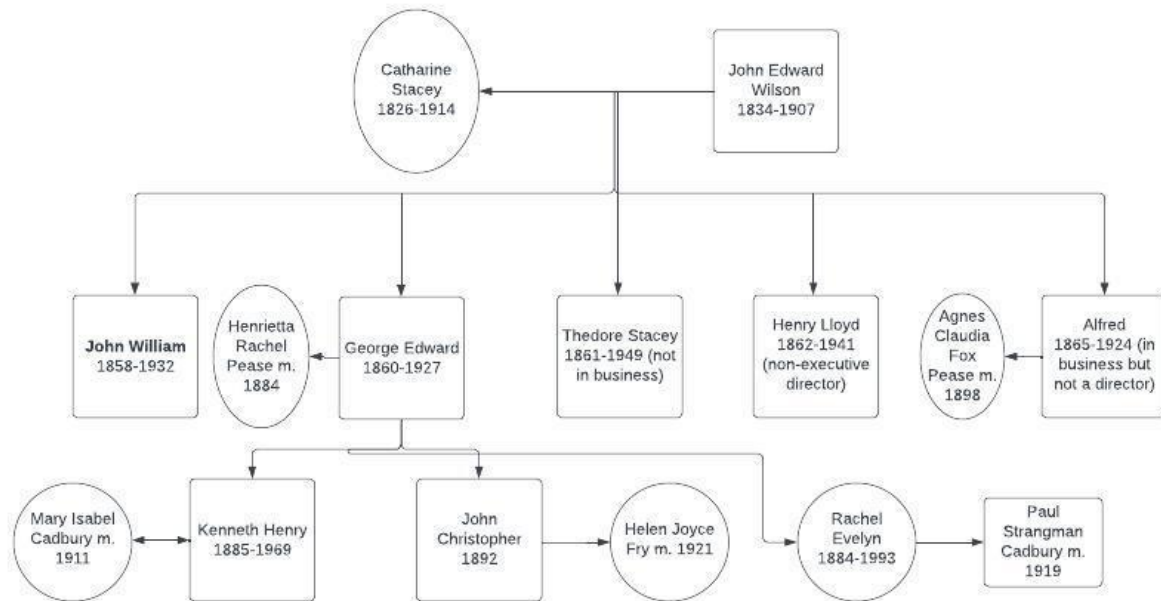


Figure 3 The Wilson Family Tree

In 1857 John Edward Wilson married one of Rachel Albright's sisters, Catharine Stacey.⁵⁰ The following year when Arthur was in Germany on a business trip, he mentioned in a letter to Rachel that he had told some clients about the importance of trust in their relationship, and that the firm had indeed then been very trusting and open.⁵¹ This was a time at which trust was very important in business relationships,⁵² and Quakers could and clearly did make the most of this as a group renowned for its honesty and integrity. It demonstrates how important a personal approach could be in Quaker firms.

The founders were beginning to start families: William Arthur Albright, Arthur Albright's eldest son, was born in 1852, and John William Wilson, John Edward's oldest

⁵⁰ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 474.

⁵¹ Albright, 1858, cited in Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 27.

⁵² Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 22-24.

son, in 1858. Their views and steering of the company would prove to be particularly important to the firm's history, as I demonstrate below.

This case study illustrates an early example of the tendency for businesses and proprietors to move away from Birmingham town centre. It also highlights the importance of the Quaker community to its businesses: in 1856 Albright and Wilson was born almost entirely through Quaker connections, from Arthur's apprenticeship at Southalls, to his employment by the Sturges, and to the many family and social links. Most of these were in turn enabled or furthered by Bull Street Meeting's position at the heart of the Birmingham Quaker world of the 1850s. By 1857 John Edward's marriage meant that the Albright and Wilson families were themselves family, linked by the sister wives of the founders.

As the stories of Albright and Wilson and the Gibbinses demonstrate,⁵³ the later nineteenth century was a period of expansions and takeovers within the Birmingham Quaker business community.⁵⁴ These examples and others I highlight elsewhere demonstrate the role of the Quaker network in often keeping businesses Quaker even when they changed hands, but also shows the dynamism of the time. My examples elsewhere remind us that Quakers were by no means immune from failure.⁵⁵

2.2 Intermarriage 1800-1900

During the nineteenth century there was more intermarrying between the Cadburys and the Barrows, a family who were to rise to prominence in Birmingham

⁵³ On part of the Cadbury's story see Section 2.4.

⁵⁴ Slepwood, 'The Birmingham Quaker Business Community'.

⁵⁵ Slepwood, 'The Birmingham Quaker Business Community'.

later.⁵⁶ In 1823 Sarah Cadbury married John Barrow of Lancaster and moved to Lancaster with him. Then in 1832 Candia Barrow, John's sister, married John Cadbury, Sarah's brother, and moved to Birmingham.⁵⁷

In 1824 Thomas Southall married Sarah Shorthouse, daughter of another Quaker pharmaceutical chemist in Birmingham.⁵⁸ In 1826 Thomas's brother Samuel Southall, who had remained in Leominster, married Priscilla Sturge (1797–1859), Joseph Sturge's sister, thereby uniting two other significant Quaker business families.⁵⁹ In this earlier period of the nineteenth century the major reason for someone being disowned from the Society of Friends by the local Monthly Meeting was marrying outside the Society, highlighting that the business network would still have been consolidated around the faithful, facilitating apprenticeships.⁶⁰ Come 1841 and Edmund Sturge had married Arthur Albright's sister Lydia,⁶¹ uniting these two families too. In 1848 Josiah Pumphrey's daughter Rebecca (1824–1864) married another Quaker businessman in Birmingham, George Baker (1825–1910), a blacking manufacturer.⁶² These are just some of the links that existed at this time.

In addition to the original Albright and Wilson founders' marriages to sisters, George Edward Wilson, the second son of John Edward and Catherine, in 1884 married

⁵⁶ They had begun intermarrying in the eighteenth century as I demonstrate in Sleafwood, 'The Birmingham Quaker Business Community'. Arthur Raistrick acknowledges the role of intermarriage nationally: Raistrick, *Quakers in Science and Industry*.

⁵⁷ Phyllida Gardner, personal correspondence.

⁵⁸ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 412.

⁵⁹ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 411.

⁶⁰ WC, SF/2/1/1/1/1/15, Warwickshire North Men's Monthly Meeting Minute Book 1822–1827, Minutes for 1825–1826.

⁶¹ Cadbury, 'Bull Street Friends I Have Known', 72.

⁶² Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 26.

Henrietta Rachel Pease,⁶³ the daughter of Henry Pease (the brother of Joseph and the railway magnate I discuss further below) and Samuel Lloyd's daughter Mary, whom Henry had married in 1859.⁶⁴ Alfred Wilson, George Edward's younger brother, married Agnes Claudia Fox Pease, daughter of Joseph Whitwell Pease, in 1898. John William Wilson's sister Anna Deborah married Allan Tangye, George's son, in 1901, thus further consolidating another local Quaker business connection.⁶⁵ There were also still further Pease connections in Birmingham: Sarah Sturge, daughter of Birmingham Quaker Charles, married Edward Pease, son of Joseph Pease (and brother of Joseph Whitwell) in 1862.⁶⁶

Intermarriage between Birmingham Quaker business families in the second half of the century therefore remained very strong, as the stories of Albright and Wilson and other families illustrate. This suggests that while the rule about endogamy had been relaxed in 1859 and the relaxation included in the 1861 book of discipline, the strength and mutual benefit accorded Quaker businesses by marriage were fairly slow to be undone. This is reinforced by Henry Lloyd Wilson's grandson, Alan Hodgkin, who vividly recalled his aunt describing the closeness between the Lloyd, Albright, Wilson, Stacey, and Gibbins families.⁶⁷

Together these examples serve to demonstrate the considerable degree of intermarriage between local Quaker business families, as well as some on a national scale.

⁶³ C. E. G. Pease, 'Descendants of John Pease', 197, accessed 26 March 2023, <http://www.pennyghael.org.uk/Pease.pdf>.

⁶⁴ Pease, 'Descendants of John Pease', 196.

⁶⁵ Pease, 'Descendants of William Wilson', 399.

⁶⁶ Pease, 'Descendants of William Wilson', 252.

⁶⁷ Alan Hodgkin, *Chance and Design: Reminiscences of Science in Peace and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 18.

Intermarriage undoubtedly boosted Birmingham Quaker businesses themselves financially and in terms of knowledge exchange, and it helped to boost and bolster the Quaker community. Below I demonstrate that this endured even into the twentieth century, despite the relaxation of the discipline, demonstrating the endurance of the Quaker network, and that the potential advantage brought to Quaker businesses by this network endured after other advantages had begun to wane.

2.3 Civic Life and Politics 1800–1900

In 1838 Birmingham became a corporate town under the Municipal Corporations Act 1835. This process created the town council.⁶⁸ This was also the year in which the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends had considered the question of Quakers participating in government and advised against it, concerned that it would endanger qualities ‘essential to the Christian character’.⁶⁹

Despite this, four Quakers stood for election to the town council at its inception. The opportunity to get involved in local politics provided by their increasing status as businessmen in the town must have been more important in their minds than the pronouncement by the quietist Religious Society.⁷⁰ Richard Tapper Cadbury was one of these men and, unlike the other Quakers who stood for the Liberal Party, Cadbury, who described himself as not a party man, ran as a Conservative candidate.⁷¹ Two of the other

⁶⁸ John Thackray Bunce, *A History of the Corporation of Birmingham; With a Sketch of the Earlier Government of the Town*, vol. 1 (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1878).

⁶⁹ M. H. Bailey, ‘The Contributions of Quakers to Some Aspects of Local Government in Birmingham, 1828 to 1902’ (unpublished MA dissertation: University of Birmingham, 1952), 49.

⁷⁰ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, 188–190.

⁷¹ Bailey, ‘The Contributions of Quakers’, 49–50.

three who stood were Joseph and Charles Sturge whom we will encounter further below;⁷² Bailey argues that the Society regarded them as rebels.⁷³ George Goodrick, the fourth Quaker to stand for office, was also a businessman, recorded in an 1858 trade directory as a 'rope and twine maker' in Edgbaston.⁷⁴ It is evident, then, that while doing so was generally disapproved of, several Quaker businessmen felt called to stand for local office in this period.

After the relaxation of the Society of Friends' approach to political involvement over the previous few decades,⁷⁵ between 1866 and 1873 five more Quaker businessmen were elected to the town council, joining Charles Sturge and George Goodrick, who by this point were aldermen.⁷⁶ George Braithwaite Lloyd and George Baker were the first two to be elected, as Liberals.⁷⁷ By 1870 George Braithwaite Lloyd had become Mayor of Birmingham, following in the footsteps of Charles Sturge, who had also been elevated to this office in 1862. By 1875 George Braithwaite Lloyd was a magistrate, a member of Birmingham school board, treasurer of Birmingham Town Mission, and vice-president of Hospital Saturday Collections.⁷⁸ In 1871, when George Braithwaite Lloyd was made an

⁷² See Section 2.5.1.

⁷³ Bailey, 'The Contributions of Quakers', 50.

⁷⁴ Bailey, 'The Contributions of Quakers', 47–50; W. H. Dix, *General and Commercial Directory of the Borough of Birmingham* (Birmingham: W. H. Dix & Co., 1858), 139, accessed 26 May 2023, <https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4/id/339979/>.

⁷⁵ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, 193–200.

⁷⁶ Bailey, 'The Contributions of Quakers', 115.

⁷⁷ Bailey, 'The Contributions of Quakers', 117.

⁷⁸ Francis White, *Commercial & Trades Directory of Birmingham*, vol. 2 (Sheffield: Francis White & Co., 1875), 1416, accessed 26 May 2023, <https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4/id/112374/>.

alderman on the council, Richard Cadbury Barrow succeeded him in his seat. Richard Cadbury Barrow and George Baker were also mayors in the 1870s.⁷⁹

Linda Jones has highlighted that businessmen were the most represented group of men on the council throughout 1860–1891, always constituting at least 55%.⁸⁰ Come 1873 Joseph Chamberlain, himself from a manufacturing background, had become Mayor of Birmingham, and Jones convincingly argues that he furthered the representation of commercial managers from large-scale manufacturers in particular.⁸¹ It was in this year that William White was elected to the council.⁸² In 1878 Chamberlain recruited George Cadbury to the council too.⁸³ He also recruited Richard Tangye,⁸⁴ though by this time the latter's Quakerism had lapsed.

In 1882 George Cadbury resigned from Birmingham Council, on the grounds that the relocation of his home and business meant that he was not able to look after his now more distant ward as thoroughly as he previously had.⁸⁵ This reminds us that geographical distance and separation, which to us seem relatively insignificant, were factors for the movements, commitments, and decisions of Quaker businessmen in the nineteenth century.

While George Cadbury was a Liberal and generally pro free trade, there is one notable exception to this approach which took place not long before his time as a

⁷⁹ Bailey, 'The Contributions of Quakers', 126.

⁸⁰ Linda J. Jones, 'Public Pursuit of Private Profit? Liberal Businessmen and Municipal Politics in Birmingham, 1865–1900', *Business History*, 25, no. 3 (1983), 241.

⁸¹ Jones, 'Public Pursuit of Private Profit?', 243.

⁸² Bailey, 'The Contributions of Quakers', 121.

⁸³ Jones, 'Public Pursuit of Private Profit?', 243.

⁸⁴ Jones, 'Public Pursuit of Private Profit?', 243.

⁸⁵ Bailey, 'The Contributions of Quakers', 128.

councillor. In an age of adulteration, Cadbury's had been keen to publicise its 'pure' cocoa through medical journals.⁸⁶ George went so far as to give evidence to a committee on adulteration, against other free traders, to recommend restricting the use of the word cocoa for only pure products such as the firm's own; here it is likely that commercial self-interest trumped free-trade principles, though this could have served as an early example of a campaign for social reform through state provision.⁸⁷

Back at Birmingham town council, Charles Sturge and George Goodrick also resigned in 1882, probably because of age. Richard Tangye did too, but it was another Quaker we have already met, Francis Corder Clayton, owner of J & E Sturge, who took his seat.⁸⁸ Corder Clayton went on to become mayor. Harrison and Walter Barrow had also joined the council by 1898, following in their father's footsteps.

Francis Corder Clayton, George Braithwaite Lloyd, George Baker, and Richard Cadbury Barrow all acted as heads of committees while serving on the council,⁸⁹ Francis chairing the finance committee from 1886 to 1890.⁹⁰

Francis Corder Clayton had retired from business in 1889 at the age of just 46, seven years after entering office. Further, William White had largely ceased his involvement in his firm White and Pike by 1880, also seven years after entering office. Thus, there may well have been a relationship between Quakers' office holding and their businesses as their influence grew: both that the wealth they began to acquire afforded

⁸⁶ Chris Smith, John Child, and Michael Rowlinson, *Reshaping Work: The Cadbury Experience*, Cambridge Studies in Management, 16 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 51.

⁸⁷ Smith, Child, and Rowlinson, *Reshaping Work*, 51–52.

⁸⁸ Bailey, 'The Contributions of Quakers', 131.

⁸⁹ Bailey, 'The Contributions of Quakers', 131–132.

⁹⁰ Jones, 'Public Pursuit of Private Profit?', 248.

them the option financially of taking office, and that taking office led to their at least partial withdrawal from their business. This is supported in the realm of involvement in Quakerism nationally by the cases of Henry Lloyd Wilson, who would become Clerk of Yearly Meeting and largely left the running of J & E Sturge to his brother and partner Alfred Wilson, and of William Littleboy, who was sufficiently wealthy to retire from manufacturing chandeliers by his forties in the 1890s.⁹¹

Those Quaker businessmen involved in local government would have had considerable influence. Indeed, four were elected mayor. But involvement in public life, while increasing a Quaker businessman's general influence, may well have been to the detriment of Quaker influence in the business realm over the course of the nineteenth century by drawing those involved away from their businesses.

Nationally, as in Birmingham, Quakers were becoming more active in politics. Over the course of Queen Victoria's reign (1837–1901), 33 different Quakers held office as MPs and, as with councillors in Birmingham, the number grew steadily from the 1850s onwards.⁹² Many of these were businessmen. In terms of using their position to influence the social order, Phillips argues that they were 'more concerned with the extension of newly acquired Quaker respectability into Westminster than with securing a place for Quaker principles in national government' and this sometimes seems to have been the case.⁹³

⁹¹ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 473, 286.

⁹² Phillips, 'Friendly Patriotism', 21.

⁹³ Phillips, 'Friendly Patriotism', 21.

2.4 Change in the Quaker Community: Geographical Distribution, the Separation of Business and Home, and New Preparative Meetings

Up to the 1870s Birmingham Preparative Meeting and Bull Street where it was located remained at the heart of the Birmingham Quaker community and business network. However, simultaneously, we begin to see a geographical shift of Quaker businessmen's homes from the town centre and Bull Street southwards towards Edgbaston. This is also evidence of the growing separation between workplace and home which took place over this half-century.⁹⁴ For example, in 1850 the Gibbins family moved away from the metal business in Deritend to Highfield Road in Edgbaston, very near to George Road, where the Albrights were living. The moves of both the Albrights and the Gibbinses were probably in fact preceded by Charles and Mary Sturge, of J & C Sturge and Co, who moved to Frederick Road some time after 1831.⁹⁵ For the Sturges, Frederick Road was fairly close to their business on Broad Street.

The movement of influential Quaker businesspeople to Edgbaston continued in the 1860s and early 1870s: for example, George Cadbury moved to George Road, Edgbaston in 1872 after his first marriage to Mary Tylor.⁹⁶ A few of these businesspeople, such as the Albrights, seem to have moved to be nearer their businesses. However, it seems likely that leafier suburbs such as Edgbaston to the south of Birmingham would have been more desirable to many of these Quakers who were growing wealthier through business. Joking among Friends about Deritend in the town's industrial heart being 'Dirty

⁹⁴ Barker, *Family and Business during the Industrial Revolution*.

⁹⁵ Sylvia Lloyd Lewin, *Gaunts Earthcott to Frederick Road: An Account of the Sturges of Birmingham* (n. p., 1980); C. E. G. Pease, 'Descendants of Joseph Sturge', 13, accessed 26 May 2023, <http://www.pennyghael.org.uk/Sturge.pdf>.

⁹⁶ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 88.

End' in the 1830s supports this.⁹⁷ In moving to Edgbaston their shared membership of the Society of Friends was probably a factor in their choosing to maintain the close geographical proximity to one another that many of them had previously enjoyed. It was not just Quakers who desired to live in Edgbaston: Albright and Wilson's neighbouring businessman Alexander Chance also lived there in 1880, with Sullivan suggesting the closeness of the three families.⁹⁸

From the 1870s more Quaker businesspeople begin to move their businesses outwards, following the early example of J & E Sturge and Co moving to Selly Oak in the 1840s. The Birmingham Battery and Metal Company largely relocated to Selly Oak in these years.⁹⁹ Once they had moved out, businesses such as Albright and Wilson found that they then had to travel some distance to their bank; therefore in 1864 the first branch of Lloyds Bank outside of Birmingham was opened in Oldbury, consolidating its Quaker links.¹⁰⁰

This movement sheds light on the founding of the first Preparative (local) Quaker Meeting other than Birmingham Meeting on Bull Street in Birmingham and the surrounding area. The Meeting, initially known as Bath Row, was settled in Edgbaston near to the homes of these businesspeople some time in 1872. It moved to George Road, Edgbaston around 1892 when the site for the Meeting House was bought by Charles Dickinson Sturge, former partner in J C and J & E Sturge, and his wife Eliza.¹⁰¹ This is at the heart of the area these Quakers lived in.

⁹⁷ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*, 261.

⁹⁸ Sullivan, 'Paying the Price for Industrialisation', 252.

⁹⁹ Rowntree, *The Birmingham Battery and Metal Company*, 53–54.

¹⁰⁰ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 80.

¹⁰¹ David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), 625.

In some senses it is a surprise that another Meeting in Birmingham had not been settled earlier: Birmingham had been a large meeting for years, judging by Cadbury's record of it,¹⁰² and Butler notes overcrowding as the reason for the George Road settlement.¹⁰³

What impact did the founding of Bath Row Quaker Meeting have on the Birmingham Quaker business community of the late nineteenth century? Given how close the business families of the Meeting seem to have been earlier in the century, one wonders whether the lack of purposeful opportunity for all of the businesspeople to meet weekly damaged Quaker business prospects at the time. Certainly, relatively casual interactions about business affairs after Meeting would have been made harder by the splitting of the community in this way between Birmingham and Bath Row Meetings.

In 1879, trade and expansion having taken off further still at Cadbury's,¹⁰⁴ building began on the new Cadbury's factory outside of Birmingham in Bournville, overseen closely by George Cadbury. There is little evidence of a distinctive character to the Cadbury firm in its earlier history before the move, in terms of its social and welfare provision, though one of its histories from 1931 was at pains to make what it could of what it did do to demonstrate continuity with its later portrayal of the firm.¹⁰⁵ Smith, Child, and Rowlinson showed that Cadbury's was not the first cocoa manufacturer to move to a factory designed for the purpose,¹⁰⁶ and Andrew Fincham has recently conceded that there was little that was distinctively Quaker or original about the Cadbury

¹⁰² Cadbury, 'Bull Street Friends I Have Known'.

¹⁰³ Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 625.

¹⁰⁴ This combined with the need for chocolate-specific manufacturing provision to motivate the move. Rowlinson, 'Cadburys' New Factory System', 94–95.

¹⁰⁵ Rowlinson and Hassard, 'The Invention of Corporate Culture', 309.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, Child, and Rowlinson, *Reshaping Work*, 54.

project around the move to Bournville, while striving to identify a motivational difference which he does not convincingly evidence.¹⁰⁷ Though few would doubt the family's good intentions, the Cadbury story is far from the straightforward pioneering project it has often been portrayed to be.¹⁰⁸

Indeed, as I have shown here, within the Birmingham Quaker business community the Cadburys were fairly late in moving their manufacturing business away from the city centre; they would have been aware of J & E Sturge (the factory which became Albright and Wilson's briefly) and the Birmingham Battery and Metal Company moving away (Emma Joel Cadbury had married Thomas Gibbins, the founder of the Birmingham Battery and Metal Company, as well as them all having contact in Meeting) and were therefore followers of this trend. Cadbury's was far from the only Birmingham Quaker 'factory in a garden', then, which serves to support Rowlinson and Hassard's argument around the Cadburys' own promotion of this in their story.¹⁰⁹ Of course, the other businesses concerned, not being manufacturers of products of general consumption, did not have the motivation or the need to advertise their story on the same scale, but this demonstrates that among Birmingham Quaker manufacturers the Cadburys were certainly not pioneers. If anything, J & E Sturge took on this role, as we saw above,¹¹⁰ though its rural site was fairly short-lived.

Not long after the factory had moved, in 1881, George Cadbury had bought Woodbrooke, on the outskirts of Bournville and Selly Oak, as his new family home. While

¹⁰⁷ Andrew Fincham, 'Made for Sharing', 225.

¹⁰⁸ Rowlinson and Hassard argue that this rarely questioned portrayal can be traced back to the company histories created for the (invented) centenary: 'The Invention of Corporate Culture', 317-318.

¹⁰⁹ Rowlinson and Hassard, 'The Invention of Corporate Culture'.

¹¹⁰ See Section 2.1.2.

proximity to the new factory may have been a major factor in Cadbury's move to Woodbrooke, the nature of the building was vastly different to his former home in George Road, which had been one house in a street of several not dissimilar dwellings. Woodbrooke, in contrast, was a vast and individual property, demonstrating perhaps that Cadbury was succumbing to some ostentation in his wealth. This was only furthered by Cadbury and his family's move to a manor house in Northfield in 1894. Corley places Cadbury in his 'staying plain' category of businessmen; however, Cadbury here is an apt demonstration of the difficulties in categorisation, change over time, and the nuance required.¹¹¹

To further nuance the George Cadbury story, three groups of authors have written some enlightening works around the Bournville building project, on which I draw and expand here.¹¹² Some fourteen years after the factory had been built at Bournville, the Cadburys bought land and soon began developing a 'building estate' on 120 acres of land around the factory.

Bailey and Bryson quote an 1894 letter from George Cadbury to his first architect, in which he describes his hopes of this becoming a 'Quaker colony'.¹¹³ Cadbury's apparent immediate reason for putting the development in these terms was to justify seeking an architect to approach the development from a shared Christian perspective.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success', 169–170.

¹¹² John R. Bryson and Philippa A. Lowe, 'Story-Telling and History Construction: Rereading George Cadbury's Bournville Model Village', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 28, no. 1 (2002), 21–41, doi: 10.1006/jhge.2001.037; Adrian R. Bailey and John R. Bryson, 'A Quaker Experiment in Town Planning: George Cadbury and the Construction of Bournville Model Village', *Quaker Studies*, 11, no. 1 (2007), 89–114, accessed 11 June 2023, <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/quakerstudies/vol11/iss1/6>, 99; Smith, Child, and Rowlinson, *Reshaping Work*.

¹¹³ Bailey and Bryson, 'A Quaker Experiment', 99.

¹¹⁴ Bailey and Bryson, 'A Quaker Experiment', 99.

Speculating further as to what Cadbury might have meant here by 'Quaker colony', while the intention may have been noble, the many 'suggested rules of health' demonstrate a clear feeling of moral superiority and a desire to impose his own mode of living and morals on others. This is something that Kevin Dowd's PhD thesis affirms, demonstrating how, even after the creation of the Bournville Village Trust in 1900, the Cadbury family remained strongly in control of the organisation and ensured their control would be maintained.¹¹⁵

To temper this suggestion of an attitude demonstrating moral superiority, Helen Smith has shown that the approach of George Cadbury's second wife, Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury, towards the working class appears to have changed significantly between around 1883 and 1896, to be less elitist and more respectful and understanding; it is worth bearing in mind that George's views are unlikely to have remained static, either.¹¹⁶ Given Smith's evidence, and indeed that provided above for George Cadbury's hope for the building estate, I do not question the sincerity and the importance of their personal faith, though its outworking in regard to the building estate seems somewhat haphazard, as I highlight here.

Despite his aspirations (or perhaps because of them, when one considers that Quakerism was a largely middle-class movement at the start of the twentieth century),¹¹⁷ Cadbury allowed the second, much larger release of properties on the estate around 1895

¹¹⁵ Kevin William Dowd, 'The Social and Political Activity of the Cadbury Family: A Study in Manipulative Capitalism', 89 (unpublished PhD thesis, Swansea University, 2001), accessed 26 May 2023, <http://cronfa.swan.ac.uk/Record/cronfa42781>.

¹¹⁶ Helen Victoria Smith, 'Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury (1858-1951): religion, maternalism and social reform in Birmingham, 1888-1914', 68 (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2012), accessed 11 June 2023, <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/3296/1/Smith12PhD.pdf>. Smith advocates caution in attempting to define the Cadbury family's values without consulting their personal papers, which is something I heed: Smith, 'Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury' 273.

¹¹⁷ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, 172-173.

to be priced highly, thus ensuring that most of the women (single, since married women were barred from employment) and almost all unskilled workers were unable to live there.¹¹⁸ Bryson and Lowe put it thus:

A fundamental contradiction existed between Cadbury's philanthropic interests and the initial development at Bournville. The prospectus specified that 'none of the houses must be below a given size or cost less than £150 as this will *secure a superior class of quiet and respectable tenant*' (our italics).¹¹⁹

The philanthropic interest in this case is the prospectus' statement that the estate was to enable working men to own property away from the polluted city centre.¹²⁰ It is noteworthy that women are excluded here, presumably due to the assumption that once the single women employees were married their husbands would provide for and house them, so they did not need property of their own. Regardless, these women were not considered worth providing for in the meantime, it seems, and Bryson and Lowe note that the estate catered to the 'family'.¹²¹ Here again, as Bryson and Lowe suggest,¹²² and as in the corporate histories dissected by Rowlinson and Hassard, the story promoted by the firm is not materially realised, at least not for everyone.¹²³ If all George Cadbury meant in seeking to establish a 'Quaker colony' was to attempt to impose a 'Quakerly' life on more people, then perhaps this could be argued to have been achieved. However, the Quaker

¹¹⁸ Smith, Child, and Rowlinson, *Reshaping Work*, 57; and Bryson and Lowe, 'Story-Telling and History Construction', 30.

¹¹⁹ Bryson and Lowe, 'Story-Telling and History Construction', 29–30.

¹²⁰ Bryson and Lowe, 'Story-Telling and History Construction', 29.

¹²¹ Bryson and Lowe, 'Story-Telling and History Construction', 34.

¹²² Bryson and Lowe, 'Story-Telling and History Construction', 26.

¹²³ Rowlinson and Hassard, 'The Invention of Corporate Culture'.

testimony to equality which was fast being debated and developed around this time seems to have largely fallen by the wayside.¹²⁴

From 1898 George Cadbury oversaw the construction of smaller properties; however, these were still beyond the reach of most working people.¹²⁵ What is more, Bryson and Lowe have highlighted evidence that many of the facilities which were developed after the creation of the 'model' village around the time Bournville Village Trust was established in 1900 were only provided as a result of demand from tenants, rather than being a philanthropic gesture.¹²⁶

By 1895, Bournville Preparative Quaker Meeting had been settled,¹²⁷ so George Cadbury would probably have moved from Bath Row to Bournville Meeting around this time. However, it did not have a Meeting House for another ten years, around the same time as other community facilities were provided.¹²⁸

Along with Bath Row and Bournville Quaker Meetings, Longbridge and Selly Oak Meetings had been settled by 1898.¹²⁹ This very rapid expansion with three new Birmingham Meetings in the space of four years further dispersed the Birmingham Quaker business community, whose families had once all congregated at Birmingham Quaker Meeting on Bull Street.

¹²⁴ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 218–219.

¹²⁵ Bryson and Lowe, 'Story-Telling and History Construction', 30. It was only after the creation of Bournville Village Trust in 1900 that smaller properties were built which did provide for the working classes: Bryson and Lowe, 'Story-Telling and History Construction', 34.

¹²⁶ Bryson and Lowe, 'Story-Telling and History Construction', 33–34.

¹²⁷ WC, SF/3/4/1/13, Birmingham Preparative Meeting Minute Book, 1895–1899.

¹²⁸ Bryson and Lowe, 'Story-Telling and History Construction', 34.

¹²⁹ Birmingham Preparative Meeting Minute Book, 1895–1899.

A study of the minutes of Birmingham Preparative Meeting from the period 1895–1899 reveals that there are some Quaker businessmen who are very much still present and active at Birmingham Meeting at this time.¹³⁰ Perhaps surprisingly, this includes some individuals or families who had moved out of the centre nearer to Bath Row Meeting in Edgbaston: William Gibbins, Thomas Gibbins (probably the son of Thomas and Emma Joel, though possibly his cousin), and Charles Dickinson Sturge (despite his having bought the site for Bath Row Meeting on George Road) are here.¹³¹ There is evidence in the Albright and Wilson archive that the firm was supplying Southalls, another Birmingham Quaker firm, with carbon tetrachloride in 1900, demonstrating that at least some business relationships endured regardless of geography.¹³² The committee of accounts over this period (1895–1899) featured several business heavyweights, from Walter and Harrison Barrow to George Braithwaite Lloyd, John Edward Wilson, and William White. As I show above, many of these men were also civil heavyweights. Notably absent, however, from the minutes are George Cadbury (presumably at Bournville), any Albrights, or Henry Lloyd Wilson.

These minutes and those absent from them strongly suggest that the Birmingham Quaker business community was starting to fracture by the end of the nineteenth century. So, while the general move towards Edgbaston as a place of residence may have aided the community's social closeness, it was arguably the trigger for the beginning of the separation of the community between different Meetings. And the minutes demonstrate

¹³⁰ Birmingham Preparative Meeting Minute Book, 1895–1899.

¹³¹ The Southalls, another local business family, are also active in the Meeting, including Wilfred, who was clerk of the Meeting in 1895, having been a director of the business that came out of T & W Southall in 1889, and who certainly lived in Edgbaston (though his business was still in the city centre). Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 412.

¹³² WC, MS1724, Box 3, Management Committee File, 3232 – 11/4/1900.

a relative lack of correlation between location of residence and Meeting, indicating that while the Quakers might have lived in proximity this did not guarantee their worshipping at the same Meeting. The growing number of Meetings certainly seems to have reduced the opportunities for the whole of the Birmingham Quaker business community to come together.

2.5 The Erosion of Trust: The Business Environment, Legal Changes, and Speculation 1800–1840

2.5.1 Trust and the Discipline at the Start of the Century

In the nineteenth century and before, trustworthiness, truth, and integrity were particularly important virtues for members of the Society of Friends to hold and maintain in business. This is demonstrated by the first advice in the ‘Trade’ section of the 1802 book, quoting an advice originally from the seventeenth century, which reads:

ADVISED, that none launch into trading and worldly business beyond what they can manage honourably and with reputation; so that they may keep their words with all men, that their yea may prove yea indeed, and their nay, nay: and that they use few words in their dealings, lest they bring dishonour to the truth.¹³³

What is more, Fincham has shown that in the early period of Quaker business history the Quaker network membership and discipline bolstered trust.¹³⁴ And Maurice Kirby and Gillian Cookson have noted the likelihood that this ‘reduced transaction costs

¹³³ *Extracts from the Minutes and Advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends Held in London, from Its First Institution, Second Edition*, (London: W. Phillips, 1802), 195.

¹³⁴ Fincham, ‘The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success’, 276–277.

by minimising uncertainty and deficient knowledge'.¹³⁵ This is further supported by Francesca Carnevali's evidence about the importance of a governing association to reduce fraud (and therefore transaction costs) within the jewellery trade in nineteenth-century Birmingham.¹³⁶ While the jewellery trade is different from most of the trades in which Quakers are known to have been involved, in that it was especially prone to fraud and opportunism,¹³⁷ that does not discount the relevance of the evidence Carnevali provides about the impact of a shared code of conduct among traders. Carnevali provides clear, concrete evidence that cooperation outside of a governing body was certainly not guaranteed to occur, and that the Birmingham Jewellers and Silversmiths Association fostered trust and mutual support through its code.¹³⁸

I would argue that, while it was not so explicit as that code, the impact of the Quaker 'secular utility' as Fincham calls it,¹³⁹ created by the education and apprenticeships, advices and discipline, network of stakeholders, and finance, lived on well into the nineteenth century, as my account of the Birmingham Quaker business community suggests.¹⁴⁰ Entering the nineteenth century, this partially written code and network would almost certainly have also afforded Quakers additional reputational advantage, as well as ensuring and engendering trust. Ann Prior has provided detailed evidence that in Leeds and to some extent in Birmingham as well as several other places nationally, Friends were still being disciplined and disowned concerning their business

¹³⁵ Gillian Cookson, 'Quaker Families and Business Networks in Nineteenth-Century Darlington', *Quaker Studies*, 8, no. 2 (2003), 127.

¹³⁶ Francesca Carnevali, "'Crooks, Thieves, and Receivers": Transaction Costs in Nineteenth-Century Industrial Birmingham', *Economic History Review*, 57, no. 3 (2004), 533–550.

¹³⁷ Carnevali, 'Crooks, Thieves, and Receivers'.

¹³⁸ Carnevali, 'Crooks, Thieves, and Receivers'.

¹³⁹ See Section 1.3.4.

¹⁴⁰ Slepwood, 'The Birmingham Quaker Business Community'.

dealings until at least 1830.¹⁴¹ Prior's evidence also supports the role of finance and discipline in bolstering trust in the Quaker business community. There was a very real motivation for mutual assistance, in that if Quakers failed in business, they could become a 'charge' on the Meeting House, a financial drain.¹⁴²

The way businesses operated at the start of the century, with a partnership system which meant that the person and the business were legally inseparable, supported the flourishing of this trust by making the owner-partner central. Partnerships fostered and relied upon trust in that 'any partner could rescind a debt due to the partnership, payment to one partner was payment to all and any partner could do what he liked with the partnership property without consulting his fellow partners', and even if a partner left a partnership he remained liable until his death.¹⁴³ Therefore, a group of people such as the Quakers, who were noted for being trustworthy and being able to support one another, would be likely to do well in this climate.

However, even at this time, not all Quakers' dealings were above board, and speculation (considered to be synonymous with gambling) was a temptation. For example, in 1788 London Yearly Meeting pronounced: 'This meeting has been deeply affected with the reproach brought on Truth and friends, by the misconduct of some... who, through an evil covetousness, have engaged in illegal dealings in the

¹⁴¹ Prior, 'Friends in Business', 178–190.

¹⁴² Prior, 'Friends in Business', 179.

¹⁴³ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 25, 26.

public stocks, or government securities: which is a species of gambling, and altogether inconsistent with our religious principles.’¹⁴⁴

This falls at an early point in the history of public investment options, for at this time incorporation, and the possibility of garnering funds more widely than from partners or an immediate circle, was available only to a small proportion of businesses, such as public utilities or cities; indeed, the mention of ‘illegal’ dealings here suggests involvement with those seeking to circumvent the law. In this regard it is perhaps surprising that Friends had already become involved in such schemes, given their discipline and its general emphasis on not bringing the Society of Friends into disrepute. It also demonstrates that from before the nineteenth century Quakers equated speculation with gambling.

Prior has clearly shown that conduct relating to ‘fictitious credit’ was particularly ‘abhorrent’ to Friends in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹⁴⁵ The problem at this point was clearly claiming to have physical money by means of a bill which a Friend did not in fact possess. So theoretically, using a paper bill to stand for physical money which a Friend did in fact possess would have been acceptable; however, it is clear that it would in many cases have been difficult to ascertain when and where this deceit may have been occurring, and that therefore all use of paper bills posed a potential difficulty for Quakers. It is also very clear that use of fictitious credit would have undermined trust in business dealings, and I would suggest this is one reason it was of particular concern to Quakers keen

¹⁴⁴ London Yearly Meeting, *A Selection from the Christian Advices Issued by the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends held in London* (London: Bagster and Thoms, 1829), 145, accessed 26 February 2023, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/ssd?id=hvd.hxjh2q;page=ssd;view=plaintext;seq=157;num=145#seq157>.

¹⁴⁵ Prior, ‘Friends in Business’, 188–193.

to maintain their reputation. Birmingham Friends were sufficiently concerned with fictitious paper credit by 1807 that they appointed senior members to 'make a selection of such advices as relate to that subject in the Book of Extracts'.¹⁴⁶

It is important here to remind ourselves that by this time, and in recent memory, many Quaker businessmen were locally, and probably even nationally, very prominent. For example, James Cropper (1773–1840), a businessman from Liverpool, Joseph Pease (1772–1846), a woollen manufacturer from Darlington (brother of the Edward Pease and uncle of the Joseph Pease (later MP) who together initiated the Stockton and Darlington joint-stock railway scheme), and later Joseph Sturge (1793–1859) of Birmingham were all actively involved in the national movement to abolish slavery.¹⁴⁷ Most of the Friends at this time would have been what is called 'birth-right' Friends in the books of discipline, meaning that they would have been granted membership at birth on account of their parents' membership.

While noble, these activities would have drawn them all out of their Religious Society and into society more broadly, where they might be more easily influenced by external factors and people. This they had in common with others such as the Lloyds, Gibbinses, and Galtons of Birmingham, who were very wealthy and locally prominent. Nationally there were other bankers such as the Gurneys in Norwich and the Peases and Backhouses of Darlington, who would all have been acquainted with the London money market and social circles there. Indeed, Isichei notes that 'The Gurneys of Earlham felt

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Prior, 'Friends in Business', 190.

¹⁴⁷ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 330; Clare R. Brown, 'To Faithfully Do Our Part: The Contribution of Joseph Sturge to the Anti-Slavery Movement in Britain and America with Special Reference to the Principles Which Motivated His Work' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 2014), 4; K. Charlton, 'James Cropper and Liverpool's Contribution to the Anti-Slavery Movement', *Transactions*, 123 (1971), 57, accessed 26 February 2023, <https://www.hslc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/123-4-Charlton.pdf>.

more at home in the company of Anglicans than they did with the poorer members of their own meeting', and in this regard the Quaker business elite's predilections were shaped by the growth of evangelicalism around them.¹⁴⁸

It is therefore clear that Quaker contact with aristocrats and other influential businessmen, mostly Anglicans, who would not have been held to similar standards in business was fairly common by around 1810.¹⁴⁹ Let us not forget those such as Joseph Gibbins junior in Birmingham, who according to his own family had strayed far from the advice of the Society of Friends. This probably goes some way to explaining how some Quakers had begun to speculate.

Come the mid-1820s, things began to change still further in terms of the economic climate, Quaker businesses, and their interests. While their discipline and support mechanisms remained solid, there were soon greater challenges to their business ethics. Somewhat ironically and unfortunately, one of the first was set in motion through Quaker business needs and desire for and involvement in railway innovation.

2.5.2 Quakers, the Railways, and Speculation in the National Context

Quakers have long been praised and exemplified as railway pioneers, as indeed they were, with their involvement in and financing of the very first railway in Britain, the Stockton and Darlington line.¹⁵⁰ The development of the railway and Quaker financial and

¹⁴⁸ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, 4; Fincham notes and refers to the growing business elite as a 'super-strata of 'Great' Quakers', 'The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success', 303.

¹⁴⁹ While Atkins shows that those of other denominations and faiths would also have relied on trust within their business networks, I have seen no evidence that they explicitly codified their systems with rules and discipline in the way nineteenth-century (and earlier) Quakers did. Gareth Atkins, *Converting Britannia: Evangelicals and British Public Life 1770–1840* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2019), 86.

¹⁵⁰ Windsor notes that "The world's first passenger train... travelled on what was called "The Quaker Line"', *The Quaker Enterprise*, 19; Raistrick details the innovation around the railways, *Quakers in Science and Industry*, 217; Quakers proclaim their work online at Quakers in the World, accessed 26 May 2023,

entrepreneurial support of it were particularly useful in furthering their own business interests in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Kirby's observation that the Stockton and Darlington Railway promoted the colliery business and was a key means of transport is undoubtedly true.¹⁵¹ No doubt railways were necessary for enabling several other Quaker businesses to thrive, or continue to thrive, including Rowntrees, Albright and Wilson, and the Sturges' corn firm.¹⁵²

The application to parliament to use the public joint-stock company form for the first ever railway enterprise in 1821 also represented the first ever Quaker joint-stock endeavour I am aware of. This choice seems somewhat curious when examined, since in the end, as Prior and Kirby note, 80% of its finance came from the national Quaker network, and it behaved largely like a family partnership.¹⁵³

Perhaps for the level of capital required it would not have been possible to secure the remaining capital from the Quaker network and fund the scheme as a partnership, though it seems curious that further Quaker funding was secured after the shares had been promoted elsewhere, rather than seeking Quaker funding as far as possible as the first port of call.¹⁵⁴ This is especially the case in light of James Taylor's research, which

<https://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/286/Railways-in-Britain>; Maurice Kirby and Ann Prior also praise the development, 'The Society of Friends and the Family Firm, 1700–1830' *Business History*, vol. 35 no. 4 (1993), 78, accessed 11 June 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076799300000129>; see also Maurice W. Kirby, *The Origins of Railway Enterprise: The Stockton and Darlington Railway 1821–1863* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁵¹ Kirby, *The Origins of Railway Enterprise*, 3.

¹⁵² For the Sturges see here, accessed 12 February 2023: https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=1542143&resourceID=19191; for Rowntrees see Rowntree Society, George Hudson, accessed 12 February 2023: <https://www.rowntreesociety.org.uk/explore-rowntree-history/rowntree-a-z/george-hudson/>; for Albright and Wilson see Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 72.

¹⁵³ Kirby and Prior, 'The Society of Friends and the Family Firm', 79–80. While there were sixty-nine individuals with at least one share at first, of the shareholders with more than five shares per person, twelve of nineteen have been identified as Quakers: Kirby and Prior, 'The Society of Friends and the Family Firm', 81.

¹⁵⁴ Kirby and Prior, 'The Society of Friends and the Family Firm', 79.

provides considerable evidence that 'central to the case against companies was the charge that they undermined the importance of character in business'.¹⁵⁵ Further, his research 'uncovers a persistent and pervasive fear of and hostility to joint-stock enterprise which was by no means the preserve of a reactionary or self-interested few' in the early to mid-nineteenth century.¹⁵⁶ If the broader public believed this, and as the Quaker business community was especially keen to maintain its good reputation, this leads us to further question the Stockton and Darlington decision. I suggest that a combination of perceived necessity, a desire to innovate managerially, and increasing connections with wealthy non-Quakers engaged in public companies drove the decision.

Looking at the list of key investors in December 1822 provided by Prior and Kirby, of the twelve Quakers, eight were bankers and one was a bill-broker. The Gurneys and their banker partners the Backhouses make up half of these; though it is hardly surprising that bankers would be turned to, it seems also to demonstrate their comfort with more worldly concerns, and Isichei's assertion about Joseph John Gurney. More Quaker bankers were turned to by the Stockton and Darlington Railway the following year for further funding.¹⁵⁷

If, or once, it would not be possible to secure funding through the Quaker network, this demonstrates a conflict inherent in business innovation for Quakers as time went on and projects grew in scale and vision: avoid innovating to secure a partnership form which would better guard Quaker control and values, or incorporate in order to advance innovation and business interests more easily. Regardless of legal status, Quakers

¹⁵⁵ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 22.

¹⁵⁶ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 3.

¹⁵⁷ Prior and Kirby, 81.

nationally clearly acted in this case as a fallback in case funding could not be acquired elsewhere, which demonstrates the enduring strength of the network itself at this time.

The passage through parliament of the first railway company and its use of the first steam locomotive to run on a public railway in Britain in 1825 would certainly have drawn national attention. A search of newspaper archives online yields 125 results in newspapers in September and October 1825, demonstrating the level of national coverage. One paper, quoting another, reports on it thus:

The Stockton and Darlington railway, which has been so long in forming, is at length completed, and is to come into operation immediately. The first wagon will pass along it this day (Tuesday) and the proprietors appear to be very sanguine as to its turning out a profitable speculation, though the expense has far exceeded the original estimate.¹⁵⁸

This extract shows quite clearly the effect that forming the railway as a joint-stock public company had in shaping opinion at least in some quarters about the nature of the endeavour and the motives behind it, by referring to it as a ‘speculation’. James Taylor has demonstrated that speculation was widely regarded as sin in the popular imagination (largely because it divorced financial gain from work),¹⁵⁹ so for a Quaker project to be portrayed in these terms risked the reputation for trustworthiness the Society of Friends had historically worked hard to secure. The boom in speculation which coincided with the opening of the line would also not have helped the Quaker cause in terms of the line’s

¹⁵⁸ *Tyne Mercury*, Tuesday 27 September 1825, quoted in the *Globe*, Wednesday 28 September 1825, accessed 10 March 2023, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001652/18250928/010/0002>.

¹⁵⁹ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 53–89.

popular reception, standing as a symbol of the type of risky investment currently flourishing.

The year after this grand opening and the share boom and bust (in which the Gibbinses' banks were caught up), London Yearly Meeting refers clearly to the episode, stating at the end of an advice reiterating the need to examine one's affairs regularly:

We know that the experience and sufferings of the past year in this nation, have furnished many useful lessons to those who have escaped the troubles of which others have partaken; and we desire that these lessons may not be without their practical good effect. They should teach us not to trust in uncertain riches; and they should be a warning to parents to be careful how they enlarge their domestic establishments, and not to hold out to their children expectations of ease and abundance, nor to train them up in habits of delicacy and indulgence. O! that both parents and their offspring might fix their hopes of happiness on that which is substantial and eternal, and endeavour to be good stewards of the temporal blessings bestowed upon them. — Such we believe to be the concern of many of our dear friends.¹⁶⁰

This clearly demonstrates a concern with trust and the growing share market, a discomfort with the undermining of clear pricing and values and with the quickly changing nature of the market, and an indictment of speculation. It also highlights that Quakers institutionally were becoming very concerned that children might be negatively impacted by the growing wealth and luxury lifestyle of some Friends in business, and therefore more likely themselves to bring the society into disrepute. This is much starker

¹⁶⁰ Advice from 1826 in *Rules of Discipline, with Advices; Being Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles of Their Yearly Meeting Held in London, from Its First Institution* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1834), 278, accessed 26 May 2023, <https://archive.org/details/cu31924029487521/page/n313/mode/2up>.

than the 1822 expression of a belief that children should be taught 'moderation and economy' and should not become accustomed to the assistance of servants, and in 1802 children were not mentioned at all in the section of the discipline on trade.¹⁶¹

Joseph Pease, one of the Stockton and Darlington pioneers (and one of these children, as the child of the very wealthy Edward Pease), was also the first Quaker to become a Member of Parliament in 1832 (the very year of the 1832 Reform Bill which permitted this by allowing affirmation rather than oath taking), symbolising the beginning of an era in which Friends nationally increasingly strived, and largely failed, to balance the strictures of their discipline with worldly activities. Indeed, Kirby has noted of Joseph Pease's speculation that his diary entries 'convey no impression of the heavy personalised guilt which characterised his father's reaction to the accumulation of great wealth'.¹⁶² Simultaneously, he was deeply personally involved in the Society of Friends, as clerk to his Quarterly Meeting in the late 1830s, and as an elder, overseer, and finally a recorded minister.¹⁶³

In terms of how the limited (wealthy, male) electorate at the time viewed joint-stock company involvement, Taylor highlights that too great an investment in these companies was badly received and damaged their reputations, particularly in 1826 after the boom and bust of the previous year, when at least fifteen of thirty-one MPs who were also directors of three or more companies were either defeated or did not stand.¹⁶⁴ Quakers seeking electoral representation at this time would therefore have needed to

¹⁶¹ Supplement to the Second Edition, 1822, in *Extracts from the minutes and advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London, 1802*, 292–293.

¹⁶² Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty', 147.

¹⁶³ Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty', 147–149.

¹⁶⁴ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 122.

take care not to be too heavily invested in new joint-stock initiatives, from a public perspective as well as from the perspective of the Society of Friends.

Considering the discipline at this time more closely, and specifically the advices of London Yearly Meeting for 1802, the 1822 supplement, and 1834 concerning the business activities of Quakers, while some variation is seen across these years there is a remarkable degree of continuity, with several advices from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries included in both editions. For example, all three feature the same advice from 1797 which begins 'we do not condemn industry; which we believe to be not only praise-worthy but indispensable. It is the desire of great things... from which we desire friends may be redeemed.'¹⁶⁵ And the 1822 and 1834 editions recommend the men in their Meetings to annually inspect the state of their affairs.¹⁶⁶ However, the 1822 supplement makes very clear Yearly Meeting's growing disquiet with the activities and circumstances of many in trade, and adds six further advices and attempts to reinforce the discipline (to the thirteen from 1802), both through general advices and through specific encouragement to take disciplinary measures concerning 'delinquents' in trade.¹⁶⁷ This fits with the advice from 1826 quoted above.

The issue of greatest and growing concern in the discipline on Trade across this time is one I mentioned above, fictitious credit: the Birmingham Quakers' concern with this in 1807 was borne out in 1817 when an advice on Trade was added explicitly saying that the previous advice on fictitious paper credit, combined with the previous general

¹⁶⁵ *Extracts from the minutes and advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London, 1802*, 200; *Rules of Discipline, with Advices; Being Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles of Their Yearly Meeting Held in London, from Its First Institution*, third edition (London: Darton and Harvey, 1834), 270.

¹⁶⁶ Supplement to the Second Edition, 1822, in *Extracts from the minutes and advices, 1802*, 295; *Being Extracts from the Minutes, 1834*, p. 218.

¹⁶⁷ Supplement to the Second Edition, 1822, in *Extracts from the minutes and advices, 1802*, 292-295.

advice to Monthly Meetings that discipline should be applied to those who ‘walk disorderly’, ‘constitutes a full authority to deal with any who may be found delinquents in these respects’.¹⁶⁸ This is the only trade-related issue singled out in such a manner regarding the application of discipline. That is because it posed a particular danger to trust and truth in business. If Quakers everywhere were persistently misrepresenting the state of their affairs, it would certainly undermine trust both within the network and in Friends externally.

Yet with the growing number of schemes in which one could speculate, many of them illegal and fraudulent, particularly in the 1825 boom, enticements to engage in schemes perceived to be fraudulent and quite possibly based on fictitious credit abounded.¹⁶⁹ By engaging in the legal company form, which Taylor has demonstrated was popularly perceived to be associated with fraud and which therefore undermined trust,¹⁷⁰ the Stockton and Darlington Railway scheme symbolised the beginning of a period in which Friends in business increasingly worked against their own interests and the prescribed standards of their Society by engaging in company structures and speculation, and set the example for this behaviour, however honourable the scheme may have been in itself. As Taylor notes, ‘whereas the partnership system of commerce was predicated on notions of character, trust and credit, companies marginalised these qualities and encouraged their members to behave immorally’.¹⁷¹

As I noted above, only a year after the Stockton and Darlington Railway began operating, and as a consequence of the boom and bust’s impact on banking, joint-stock

¹⁶⁸ Supplement to the Second Edition, 1822, in *Extracts from the minutes and advices*, 1802, 294.

¹⁶⁹ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 116–117.

¹⁷⁰ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, see esp. 22.

¹⁷¹ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 22.

company status was extended to banks, which furthered the erosion of trust and increased the profile of such companies. When they began to be established, and because they were so much more impersonal, joint-stock banks resorted to architecture in an attempt to imbue themselves with a sense of character and trustworthiness.¹⁷² Here it is worth contrasting the decisions of two Birmingham Quaker banks, Taylor and Lloyds and Gibbins and Lovell. As I mentioned above, and as is hardly surprising in his personal context as someone clearly defying the discipline, Joseph Gibbins' firms incorporated very early in 1829 as the Birmingham Banking Company. The Birmingham Banking Company conformed to type architecturally by being a substantial, imposing building, built by a high-profile on-off (disowned, readmitted, resigned) Quaker architect, Thomas Rickman, in the Gothic style.¹⁷³ The Lloyds, in contrast, were more restrained, not incorporating until 1865.¹⁷⁴

Concern around fictitious credit, and speculation alongside it, had grown still further by the time the next discipline was published in 1835. A further advice was added in 1826, probably also as a result of the 1825 boom and bust:

Among the evils of later times has been the practice of individuals trading beyond their capital, and that of carrying on their business by means of a fictitious credit; practices very dangerous in their effects, advices, and utterly inconsistent with Christian moderation and contentment.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 35.

¹⁷³ Architects No. 7: Thomas Rickman (1776–1841), *A Tour of Lost Birmingham*, accessed 12 March 2023, <http://mappingbirmingham.blogspot.com/2013/02/architect-thomas-rickman.html>.

¹⁷⁴ Lloyds Banking Group, The History of Lloyds Bank, accessed 12 March 2023, <https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/who-we-are/our-heritage/lloyds-bank.html>.

¹⁷⁵ *Being Extracts from the Minutes*, 1834, 276–277.

The use of the term 'later times' here when an advice around fictitious credit has been present in the discipline since 1771 suggests that increasing numbers of Friends were falling foul of the concern, as does the presence of three separate advices on the issue in the 1834 edition of the discipline. The wealth of many Friends in business combined with the opportunities for speculation and over-extension were clearly proving too much of a temptation for some Friends to resist by around this time.

Even by 1815 it had been noted that 'We believe that many who begin the world with moderate views, meeting at first with success in trade, go on extending their commercial concerns until they become involved therein to a degree prohibited by the precepts of Christ, and incompatible with their own safety.'¹⁷⁶ However, this was not thought to be sufficiently pertinent to include in the supplement to the published edition of the advices produced in 1822. It was not until 1834 that this advice felt to Yearly Meeting to merit publishing in its formal collection.¹⁷⁷ I assert that the increasing changes in the commercial sphere and Quaker engagement with it were the trigger for this inclusion. The inauguration of the Stockton and Darlington company and the creation of more joint-stock railways such as the Liverpool and Manchester line in 1830 (in which James Cropper invested, largely for business reasons), the creation of banks such as the Quaker Birmingham Banking Company in 1829, and the establishment of daily share lists in newspapers from the 1820s were all factors in this.

Not only was the Stockton and Darlington Railway a Quaker project, but two Quakers, including the abolitionist James Cropper, were involved in the second railway

¹⁷⁶ *Being Extracts from the Minutes*, 1834, 270–271.

¹⁷⁷ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 7.

project to open, the Liverpool to Manchester railway.¹⁷⁸ In fact, it has been suggested that James 'gave his support because "railways ... tended to break up the reign of vested interest under which the slave owners of the West Indies claimed they had the right to buy and sell their fellow men."¹⁷⁹ This demonstrates a dual concern for free trade, linked to abolition and common among Quaker businessmen of the time, as a driving force behind railway development. James' son Edward would go on to become a relative railway magnate, though it is not clear whether he remained Quaker.¹⁸⁰

The diary of Harriet Arbuthnot, wife of Conservative front-bench MP Charles Arbuthnot, demonstrates two very helpful things here concerning the Liverpool and Manchester line to enlighten us about perceptions of the railways among a certain class of wealthy women, and to highlight the views of a front-bench MP. Arbuthnot refers explicitly to speculation as gambling and as enticing because of the possibility of quick monetary gain, but notes that her husband did not want to be seen to be involved because of his prominent political position and the potential conflict of interest with MPs approving railways by Acts of Parliament, though Taylor notes that on companies being approved by Acts of Parliament back-bench MPs were less reticent.¹⁸¹

The Society of Friends' own actions in this period, while not uniform as the case of Joseph Gibbins demonstrates, confirm the importance to them of trust in business. Quakers ensured their standing well into the nineteenth century by regulating their

¹⁷⁸ Adrian Jarvis, 'James Cropper, Liverpool Docks and the Liverpool & Manchester Railway', *Journal of Transport History*, 19, no. 1 (1998), 19. Edward Milligan provides further details about Quaker involvement in many of the major lines in the mid-nineteenth century: Edward H. Milligan, *Quakers and Railways* (York: Sessions, 1992).

¹⁷⁹ E. S. Richards, 'The Finances of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Again', *Economic History Review*, 25, no. 2 (1972), 285.

¹⁸⁰ *Robinsons Railway Directory* (London: Railway Times Office, 1841), accessed 2 April 2023, https://library.lse.ac.uk/collections/pamphlets/document_service/HE1_42/00000671/doc.pdf.

¹⁸¹ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 115.

members' businesses, and those who broke the trust of their creditors by going bankrupt would often be disowned. For example, when Joseph Fry's business failed in 1828, despite his family's standing in the Society he was disowned six months later after an investigation by their Monthly Meeting,¹⁸² to the shame of his famous prison-reforming wife and broader family.¹⁸³ This demonstrates that at this period, even high social standing would not protect you from the discipline of the Society. Even Elizabeth Fry herself was told the following year that she would not be welcomed by a group of Friends which included some of her husband's creditors.¹⁸⁴

Another advice from 1824 (which entered the formal collection in 1834) clearly deemed any speculations to be contrary to Quaker principles since they 'hold out the prospect of a rapid accumulation of wealth, greatly endanger that tranquillity of mind to which we have alluded. They often involve in perplexities, which disqualify us for exercising a patient dependence upon Him from whom cometh our strength.'¹⁸⁵ Bearing in mind that at least fourteen Quakers invested in the London to Birmingham Railway which was created by an Act of Parliament in 1833, perhaps unsurprisingly including six from Birmingham,¹⁸⁶ there was clearly a growing distance within the Society between

¹⁸² June Rose, *Elizabeth Fry: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 125.

¹⁸³ Walvin, *The Quakers*, 131.

¹⁸⁴ Rose, *Elizabeth Fry*, 128.

¹⁸⁵ *Being Extracts from the Minutes*, 1834, p. 272.

¹⁸⁶ London and Birmingham Railway Company documents, accessed 15 May 2023, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/99/London_and_Birmingham_Railway_Company_-_Minutes_of_a_meeting_of_the_general_Board_of_Management_of_the_Company_.._31st_January%2C_1822_%28IA_londonbirmingham00lond%29.pdf. Quaker investors I identified principally using Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, include James and John Cropper (John Cropper was disowned 1837 by Hardshaw West MM – Milligan entry for John Wakefield, 454), John Barclay, Robert Benson (of Cropper and Benson), Paul Bevan, Richard Tapper Cadbury (Birmingham), Isaac Crewdson, James Foster (stockbroker, Milligan says disowned 1838, 178), Robert Were Fox, possibly Robert Garnett (other Garnetts are present in Milligan, one of whom had several sons not named), Joseph Gibbins (Birmingham), James Pearson (Birmingham), Joseph Shorthouse (Birmingham), John Sturge (Birmingham), Joseph Sturge (Birmingham), and probably John Wakefield.

those prepared to speculate and those objecting to the behaviour. It is worth remembering that those objecting were in line with society more broadly here.¹⁸⁷ That two of these investors are recorded by Milligan as having been disowned in the later 1830s is worth noting: it would not come as a surprise if this were due to their commercial activities, particularly in the case of James Foster, whom Milligan lists as a stock broker.¹⁸⁸

However, this leaves at least eleven Quakers who I am not aware faced any consequences for their financial activities, despite the Society of Friends becoming increasingly vocal about these between 1802 and 1834. This highlights the increasing difficulty for Friends in business to maintain their business interests (where investments directly supported these) and to conform to the discipline of the Religious Society of Friends. As some cases show, such as those of Joseph Gibbins, Edward Cropper, and Henry Pease, Edward's youngest son, who were all investors in several joint-stock endeavours, it was also hard for some to resist the temptation to 'the prospect of a rapid accumulation of wealth', and to conforming with their peers outside of the Society.

What is more, evidence from Warwickshire North Men's Monthly Meeting from November 1825 to December 1826 demonstrates that key positions such as clerk, assistant clerk, and overseer were held by influential businessmen from Birmingham Preparative Meeting, including investors in the London to Birmingham Railway.¹⁸⁹ This demonstrates the regional influence of the Birmingham businessmen. While these

¹⁸⁷ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*.

¹⁸⁸ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 178.

¹⁸⁹ James Pearson, clerk until March 1826 (when Samuel Lloyd junior took over), invested in the project, as did Joseph Sturge and Richard Tapper Cadbury who were both overseers of the Monthly Meeting at this time at Warwickshire North.

minutes are from some years before the railway project reached parliament for approval, they cover a period only four years before the project was first conceived and demonstrate that Quaker businessmen liable to be tempted by such investments held particular sway in their Religious Society. This would have made their collective disownment for speculating very difficult or impossible. One of the investors, James Pearson, was clerk of the Monthly Meeting at the end of 1825, and held money on behalf of Martha Gibbins for her children, which possibly sheds further light on Joseph Gibbins not being formally disowned.¹⁹⁰

In contrast to the additions to the book of discipline, one element of the advice had been curtailed from 1834: the final section of the original 1771 advice concerning the ‘pernicious practice’ of creating ‘fictitious’ credit which had stood in place for the previous sixty-three years, invoking Friends to refrain from ‘imprudently entering into joint securities with others; for by these practices many innocent wives and children have been inevitably and unexpectedly involved in ruinous and deplorable circumstances’. This omission seems to conflict with the advice around speculation which was so strongly worded in the same edition. Perhaps it was simply felt that the new emphasis on speculation in the more recent advice was clearer, or more emphatic as a separate advice to those concerning fictitious credit, which seems still to have been of great concern. Or perhaps Friends were starting to mentally distinguish between some forms of joint security (such as partnerships and small joint-stock companies), which the Society felt it necessary to deem acceptable by this point, and more risky speculation in a broader venture. This latter position appears more likely to me, in the context of the ventures of

¹⁹⁰ Gibbins, *Records of the Gibbins Family*, 205.

Friends which I have demonstrated above; some ground needed to be conceded in order to attempt to keep wealthy Quakers in business within the Societal fold.

The 1834 discipline, then, included advices such as the above, and another expressly exhorting Quakers in business to be moderate in their affairs and investments even in difficult financial times where there is the temptation of financial risk taking. It demonstrated a growing and considerable concern with fictitious credit and speculation among Friends, and a recognition of difficult financial circumstances, but maintained an exhortation to moderation and inspection of one's affairs. There was also possibly the beginning of a recognition that to accommodate wealthier Quakers with business concerns requiring combined credit there was some degree of flexibility, despite the seeming conflict between this and the advice on speculation.

2.6 Quakers, Business Form, Discipline, and Investments, 1840–1900

2.6.1 Partnerships, Legal Changes, and Quaker Businesses Incorporating

Thus, I have demonstrated that trust, character, and personal reputation were particularly important and advantageous qualities for Quakers in business to hold in the nineteenth century, and I demonstrate below how the advantage these offered was reinforced by the Quaker discipline. Besides Quakers' own forays into joint-stock companies in the early nineteenth century, another factor in undermining these

advantages and Quakerism's 'secular utility' in business, as Fincham calls it,¹⁹¹ was change in company law in the mid-nineteenth century.

Taylor's well-reasoned arguments in *Creating Capitalism* demonstrate that developments in company law in the nineteenth century made trust, character, and personal reputation difficult to maintain in business by the end of that century.¹⁹² As I noted above, Kavanagh, Brigham, and Burton have also explored this from a Quaker business perspective.¹⁹³

However, Kavanagh and Brigham overlook Quakers' early investments in the stock market, particularly in railway companies other than Stockton and Darlington, suggesting, in response to a criticism that Quakers did not labour and caused no production, that for 'Quakers of the nineteenth century... buying and selling consumer goods is categorically different to buying and selling shares'.¹⁹⁴ Of course, the contemporary criticism that Quakers did not produce goods is clearly inaccurate, as manufacturers like Albright and Wilson demonstrate, but so is the view on the part of Kavanagh and Brigham that Quakers did not buy and sell shares and were therefore in some way superior to rentiers. While their assertion that Quaker investments in joint-stock infrastructure projects were 'based on... trust, confidence and personal relationships that were a feature of Quaker networks' likely holds true for Stockton and Darlington,¹⁹⁵ I demonstrate clearly above and below that in most other cases this is untrue, and that some Quakers did engage with the stock market. For example, alongside

¹⁹¹ Fincham, 'The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success'.

¹⁹² Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*.

¹⁹³ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law'; Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company'; Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers: Forgotten Pioneers'.

¹⁹⁴ Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company', 122.

¹⁹⁵ Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company', 120.

the roughly thirteen Quakers investing in the London to Birmingham line were around one hundred non-Quakers, so it was not a product of the Quaker network alone.¹⁹⁶

Yet even prior to broad legal changes, some more Quaker firms were choosing to incorporate. Joseph Gibbins' Birmingham Banking Company was not the only banking firm with Quaker connections to incorporate in the early period of bank incorporation: the Backhouse Bank of Newcastle merged with a joint-stock bank created in 1836 not long after its incorporation.¹⁹⁷ The bank became the Northumberland and Durham District Bank and certainly had a Quaker manager, Jonathan Richardson, and therefore seems likely to have qualified as a Quaker business following my definition above if its purpose aligned with Quaker principles and it treated its employees in line with those principles. And directly contrary to an advice in the contemporary edition of the Quaker discipline against speculation, which I explore further below, Elizabeth O'Donnell notes that its shareholders included 'most of the region's Quaker businessmen'.¹⁹⁸

Directly related to this is the Derwent Iron Company, established by three Quakers and one non-Quaker in 1840,¹⁹⁹ which was probably also a joint-stock company since that was common in the sector and it bears the name company. It was very much propped up by the Quaker Jonathan Richardson, manager of the Northumberland and Durham District Bank, who provided the land for the initial endeavour. These conversions demonstrate that despite the poor popular reputation of joint-stock companies at this time and the advices of the Quaker book of discipline, there were some business-minded

¹⁹⁶ London and Birmingham Railway Company documents.

¹⁹⁷ Elizabeth O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety: The Rise and Fall of a Nineteenth Century Quaker Meeting', *Quaker Studies*, 8, no. 1 (2003), 71.

¹⁹⁸ O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety', 71.

¹⁹⁹ O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety', 73.

Quakers looking to embrace the form. Instances such as these would have begun a slow erosion of Quakers' reputational advantage.

Therefore, despite the official line against speculation of any kind in 1834 and growing concern within the Society of Friends, I have found several examples of Quaker involvement in joint-stock companies before the widening access to this form through the Joint-Stock Companies Act in 1844, beginning with the Stockton and Darlington Railway. This further research demonstrates, contrary to my earlier suggestion and the work of Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, that even prior to the Act, the joint-stock company form was being engaged with by Quakers and causing moral tension within the Religious Society of Friends around its effect.²⁰⁰ Thus this was gradually diluting and increasingly confusing the Quaker position with regard to discipline and its application over the course of the nineteenth century.

Still, the more common business form among Quakers at this time was the partnership. Here I therefore examine briefly some nineteenth-century deeds of partnership from this time to further highlight the nature of business agreements in reinforcing trust and to demonstrate the norm of the period, to which most Quaker firms conformed and which they benefited from. I have accessed two deeds of partnership for businesses which were, as far as I can tell,²⁰¹ not Quaker, and one of a firm which was. As might be expected given Taylor's assertions around trust in businesses under the partnership form, even the non-Quaker deeds I found demonstrate to some extent the importance of trust between partners in business. However, Robert Bennett has found evidence that in 1872 it was more common for a partnership to exist informally than for

²⁰⁰ Slepwood, 'The Birmingham Quaker Business Community'.

²⁰¹ I have researched the firms online and checked Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*.

there to be deeds at all,²⁰² so it is possible that those of any faith who went to the effort to have deeds drawn up would have been particularly conscientious to have done so.

Bennett's research also suggests that the sole proprietorship was also far more dominant a form of business in 1881 than the partnership.²⁰³ The case for the Birmingham Quaker business community I have uncovered indicates that among Quakers the partnership was in fact dominant. I would tentatively propose that the Quaker network led this to be the case among Quakers.²⁰⁴ But in the trade directory and other research I have done I have not encountered many Quakers who were certainly sole traders at this time, besides those like Josiah Pumphrey with his business on Bull Street.

The non-Quaker partnership deeds, from 1832 and 1833, both mention trust in some form briefly, using the wording that the partners are to be 'true and just to each other in all their transactions relative to the concerns of this partnership and from time to time give to each other a true account thereof'²⁰⁵ and that 'the said partners respectively shall and will be true and faithful to each other in all buyings sellings receipts payments accounts reckonings and other transactions... relative to the joint Trade'.²⁰⁶ While they do not use the word trust they both refer to being true to one another and employ another term to reinforce this sense of the importance of trust.

²⁰² Robert Bennett, 'Interpreting Business Partnerships in Late Victorian Britain', *Economic History Review*, 69, no. 4 (2016), 1204.

²⁰³ Bennett, 'Interpreting Business Partnerships', 1203.

²⁰⁴ A thorough analysis of trade directory and census data cross-referenced with Society of Friends membership data would be necessary to attempt to confirm my suspicion, and this is beyond my scope here.

²⁰⁵ WC, MS1688/3/1-5, 1833 Deed of Partnership between two ribbon manufacturers, John Southam Evans and Samuel Nuttall.

²⁰⁶ WC, MS1688/3/1-5, 1832 Deed of Partnership between Richard Mitton and William Fletcher.

The Quaker deed, between Arthur Albright and Edmund Sturge from 1842 after John Sturge's death, is formulated slightly differently and makes explicit reference to integrity, stating:

this indenture witnesseth that in pursuance of the said agreement and *in consideration of the confidence which the said parties respectively repose in the integrity of the other* Each of them the said Edmund Sturge and Arthur Albright for himself his heirs executors and administrators – doth hereby covenant with the other of them... that they... will become co-partners in the said trade or business of manufacturing chemists²⁰⁷

This expression of confidence in one another's integrity is quite possibly distinctively Quaker given that it is lacking from the other two documents, and may well have derived from knowledge of the Quaker network and the myriad connections between Quakers which helped to reinforce mutual trust at this time. Integrity was certainly a Quaker value which was present in the discipline generally, though not explicitly referred to in the trade section at this time. This opening is reinforced by another passage further down the deed which resembles the other non-Quaker deeds more closely, though it is slightly longer, stating 'That the said parties will be faithful to each other in all pecuniary and other transactions connected with the trade and use his utmost endeavours to promote the prosperity thereof and neither will engage himself directly or indirectly in any other trade or business whatsoever without the express consent in writing of the other'.²⁰⁸ While one of the non-Quaker deeds refers to not engaging in other trade, the other does not, suggesting that this was not a ubiquitous

²⁰⁷ Emphasis my own. WC, MS1724, Box 55, 1842 Articles of Partnership between Edmund Sturge and Arthur Albright.

²⁰⁸ 1842 Articles of Partnership between Edmund Sturge and Arthur Albright, 3.

clause in such documents. There is further information in the deed about checking accounts and about paying any debts,²⁰⁹ which are not surprising in the context of the Quaker discipline, as I discuss further below.

The 1844 Joint Stock Act allowed much broader incorporation of any firms which applied for registration, and enabled firms to grow much bigger. It also outlined the division of managers and shareholders, where with partnerships these had almost always been one and the same.²¹⁰ On the whole, the introduction of the joint-stock company in 1844 distanced the firm from its chief owner and manager, and enabled a higher number of investors who need not be involved in the day-to-day running of the firm. It ultimately began creating free market capitalism in allowing for the broadening of the stock market to such a great extent that there would be thousands of investment opportunities by the early twentieth century.

It is very easy to see how Quaker businesses, based so much on character, trust, and reputation, could have been irreparably damaged by the Joint Stock Companies Act 1844, which created the company as a common legal entity. If used by Quakers to form a company, it was arguably the first stage in the removal of Quaker businesspeople from their customers, and eventually from their employees because it enabled so much more scope for growth and allowed for the possibility of external, usually non-Quaker, management. Without considerable marketing, then, this would make it hard to maintain a reputation as trustworthy Quakers. However, Quaker businesses which did not become

²⁰⁹ 1842 Articles of Partnership between Edmund Sturge and Arthur Albright, 3.

²¹⁰ M. S. Rix, 'Company Law: 1844 and To-Day', *Economic Journal*, 55, no. 218–219 (1945), 242–260.

joint stock would have been at a potentially significant disadvantage compared to many of their competitors, because they did not have access to the same levels of capital.²¹¹

There was much resistance following the passing of the 1844 Act, particularly among active Christians. One minister proclaimed the vast increase in speculation to be blasphemous, and another spoke out about the increasing sense of a perceived separation between religion and business.²¹²

After the early Quaker banking examples, the earliest Quaker firm I have found that incorporated under the provision of the Joint Stock Companies Act 1844 is the Gibbins family's Birmingham Battery and Metal Company in the 1860s, which actually used joint-stock status to buy out the other original proprietors and make the business a wholly family affair.²¹³ Thus, the Gibbinses used a system which often meant that businesses moved away from direct family control to strengthen that control. I wonder whether Joseph Gibbins, with his prior banking experience of incorporation, advised his relatives here. Regardless, it demonstrates that if well controlled, a change to joint-stock status did not necessarily and inherently threaten Quaker ownership and control, and could even bolster it. However, converting at this time may have eroded public faith in the firm, in the context of popular perception of the issue. Certainly, the Gibbins family was twenty to thirty years ahead of most other Quaker firms in their conversion, judging by my own research and the list provided by Kavanagh and Brigham, which suggests the

²¹¹ Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company', 122.

²¹² Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 145. I demonstrate this further in my section on the railways, Section 2.7.2.

²¹³ Rowntree, *The Birmingham Battery and Metal Company*, 48.

Consett Iron Company was the only other one to do this so early, though they do not note that this was the successor to the Derwent Iron Company.²¹⁴

Not too long after this, a later Albright and Wilson deed of partnership from 1876 (on the admission of William Arthur Albright to the firm) is not so clear around trust and integrity as was the deed from thirty years earlier, which may be due to changing times and legal advisers. However, this later deed does still include a clause invoking the partners not to share trade secrets outside of the partnership, or enter into business otherwise, and not to lend money or goods to anyone forbidden in writing.²¹⁵ This clearly still helped to reinforce trust in practice. What makes this deed strikingly different to the earlier ones is that as well as the partners, it also specifies that George Stacey Albright is a shareholder, rather than a partner. This seems almost like a halfway house between a straightforward traditional partnership and a joint-stock company in some sense, coming as it does thirty years after the initiation of the joint-stock form where this was a more evident possibility. Albright and Wilson seem then to have begun a gradual behavioural shift towards becoming a company in the 1870s.

Twelve years later the passing of the Limited Liability Act of 1856 meant that individual shareholders in a company were no longer personally liable for any debts accrued, beyond the value of their shares. The 1856 Act deregulated limited liability and made it accessible to all incorporated firms.

Taylor shows that even among potentially interested parties, there was by no means agreement that if limited liability were introduced access to it should be

²¹⁴ Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company', 122.

²¹⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 55, Articles of Partnership between Arthur Albright, John Edward Wilson, J. H. Player and William Arthur Albright, 18 December 1876.

unrestricted. Most favoured some sort of restriction on the granting of limited liability status.²¹⁶ However, although opinion nationally was divided, a majority of MPs in the Commons supported the Bill granting relatively unrestricted limited liability.²¹⁷

One of the MPs who was in favour of limited liability was the Quaker John Bright.²¹⁸ This is simultaneously surprisingly given the unequivocal message around speculation in the discipline of 1834 which I detail above, and unsurprising given that he was a radical and extreme supporter of free trade, to the extent that he had argued against the introduction of the 1844 Factories Bill to protect young children (Joseph Pease also argued against factory reform).²¹⁹ In Bright's eyes, limited liability opened up business possibilities to those who would otherwise not have been able to afford to take the risk to enter business, since they would have been personally liable if the business failed.²²⁰ Taylor notes that there were other proponents on this basis, arguing that it extended access to women and the working classes and the 'collective principle' in areas such as trade unions and co-operatives.²²¹ Yet Bright's eyes were very much not those of the writers of the discipline in 1834, nor of society more broadly, which saw little likelihood of change in practice arising from the 1856 Act.²²²

Given his commitment to the passing of the Act allowing limited liability, it is no great surprise that John Bright converted his own business to limited liability in 1878,

²¹⁶ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 150–151.

²¹⁷ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 152.

²¹⁸ John Saville, 'Sleeping Partnership and Limited Liability, 1850–1856', *Economic History Review*, New Series, 8, no. 3 (1956), 430.

²¹⁹ Richard Turnbull, 'Quakers, Free Trade and Social Responsibility', in N. Burton and R. Turnbull (eds), *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility: Lessons and Cases for Responsible Management* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 97.

²²⁰ Saville, 'Sleeping Partnership and Limited Liability', 430.

²²¹ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 155.

²²² Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 162–163.

which is one of the earliest Quaker conversions I am aware of.²²³ Despite Bright's view, when limited liability did come with the passing of the Act in 1856, it was rejected by many people 'because it was unfair – an unjustifiable redistribution of rights from creditors to shareholders – but also because it would prevent businessmen from learning from their mistakes – a crucial element in dominant, evangelical notions of a sound economy'.²²⁴ Limited liability meant that shareholders would no longer be personally liable beyond the value of their shares if a business went bankrupt,²²⁵ and it thereby arguably eroded responsibility and thus trust,²²⁶ and encouraged over-extension. Mary Poovey argues that the 1856 Act marked the end of morality in the economic sphere and the ceasing of the link between failure and personal bankruptcy.²²⁷

David Crowther maintains that these nineteenth-century Acts resulted in a diminishing of trust which lasts to this day. He asserts that, largely as a consequence of the introduction of the joint-stock company, the agent–principal relationship between shareholders and managers in the capitalist system has broken down.²²⁸ This, he argues, is particularly the case in the UK as fund managers tend to be distanced from investors by an interceding financial institution, so there is little call for accountability.²²⁹ When limited liability came into being in 1856 it only served to exacerbate this, by encouraging shareholders to have no interest in a company besides their own profit.

²²³ R. A. J. Walling (ed.), *The Diaries of John Bright* (New York: W. Morrow, 1931), 412.

²²⁴ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 31.

²²⁵ Donna Loftus, 'Limited Liability, Market Democracy, and the Social Organization of Production in Mid-Nineteenth Century Britain', in Nancy Henry and Cannon Schmitt (eds), *Victorian Investments: New Perspectives on Finance and Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 79.

²²⁶ Crowther, 'Limited Liability or Limited Responsibility?', 45–46.

²²⁷ Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830–1864* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 22–23, 155–181, cited in Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 156.

²²⁸ Crowther, 'Limited Liability or Limited Responsibility?', 50.

²²⁹ Crowther, 'Limited Liability or Limited Responsibility?', 50.

Crowther also claims that limited liability meant businesspeople were no longer responsible for their actions:

Without risk corporations were able increasingly to do whatever they wished – and without responsibility anything became possible, even the lies of the present as no one was accountable for their actions as long as economic growth – and profitability – continued. Thus we arrived at the present excesses. The link between rights and responsibilities had been severed and forgotten.²³⁰

He goes on to argue that the legal set-up resulting particularly from the 1856 Act enables the managers of a company, as the authors of its corporate report, to shape the report and thereby determine the cultural myth or perception of the company they create.²³¹ As if by way of confirming Crowther's point about corporate reporting, one Quaker bank which failed in 1858 had implied that business was going well in its annual report in 1857; the Monthly Meeting which investigated unsurprisingly condemned this deceit.²³²

Between the early Birmingham Battery and Metal Company's conversion and the later wave which began in the late 1880s, Pease and Partners took on a limited company form in 1882, when the Quaker David Dale who had begun his career with them joined as a partner, then moved onto the Board and suggested the change of form. It was also alongside Dale that Joseph Whitwell Pease became relatively pro union activity.²³³ Also on the national stage, Rowntree's converted to become a limited liability company in 1897, along with dozens of other Quaker firms. Fitzgerald explains that 'it was clear that

²³⁰ Crowther, 'Limited Liability or Limited Responsibility?', 46.

²³¹ David Crowther, 'Limited Liability or Limited Responsibility?'

²³² O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety'.

²³³ Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty', 154.

investment funds would have to be publicly raised', but does not provide any detail concerning this clarity.²³⁴ Use of the Quaker network to raise funds by this point in time was perhaps a distant memory to businessmen increasingly accustomed to social contact with those outside of their Religious Society.

In 1897 Birmingham Battery and Metal Company converted to limited liability status. Also in the 1890s, several other Birmingham Quaker businesses converted from partnerships to private companies with limited liability status: Albright and Wilson in 1892, Barrows Stores in 1895, when Harrison Barrow took over as managing director, Southalls in 1898, and Cadbury's in 1900. It is possible that the economic downturn, a popular book about conversion, and a broader wave of incorporation triggered these decisions.²³⁵ Certainly, prior to the twentieth century, very few businesses were organised as (joint-stock) companies – it was only after the twentieth century had begun that they came to be ubiquitous and dominant.²³⁶

Having said this, G. G. Acheson, G. Campbell, J. D. Turner, and N. Vanteeva have demonstrated that the 1890s was a particularly popular decade for incorporation of existing businesses nationally (especially for commercial and industrial firms, which grew considerably in terms of the stock market between 1860 and 1900),²³⁷ so the Quakers converted their firms in line with broader trends. However, it is also possible that these businesses and their families may have been finding ways to discuss this process over this period, even if they were at different Meetings by this point, and would

²³⁴ Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution*, 69.

²³⁵ Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company', 122.

²³⁶ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 6.

²³⁷ G. G. Acheson, G. Campbell, J. D. Turner, and N. Vanteeva, 'Corporate Ownership and Control in Victorian Britain', *Economic History Review*, 68, no. 3 (2015), 911-936.

potentially have been talking over the decisions among themselves. In the case of Albright and Wilson, one of the earliest in Birmingham to convert, it seems likely that its owners were influenced by their non-Quaker close neighbours, Chance and Hunt, whose firm converted in 1890, and that they then spoke to other local Quaker families about the change.²³⁸

Not long after these conversions, at least one Birmingham Quaker business, White and Pike, which had also recently followed several other firms in moving out of the city centre to Longbridge in 1895 and converting in form at the same time,²³⁹ was perceived to have suffered as a consequence of conversion to a limited liability company; as Oliver Morland puts it of William White, 'Ill-advised extensions, however, after the firm had been converted into a limited liability company, led to commercial disaster, which much saddened his last days.'²⁴⁰ The prospectus for the firm reveals that it was seeking to raise a third of its capital through a public offer, meaning that in theory it would raise some much-needed funds without losing governance control.²⁴¹ Clearly, this did not go well in practice. Morland's implicit view that limited liability could at best be a path to ruin seems to have chimed with the view of Quakers elsewhere, at least earlier in the century. Unfortunately, according to local history sources this happened just after the conversion of the other Birmingham Quaker businesses in the 1890s;²⁴² had it happened just three

²³⁸ Alexander Macomb Chance (1844–1917), *Black Country History*, accessed 20 February 2023, https://www.blackcountryhistory.org/collections/getrecord/GB146_FP-CH_9.

²³⁹ WC, Lpp62.11/528596, Prospectus. 8pp. 1895. White and Pike, Limited.

²⁴⁰ Oliver Morland, *William White: A Brother of Men* (Birmingham: Morland and Co., 1903), 34.

²⁴¹ Prospectus. White and Pike.

²⁴² History, Longbridge, accessed 19 March 2023, <https://longbridgebirmingham.co.uk/the-place/history/>; Longbridge Factory, accessed 19 March 2023, <http://www.austinmemories.com/styled-12/index.html>; Sleafwood, 'The Birmingham Quaker Business Community'.

or four years earlier perhaps some of the other firms might have reconsidered their own conversions in light of the event.

While Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham similarly note, following my 2017 argument, that limited liability in particular undermined honesty,²⁴³ they also argue that one reason for the incompatibility between Quakerism and the joint-stock company is that a belief in the ‘centrality of the individual’ was core to Quakerism.²⁴⁴ Yet this individualism is an anachronism and has been demonstrated not to be the case for Quakers until at least the mid-nineteenth century.²⁴⁵

Other than Lloyds Bank, which went public upon its conversion in 1865, the first Quaker company I am aware of nationally to convert in practice to the public form²⁴⁶ besides White and Pike is Pease and Partners in 1898, not long before its collapse in 1902, in an attempt to raise capital.²⁴⁷ The public company structure was arguably particularly hazardous in terms of firms remaining Quaker, since anyone could purchase shares, but in the case of these firms desperate times clearly called for desperate measures.

In 1858 we have already seen Arthur Albright’s concern for trust in his relationships with other businessmen. This relied on personal relationships, which were made much harder as firms grew bigger. Growth often went hand in hand with converting from a partnership to a company,²⁴⁸ and as I show in the case of Albright and Wilson, the

²⁴³ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, ‘Religion, Organization and Company Law’, 321.

²⁴⁴ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, ‘Religion, Organization and Company Law’, 321.

²⁴⁵ Jonathan Ryan Kershner, ‘“The Government of Christ”: John Woolman’s (1720–1772) Apocalyptic Theology’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2013), 121 n. 59; Pink Dandelion, *The Cultivation of Conformity*.

²⁴⁶ Fitzgerald notes that formally companies could not be private until the Act of 1907, but in practice most Quaker firms did not open their share offers: Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution*, 69.

²⁴⁷ Kirby, ‘The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty’, 156.

²⁴⁸ See for example Kavanagh and Brigham, ‘The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company’, 123.

company form also frequently led to the introduction of external management not long afterwards, which further undermined trust and the possibility of trading on one's reputation as a Quaker. It also relied at least to an extent on personal responsibility, which was undermined by limited liability conversions, since they ended personal financial responsibility, thereby undermining trust. Yet some publicly influential Quaker businessmen did not seem to be affected by this danger, such was their commitment to free trade. I have highlighted here that limited liability actually had Quaker support in parliament from John Bright; in this regard, then, some Quaker businessmen sowed the seeds of their own undoing. This support in parliament, the spate of limited liability conversions in the late nineteenth century, and the failure of businesses such as White and Pike and Pease and Partners (and the lack of associated discipline from the Society of Friends) therefore jeopardised the reputation of Quaker businesses and made them less distinct.

Whereas the 1844 Act had required each company to submit an annual balance sheet in order to facilitate oversight, the 1856 Act made even this submission voluntary.²⁴⁹ Perhaps this is partly why, highly ironically, Taylor suggests that 'even after 1856 those concerns which did adopt limited liability found themselves imitating private partnerships in some respects in order to achieve respectability and a reputation for financial solidity'.²⁵⁰

With their reliance on integrity, then, Quaker businesses were struck a considerable blow by the Limited Liability Act, which arguably compounded the damage done by the Joint Stock Companies Act twelve years earlier. Quaker businesses, which

²⁴⁹ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 154.

²⁵⁰ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 174.

particularly benefited from personal reputations, would have suffered as a result of these changes, particularly around the dawn of the twentieth century, once a greater number of firms were taking on the new forms and growing in size. Generally, as Fitzgerald and Kavanagh and Brigham have suggested,²⁵¹ they needed to and did convert in form and also grew considerably in order to compete. This undermined several of their advantages: it would make it harder to maintain a close-knit distinct network as more external actors would become involved, it would make it harder to undertake personal apprenticeships in the same way in the context of much larger firms, and it would make it harder to uphold their reputation as a trustworthy body of businessmen of integrity. Below I consider how the Quaker books of discipline changed over the nineteenth century and interacted with these legal changes, and how Quakers reacted to these changes and their effects at this time.

2.6.2 Quakers and the Railways Continued

Come the start of the 1840s, evidence suggests that Quakers of varying shades were continuing to invest in the railways. For example, when it opened in 1845 the York and North Midland line included a branch to serve the Rowntree factory, and in 1840 had drawn Joseph Rowntree in as a shareholder in the scheme which was initiated by George Hudson, a railway magnate. Milligan notes that at the time Rowntree was sceptical about the scheme due to the vagueness of its accounts.²⁵² This demonstrates that even later when railway schemes were becoming more common, some Quakers were involved

²⁵¹ Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution*, 69; Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company', 123.

²⁵² Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary*, 378.

purely as business endeavours, rather than being motivated by financial gain to speculate.

However, the advice of 1834 against all kinds of speculation would have presented an ethical dilemma to those such as Rowntree who by this point, where railways were all joint-stock companies, could not but do so to meet their business needs. It also demonstrates an awareness among more ethically aware Quakers of the potential for fraud or at least lack of transparency involved in such affairs, facilitated by the impersonal joint-stock structure. Had the Stockton and Darlington line been otherwise structured, perhaps alternatives might have presented themselves to Quakers keen to obey the discipline and looking to be involved in the railways. Hudson was a railway magnate who was exposed as a fraud in 1849, and Rowntree would briefly become a reluctant director of the line after Hudson's exposure (possibly to lend his moral authority).²⁵³

Milligan identifies twenty-two Quaker businessmen who were railway directors in the nineteenth century, many around the same time as Rowntree.²⁵⁴ This demonstrates that, whatever the official view of the Society of Friends (and the view of society more broadly), it was not an unpopular pursuit among Quakers. One of these, John Ellis, was also in local politics and later an MP, as well as being active in the anti-slavery movement, much like Joseph Sturge (who was both an anti-slavery campaigner and railway director), demonstrating how these different modes of worldly engagement often coalesced. In terms of the public and railway investment, in 1845 railway enthusiasm took over, with so many companies being registered that it was impossible to oversee them in any way. Taylor argues that by October 1845 'confidence in many railway schemes began to falter.

²⁵³ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary*, 378.

²⁵⁴ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary*, 509.

As the extent of the frauds perpetrated became known that turned to panic. Investors rushed to offload their scrip, prices dropped dramatically.²⁵⁵ This, however, does not seem to have deterred the Quakers involved. Some, such as William Evans Hutchinson, maintained their railway interests after this time and kept positions of authority within the Society of Friends: he was a director of three companies, and an elder and sometime representative to Quarterly Meeting.²⁵⁶ This suggests a relative indifference in practice on the part of institutional Quakerism to the activities of Quaker businessmen, or at least that it did not affect their position within the Society, thus arguably beginning to compromise the integrity of the Religious Society itself, which railed against such activities in its discipline.

Around a year after the passing of the Joint Stock Companies Act of 1844, an anonymous letter to the editors was published in *The British Friend* from a Quaker railing against ‘Trading-Investing-Speculating-Gaming’.²⁵⁷ This came during what is often known as ‘railway mania’, triggered by incorporation becoming freely available without an Act of Parliament. To give some idea of its perspective, it begins with a quote from George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, saying that Quakers ‘should be more just than others... in your dealings, and more righteous, holy, and pure, in your lives’.²⁵⁸ It goes on to assert that the Christian immorality of railway speculation in its current form should be as apparent as a simple sum, but that if word is true that Quakers are involved in it (which I have shown it certainly was), then it is worthwhile making the case for it.²⁵⁹ The

²⁵⁵ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 145.

²⁵⁶ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary*, 255.

²⁵⁷ *The British Friend*, 30 April 1845.

²⁵⁸ *The British Friend*, 30 April 1845.

²⁵⁹ *The British Friend*, 30 April 1845.

author alludes to popular opinion against the share trade, compares it to gaming and gambling, and then moves on to Quaker involvement, saying:

I could name a county in which the conduct of Quakers has been often adduced as a proof that surely the system is not so very bad; and great has been their influence; hence the need of a word of caution to those who have not yet been drawn into the snare.²⁶⁰

If the author is referring to the Stockton and Darlington scheme, which they may well be, as Kirby and Prior noted and I detailed above,²⁶¹ the project was run very differently in terms of the network and number of investors to the scale of the majority of joint-stock companies, which would indeed mean that it was a misleading example to other Quakers at the time. The author suggests, using an anecdote about a share broker who moves his business to a back street and thus increases his activities considerably by decreasing his customers' visibility, that the shame of speculation is proof of its immorality. The writer then addresses possible concerns about the maintenance of railways, canals, and other public utilities, referring to the discipline and the Bible for answers. They then compare speculation to lotteries in terms of the hope of fast acquisition of wealth without labour; the prohibition of lotteries by parliament had recently been extended. Examples are then given of people (implied to be Quakers) who have lost or gained huge sums of money in their attempts purely to increase their share value and wealth, observing that the loss or gain does not affect the moral rectitude of the transactions or the individual, and that some stocks advertised are in companies which never intended to pursue their project and purpose. The letter finishes with the

²⁶⁰ *The British Friend*, 30 April 1845.

²⁶¹ Kirby and Prior, 'The Society of Friends and the Family Firm'.

observation that a moral Christian should be answerable for the means of acquiring wealth as well as for their use of it, and with an exhortation to read the discipline, and specifically the advice against ‘speculations of any kind’.²⁶²

Of course, this letter offers only one perspective, but it provides direct evidence of a Quaker view at this time and of broader perceptions. That its ending is based on the current edition of the book of discipline demonstrates how much more difficult it would have been for a Quaker to make this argument after the slight dilution of the discipline in 1861, and its increasingly less strong tone on the matter over the following half-century. I discuss the change in the discipline in greater detail below.

To reinforce this view, the editors of *The British Friend* also condemn speculation on the railways in the same issue. They give a biblical reference and then a quote from the public press, observing that if even writers in the public media took a strong stance against the issue, how much stronger was ‘the standard recognised by our Society’.²⁶³ The press quote compares speculation to gaming in a counting-house, describes it as ‘madness’, and notes that by this point people seemingly from all walks of life are seeking to be involved.²⁶⁴

Much later in the century the worldly Sir Joseph Whitwell Pease became deputy chairman of the North Eastern Railway, and chairman from 1894.²⁶⁵ Further demonstrating how far he had come from his Religious Society’s values, he had been

²⁶² *The British Friend*, 30 April 1845.

²⁶³ *The British Friend*, 30 April 1845, 58.

²⁶⁴ *The British Friend*, 30 April 1845.

²⁶⁵ Charlotte Fell-Smith and M. W. Kirby, ‘Pease, Sir Joseph Whitwell, First Baronet’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/35447](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35447).

created a baronet and therefore given the title Sir, the first Quaker to accept such a title by choice, a position at odds with the traditional Quaker rejection of titles.²⁶⁶

2.6.3 The Discipline on Paper, 1845–1883

After 1834, it would be a long time before the discipline of the Society of Friends would come to be fully revised, and as I noted above, much change occurred within the Society. D. J. Hall's thesis and Kennedy's work have described how, not long after the publication of the discipline in 1834, Isaac Crewdson, an evangelical businessman and one of those I identified above as investors in the London to Birmingham railway company, wrote a work, *A Beacon to the Society of Friends*, which advocated for absolute biblical authority over that of the inward light.²⁶⁷ It is congruous that a Quaker businessman who was close to Joseph John Gurney, and who was clearly engaged in theology which seems to have fitted with that of those outside the Society of Friends at the time, would also have pursued investment interests not related to his business pursuits (since the railway was not local to his business in Manchester). This controversy was significant, with many Manchester Friends leaving the Religious Society with Crewdson in the later 1830s,²⁶⁸ and Hall argues it left its mark on the re-examination of the discipline which would take place in the late 1850s,²⁶⁹ around the essay competition I mentioned above.

²⁶⁶ Fell-Smith and Kirby, 'Pease, Sir Joseph Whitwell'.

²⁶⁷ D. J. Hall, 'An Historical Study of the Discipline of the Society of Friends, 1738–1861' (unpublished PhD thesis, Durham University, 1972), accessed 27 May 2023, <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/10138/>; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 26.

²⁶⁸ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 29.

²⁶⁹ Hall, 'An Historical Study', 151–153.

Although change within the Society of Friends had begun in 1850 with the reform on the possibility of gravestones by London Yearly Meeting,²⁷⁰ 1859 was the year that visible change began to occur, despite the ire of conservative Friends. John Bright as an MP advised on the viability of legal changes to allow Quakers to marry non-Quakers in the Meeting House that year, and the law was changed the following year. Plain dress and plain speech were also made optional in 1861, as part of the revision of the Quaker discipline. By 1861, then, Quakers could dress and speak as they wish, and marry who they wished without facing the possibility of disownment.²⁷¹

Quaker social change cannot be divorced from that in society more broadly. This period also saw trade unions and socialism grow in size and vigour as movements, the establishment of the Trades Union Congress, and the legalisation of union activities. The Christian Socialist F. D. Maurice was chosen to judge the 1859 Quaker essay competition, suggesting that some Quakers were beginning to hold socialist sympathies.²⁷²

The discipline of 1861 was the first edition in the nineteenth century in which advices around trade were slightly less prominent, in that they do not have their own section heading. Instead, the advices on trade are combined with general advices on 'Advice in relation to the affairs of this life', which also included other advice on matters such as wills. However, there is a new section heading 'Counsel to Employers', which was perhaps deemed worthwhile due to the increasing scale of Quaker businesses by this time as they prospered and grew. Across both of these sections there are a total of twenty-nine

²⁷⁰ Pink Dandelion, *The Cultivation of Conformity: Towards a General Theory of Internal Secularisation* (London: Routledge, 2019), 68.

²⁷¹ Pink Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 11; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 42, 43.

²⁷² F. D. Maurice, J. P. Nichol, and E. S. Pryce, 'Preface', in John Stephenson Rowntree, *Quakerism Past and Present* (London: Smith, Elder, 1859), vi.

advices (six to employers, twenty-three on trade), compared to twenty-five advices on trade in 1834.²⁷³ In some sense this change in heading might also reflect the relaxation in the discipline of this edition, and the increased comfort of Quakers with worldly life, which I noted above; more Friends might not have been active in business by this point, but some of the financial advice here would still have been relevant to them.

Therefore, while the discipline around business had been presented differently in this edition, unlike the relaxations in other areas of Quaker life such as marriage and dress, the number and tone of advices on trade remained many and strong in 1861. The one exception to this I would note is the absence of the 1824 advice against 'Speculations of any kind',²⁷⁴ suggesting that Quakers as a body had by this point either accepted that the likelihood of this transpiring was minimal, or had changed their mind as to the correctness of a blanket approach; perhaps by this time there was agreement among Quakers that some joint-stock investments were more morally acceptable. It was almost certainly in response to the progress of the Joint Stock Companies Bill through parliament that a new advice from 1845 has been added to this edition. This advice provides confirmation of this change of approach to speculation, by referring damningly to the effects of only 'some' speculations:²⁷⁵ the new law was almost certainly a further factor in the change of approach, as it made the prospect of speculative investments much more

²⁷³ This was also an increase on the previous edition in 1802, which contained only thirteen advices. *Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Held in London, from Its First Institution to the Present Time, Relating to Christian Doctrine, Practice, and Discipline*, 4th edn (London: London Yearly Meeting, 1861), 76–77, 86–95, accessed 15 March 2023, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t16m3bz3d>; *Rules of Discipline, with Advices; Being Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles of Their Yearly Meeting Held in London, from Its First Institution*, 3rd edn (London: Darton and Harvey, 1834), 268–279, accessed 15 March 2023, <https://archive.org/details/cu31924029487521/page/n35/mode/2up>; *Extracts from the Minutes and Advices*, 1802, 195–200.

²⁷⁴ *Rules of Discipline, with Advices*, 1834, 272.

²⁷⁵ *Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles*, 1861, 93.

likely. In contrast to speculation, the advice counsels Friends (and especially young Friends) 'to be satisfied with the moderate gains and profits of the ordinary course of trade'.

A key advice which had been new in 1834 advising retirement from business at the right time (i.e. before excessive wealth was accrued) remained in the 1861 edition:

we would tenderly invite those who may have acquired a competency of outward substance, to watch the proper period at which they may withdraw from the cares of business, and when disengaged from the regular concerns of trade to beware how they employ their property in investments which may involve them anew in care and anxiety.²⁷⁶

Thus, it is clear, both from this and from other advices in 1861, that by the mid-nineteenth century Quakers were very conscious of the moral risk and the risk to mental health (booms were often called 'mania', after all) posed even after retirement by involvement in financially risky behaviour. The advices to pay just debts (from 1692), and to take care to keep track of one's affairs if you hold the property of others (from 1826), also remained.²⁷⁷ Other new advices added in 1861 focused on restraint in terms of wealth, for example being sure to distinguish service of self from service of God,²⁷⁸ and not succumbing to the influence of the world.²⁷⁹

Though in language (such as that from the seventeenth century around one's yes being yes and no being no, and that around truth) it had long been implicit in the discipline around trade, the language of integrity explicitly enters the trade section of the

²⁷⁶ *Rules of Discipline, with Advices*, 1834, 273–274; *Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles*, 1861, 92.

²⁷⁷ *Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles*, 1861, 92.

²⁷⁸ 1858, *Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles*, 1861, 95.

²⁷⁹ 1846, *Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles*, 1861, 94.

official discipline in 1861 in several advices, three of which concern trade. One of these three is to be read annually in Meetings and calls for 'strict integrity in your transactions in trade', at a time when this must have seemed an increasingly challenging prospect, given the disintegration of integrity encouraged by the new company law.

Specific new sectors of trade mentioned in the 1861 book of discipline are agriculture and alcohol: in the first, traders are cautioned against temptations at markets and fairs, and in the second, Quakers are warned against 'numerous evils' and exhorted not to enter such a sector.²⁸⁰ The new 'Counsel to Employers' section of the book of discipline added in 1861 specifically includes an advice from 1828 (absent from the 1834 book) about apprenticeships, and giving priority for these to fellow Quakers.²⁸¹ This suggests two things to me: firstly, that apprenticeships offered by Quakers to other Quakers were not yet uncommon; and secondly, that there may have been some concern that they were a decreasing priority for some businesspeople at least. This section of the book also includes advice on how to treat servants, thus demonstrating the wealth of many Quaker employers at this time.²⁸²

While in broader terms the published Quaker discipline of 1861 relaxed many regulations which had been considered to be restricting the Society's growth (for example around dress and marrying outside of the Society), superficially this edition remained clear, extensive, and strong in its words to Quakers in business. However, this belies the tentative beginning of the erosion of the discipline in some regards, such as the now long-gone explicit requirement to apply the discipline to those engaging in fictitious

²⁸⁰ *Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles*, 1861, 92, 94.

²⁸¹ 1828, *Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles*, 1861, 77.

²⁸² *Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles*, 1861, 76-77.

credit of 1822 (though the 1771 advice against fictitious credit itself remained in the book) and the weakening of the criticism of speculation. In the context of the Joint Stock Companies Act of 1844 and the behaviour of wealthy Friends, to advise otherwise would have been extremely difficult.

Come 1883, the structure of the discipline around trade altered again, being compiled under the heading 'business and trade', itself under the heading 'uprightness and integrity'. This section contains twelve advices and demonstrates an ongoing concern that core Quaker values be carried over into business throughout the nineteenth century. There are further subsets here which relate directly to business and contain advices which were previously in the same section, 'a frequent Inspection of Affairs and early Disclosure of Pecuniary Difficulties', which contains four advices, and two more in 'Counsel to those in Insolvent Circumstances'. Still, from the high point of twenty-nine advices, eighteen across the three sections in 1883 is the lowest number since 1802. Whether this reflects the likely gradual move of Friends into other careers and professions outside of business, particularly enabled by the possibility of attending university from the 1870s, is hard to say, but it could be a factor.

In terms of the content of its advices, the 1883 book retains many of the earlier advices and themes, such as the just payment of debts, the warning against providing fictitious paper credit, and an 1846 caution not to let 'a worldly standard... be substituted for that true tenderness of conscience which would not only preserve from injustice in dealing, but would lead us, in all things, to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us'.²⁸³ It even adds one further advice against too great a love of worldly things,

²⁸³ *Book of Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends in Great Britain: Consisting of Extracts on Doctrine, Practice and Church Government from the Epistles and Other Documents Issued under the Sanction*

from 1865.²⁸⁴ Therefore, while it omits one caution about worldliness, this is still a very clear concern. The concern for integrity and honourable behaviour also remains, as is evident from the section heading, and as is probably evident from the title to its subsection, as does the eighteenth-century concern that Friends in financial trouble should disclose this to other 'men of upright character'.²⁸⁵

Officially the position on the response of the Society of Friends in case of business failure remained strong and clear even in 1883 when the following was included:

We recommend to Friends in their respective Quarterly and Monthly Meetings to have a watchful eye over all their members; and where they observe any deficient in discharging their contracts and just debts in due time, so as to give reasonable suspicion of weakness or negligence, that Friends do earnestly advise them to a suitable care and necessary inspection into their circumstances, in order that they may be helped; and if any proceed contrary to such advice, and by their failure bring open scandal and reproach on the Society, that then Friends justifiably may and ought to testify against such offenders. Nevertheless, it is not intended to prevent Monthly Meetings from exercising the discipline in cases in which no advice may have been given prior to insolvency. Those Friends who may be appointed by Monthly Meetings to visit those who have failed should inquire whether they have kept clear and accurate accounts, and carefully avoided giving one creditor any undue preference over others, and report to the Meeting.²⁸⁶

of the Yearly Meeting Held in London from Its First Institution in 1672 to the Year 1883 (London: Samuel Harris, 1883), 120, accessed 15 March 2023, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t9862sz33>.

²⁸⁴ 1865, *Book of Christian Discipline*, 1883, 121.

²⁸⁵ 1782, 1819, *Book of Christian Discipline*, 1883, 122–123.

²⁸⁶ 1732, 1782, 1816, *Book of Christian Discipline*, 1883, 205–206.

The wording here demonstrates that the concern to protect the reputation of the Society had remained a key factor for over 150 years. However, I now demonstrate how in many other ways the enforcement of this discipline in practice was not reinforced by this point in time.

For example, as I detailed above, in 1822 it was made very clear that the general process for those who ‘walk disorderly’, which remained in the 1883 book, should be applied in relation to business activities, and specifically to those engaging in the creation of fictitious paper credit. In 1883, despite the advice above, there was no such further emphasis. Moreover, in terms of the guidance on oversight there was a crucial omission to the 1883 book of discipline. This guided practice as to what might be done in terms of the response regarding Quakers who did not meet the Society’s standards set out in the advices. Of course, the book did not always determine practice, and Fincham has highlighted regional variation in practice,²⁸⁷ but it was a guide to best practice. Here is a key passage from 1827 which remained in the discipline on oversight in 1861, but is omitted in the 1876 and 1883 guidance on oversight (in these later books the guidance relates to desirable qualities in an overseer, not to discipline in any way). I quote it in full here because the detail is important:

We have in this meeting been led to the reflection, that one of the great benefits of religious society is, that it places us under the care one of another, and that we are called upon to watch over each other for good. When we see any of our brethren or sisters overtaken with a fault, or neglecting an important duty, we ought to cherish a solicitude for their improvement; and, in that love which would lead them to Christ, to offer such counsel or encouragement as we may think best calculated to

²⁸⁷ Fincham, ‘The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success’.

help them. Much depends on the manner in which advice is offered, and on our embracing the right opportunity to convey it. If it should not immediately have a salutary effect, we are not to be too much discouraged; we ought to take heed that we become not impatient or discomposed, but repeat our efforts in a spirit of love and forbearance. The result of this Christian concern for our friends is often greater than is at the time apparent. In the exercise of this duty, it becomes those who have the earliest opportunity of knowing the faults of others, seriously to consider on all occasions, whether they ought not to endeavour to reclaim them before they disclose the matter to another. At the same time we believe it has often happened, that the lengthened concealment of the errors of our friends from those who were best qualified to advise them, has been productive of serious injury, which might have been prevented by an early, yet prudent, disclosure to those of greater experience. 1827.²⁸⁸

This advice calls for a clear practical intervention when a Friend is perceived to have strayed from the discipline, with thought and detail as to how to go about it. What is more, the advice from 1737 that ‘no persons who shall fail in paying their just debts, ought to be admitted to act in meetings for discipline’ which was present in the 1802 book of discipline is also long gone.²⁸⁹ What replaces the strong emphasis on communal discipline is an advice from 1869 which acknowledges that those in business are unlikely to share their business anxieties with other Friends, and, instead of suggesting bringing their concerns to Friends, suggests that they pray about them.²⁹⁰ This demonstrates for the

²⁸⁸ *Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles*, 1861, 173–174.

²⁸⁹ *Extracts from the Minutes and Advices*, 1802, 199.

²⁹⁰ 1869, *Book of Christian Discipline*, 1883, 121–122.

first time a growing individualism among Friends and their sense of their business responsibilities.

In 1883, then, there still remained an advice to discipline Friends in cases of business failure, and many advices on trade retained from earlier editions. However, that the advice on discipline did not refer to disownment, that the advice on oversight had altered to omit watching over Friends, and that the advice to a Friend in business difficulty was to pray rather than approach a fellow Friend show a marked relaxation compared to 1861.²⁹¹ While Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham note the decline of the 'quasi-legal logic' to Quaker governance in the nineteenth century, they speak only of broadly available general examples such as entry to universities and the ending of the prohibition on marrying-out, and do not examine the 'quasi-legal' rules around business in any detail.²⁹² What is more, Kavanagh and Brigham elsewhere seem to presume, by contrast, that the discipline regarding business remained static throughout time and was 'consistent and constant'.²⁹³ As I demonstrate here, and expand on in section 5.5 through a thorough examination, change in the regulation around business was not linear and did not closely follow the broader relaxation, and it is presumptive to assume that it did.

The lack of a direct suggestion to disown in cases of business misconduct by 1883 meant that it was perfectly possible to follow the advice and visit members, without taking disciplinary action in the form of disownment. Were this course taken, it had the advantage of an appearance of action to fellow Quakers, but suggests that the maintenance of the broader reputation of the Society through its own regulations was no

²⁹¹ *Book of Christian Discipline*, 1883.

²⁹² Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law', 329.

²⁹³ Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company', 119.

longer being enforced. I would suggest that the ever-growing number of wealthy, increasingly worldly, Quaker businessmen who were all socially connected and also often influential within the Society would have dissuaded Quakers from disownment in such cases by this time. It would likely have been an embarrassment to the Society to disown a high-profile Quaker, given the growing pride in such figures. The broader legal changes relating to businesses, and Quakers' involvement in companies through directorship and speculations, were a part of their social environment which those formulating the discipline would certainly have been aware of and possibly even involved in.

2.6.4 Businesses and the Reality of the Discipline

While it is outside the scope of this thesis to conduct a full study into the enforcement of the discipline through an analysis of Meeting records during this time, as Ann Prior did for the period 1700–1830 as the subject of her thesis, there are several nineteenth-century examples which show how the discipline was being applied at the time.²⁹⁴ I described above how the discipline of the Society of Friends was used in 1828 to disown Joseph Fry, the husband of Elizabeth who had achieved considerable fame through her work on prison reform. This confirms Prior's thesis that the discipline was still being actively practised in relation to business failure until at least 1830. However, my analysis of the Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting minutes over fourteen months between November 1825 and December 1826 shows that no disownments or investigations explicitly on business-related grounds happened during this time (though several happened for insolvency in 1827) and suggests that if they were happening

²⁹⁴ Prior, 'Friends in Business'.

investigations were taking place largely behind the scenes.²⁹⁵ Even in 1827 when decisions, (likely based on earlier events), filtered through, Joseph Gibbins was not disowned or investigated (or mentioned at all), suggesting that his misdemeanours and misfortunes in 1825 were only informally or privately acted upon.²⁹⁶ This demonstrates national variation and that some individuals and families were likely beyond the reach of the discipline.

The next evidence of which I am aware has been highlighted by Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham.²⁹⁷ They describe how at Huntley and Palmers in around 1851 George Palmer and Thomas Huntley had some level of dispute around their respective work and workloads and new partners in the firm, and George called in three Quakers to arbitrate. This was probably not an uncommon practice among Friends, particularly at this time, which was at the relative peak of the nineteenth-century discipline around business in terms of its prominence in the advices and the strict nature of those advices.

Not too much later, in 1857, the Quaker Derwent Iron Company faced ruin in the north-east of England.²⁹⁸ Elizabeth O'Donnell has shown how the company and the Quaker Jonathan Richardson had transformed the area, drawing Quakers back and re-creating the local Quaker community with their businesses. The Stockton and Darlington Railway provided the iron company's transport. Richardson had loaned the iron company in which he also had a personal interest one million pounds.²⁹⁹ When the bank came

²⁹⁵ Nor was any action taken by the Quarterly Meeting at this time, and there were prominent Quakers such as MP John Ellis, who was also a railway investor and anti-slavery campaigner, on the Quarterly Meeting body. WC, SF/1/1/1/7, Warwickshire Quarterly Meeting Minutes; WC, SF/2/1/1/1/30 and SF/2/1/1/1/31, Warwickshire North Mens Monthly Meeting Minute Book.

²⁹⁶ See Section 2.1.1.

²⁹⁷ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law', 324.

²⁹⁸ O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety'.

²⁹⁹ O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety', 74.

tumbling down, the huge amount owed to it by the Derwent Iron Company was a large part of the reason it fell.³⁰⁰ The behaviour of the owners of the Quaker Derwent Iron Company in borrowing so much more than they were surely able to pay quite clearly fell foul of the book of discipline at this time. They were in debt, were speculating, and were guilty of that most severe offence earlier in the century, engaging in fictitious paper credit, by continuing to buy other concerns when they did not have the finances in hand. O'Donnell has noted that in Newcastle at this time disownment was still the likely outcome in cases of bankruptcy.³⁰¹ Richardson's behaviour in terms of his involvement in both companies was of concern to the other Quaker partners long before failure loomed, and they argued for external auditing, which did not happen.³⁰²

Unsurprisingly, given that his behaviour contravened several 1834 advices, Richardson was disowned in 1858.³⁰³ However, the partners of the iron company were allowed to maintain their membership of the Society of Friends because they were prepared to cede their personal property in order to fulfil their liabilities.³⁰⁴ This demonstrates that in this case the thoroughness of the Monthly Meeting's investigation highlighted Richardson's role sufficiently to enable the partners to remain in membership. However, Richardson's wife Ann felt compelled to resign,³⁰⁵ as did all of his children bar one, and the local Meeting they had built back up dwindled hugely because of the crisis, and had disappeared by 1886.³⁰⁶ This very clearly demonstrates the

³⁰⁰ O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety', 75.

³⁰¹ O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety', 76.

³⁰² O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety', 77.

³⁰³ O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety', 79.

³⁰⁴ O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety', 81–82.

³⁰⁵ O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety', 79.

³⁰⁶ O'Donnell, 'Deviating from the Path of Safety', 85.

significance of the wealth and success of Quaker businessmen, and the potential impact of the enforcement of the discipline on Quaker communities in the mid-nineteenth century.

Only eight years later in 1866, the Quaker banking wholesale firm Overend, Gurney and Co. came catastrophically tumbling down, triggering wider financial chaos and 'Black Friday' because it provided finance to other banks.³⁰⁷ Indeed, it brought down the Bank of London, Consolidated Bank, British Bank of California, and Contract Corporation.³⁰⁸ This happened only one year after it had assumed limited liability status.³⁰⁹ This status would only have encouraged further over-extension on the part of the directors, since they were no longer personally liable. Yet Elliott has shown how the Gurneys were still regarded honourably by the press at this time.³¹⁰ This suggests that the Quaker business reputation nationally remained strong. The Gurneys had separated their Norwich bank from its affairs with Overend and Gurney not long before the crash.³¹¹ This meant that their ancestral bank at least survived the debacle. However, there were several Quaker partners in common across both firms, and their exposed knowledge of Overend and Gurney's over-extension and creation of fictitious credit is certainly surprising in the context of the book of discipline of 1861,³¹² which as I demonstrated above remained clear on that point and about debts.

³⁰⁷ Geoffrey Elliott, *The Mystery of Overend and Gurney: A Financial Scandal in Victorian London* (London: Methuen, 2006).

³⁰⁸ Elliott, *The Mystery of Overend and Gurney*, 185.

³⁰⁹ Elliott, *The Mystery of Overend and Gurney*, 163.

³¹⁰ Elliott, *The Mystery of Overend and Gurney*, 163.

³¹¹ Elliott, *The Mystery of Overend and Gurney*, 174.

³¹² Elliott, *The Mystery of Overend and Gurney*.

It might be reasonable to think that the Quakers implicated in the national scandal faced some censure. Yet Elliott describes the response from the Society of Friends as non-existent.³¹³ This seems incredible in the context of their knowledge and behaviour, and the national scale of the crisis. It suggests, compared to the 1820s response with the Frys and the 1850s response with Jonathan Richardson, that the discipline was less likely to be enforced by this time.

I return now to the businesses of Joseph Pease, the young director of the Stockton and Darlington Railway and the first Quaker MP. Joseph built up several commercially successful businesses alongside the woollen mill his father had run over the nineteenth century.³¹⁴ Several of them thrived thanks to the railway. In turn, his eldest son, Joseph Whitwell Pease, followed him both into parliament (in 1865) and into the family businesses, taking on the businesses in 1872.³¹⁵ Being Quakers and from a similar area, the Peases had a share in the Consett Iron Company, which came out of the Derwent Iron Company,³¹⁶ demonstrating further the strength of the networks at this time. As we saw above, the firm took on the limited liability form in 1882, ahead of most other Quaker firms. Joseph and Joseph Whitwell together ran the family bank, which Edward and Joseph had begun to support their other business, and which was now known as J and J W Pease. Kirby describes how the bank had first encountered difficulties in the 1870s

³¹³ Elliott, *The Mystery of Overend and Gurney*, 229.

³¹⁴ A. F. Pollard, Charlotte Fell-Smith, and M. W. Kirby, 'Edward Pease', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/21728.

³¹⁵ Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty', 151.

³¹⁶ A. S. Wilson, 'The Consett Iron Company Limited: A Case Study in Victorian Business History' (unpublished MPhil thesis, Durham University, 1973), accessed 27 May 2023, <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/9582/>.

with the deaths of some of its partners (including Joseph Pease in 1872) and therefore the withdrawal of their capital.

By 1902 J and J W Pease was so heavily indebted that it was facing bankruptcy, and while the historically Quaker Barclays Bank had agreed to take the bank over, it refused to honour the partners' liabilities.³¹⁷ This bankrupted Joseph Whitwell (now Sir Joseph), though as in the case of Joseph and Elizabeth Fry long before, wealthy family and Friends rescued the Peases personally. When his Monthly Meeting investigated him, perhaps unsurprisingly given the date and previous examples, it not only did not disown him, it went so far as to say that it still held respect for him and his family.³¹⁸ While of course each case would have been treated individually throughout the nineteenth century, and disownment would not have been inevitable earlier, it seems unprecedented to go so far as to issue no rebuke of his increasing indebtedness over an almost thirty-year period when for so long the discipline had encouraged Quakers to turn to their fellows when in trouble (though this was emphasised less by this point), and is beyond the mere silence in relation to the Gurneys.

Kirby suggests in relation to the view that the abandonment of Quaker values and 'virtues' had led to disaster that 'such judgements would have been as unfair as they were outdated. Quakerism was not a static religious faith – how could it be when so many of its most influential adherents were closely identified with commerce and industry, often in daily contact with contemporaries who did not share their faith or scruples?'³¹⁹ Therein lies the quandary: the inevitably growing influence of Quaker businessmen as their

³¹⁷ Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty', 156–157.

³¹⁸ Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty', 158.

³¹⁹ Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty', 157–158.

worldly connections and wealth increased was arguably a driving force in the very demise of the business success of their kind. This was so in that it led to the adoption of more 'worldly' standards and the joint stock form, which undermined Quakers' advantages, particularly in terms of trust and reputation. By this time they were shaping the Society more than it was shaping them, and together they increasingly moved away from a distinctive Quaker ethic. The Society in which they were often still active and highly esteemed did not see fit to admonish them.

This decline in the implementation of the discipline can on the whole be dated to some time between 1850 and 1870 (though Joseph Gibbins is a clear early exception and implementation would have varied between Monthly Meetings). Although in theory the discipline should still have been practised in terms of visiting, rebuking, or disowning Quakers until at least 1883, the evidence I have found suggests that rebuking, disowning, and sometimes even visiting at all were rare by this date. This would have been a factor in undermining trust in Quaker businesses and therefore their reputations, since trust rests on integrity.

Meanwhile, it was written in *The Friend* in 1892 (by whom it is unclear) that 'We firmly believe that it is quite possible even under the present conditions of competition to conduct business upon principles of highest Christian morality.'³²⁰ The author cites the example of a non-Quaker Christian from a recent book, and does not refer to specifically Quaker principles and values, or to the discipline. This suggests that, as the role of the discipline in the lives of Quaker businesspeople diminished, there was a sense that business principles might begin to be agreed through Quaker conversation. It also indicates that, while the author refers to Quaker tradition, a distinctively Quaker

³²⁰ *The Friend*, 19 August 1892, 550-551.

approach was not necessarily being sought and its details were largely forgotten. The broader Quaker liberalisation which took hold earlier in other areas of the discipline than it did for trade furthered external engagement and the shift from an imposed discipline to a conversation which left business people free to live out the Quaker testimonies as they saw fit, and to face no consequences for a lack of integrity as they became more worldly.

2.7 Conclusion

If even the most laudable 'plain' Quaker firms and their owners such as the Cadburys were not in fact managing to fully maintain their integrity or conduct business and its associated activities in a distinctively Quaker way by the end of the nineteenth century, this surely should lead us to question the nature and degree of the Quaker business 'success' at this time which has often been proclaimed.³²¹ While some Quakers were undoubtedly successful in business, as this chapter shows others were less so, and these factors should temper our consideration of Quaker business success.

As the Quaker business community entered the twentieth century, it had experienced considerable change over the preceding 100 years, but some things had remained similar. There is likely to have still existed some 'secular utility' for Quakers and their businesses, as Fincham demonstrated in the earlier part of the century, and some of these factors such as strong elite business networks continued beyond this period to a lesser extent.³²² In terms of bolstering business networks and success, there

³²¹ For example by Raistrick, *Quakers in Science and Industry*; Walvin, *The Quakers*; Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company'.

³²² Fincham, 'The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success'.

was still a considerable degree of intermarriage and familial closeness, despite this not having been regulated for over forty years. And some business families, such as the Cadburys and the Lloyds, remained successful over the century.

However, other factors, such as the strength of the discipline and its implementation, were diminishing by the century's close. Although the books of discipline appeared to remain strong on paper, there were some key omissions in 1883 which began to undermine practice, and the clear evidence is that practice shifted away from enacting disciplinary measures, which would have begun to undermine Quaker businesses' reputational advantage and trust. The extensive influence of businessmen within institutional Quaker structures would have contributed to this, as they started behaving in ways contrary to the books in some cases, and did not have an interest in maintaining the discipline.

Quaker businessmen's behaviour and growing visibility in public roles would also have muddied public understandings of Quaker values. In this regard the growing liberalisation of Quakerism therefore also increasingly undermined the distinctive Quaker testimonies and values in business, since however honourable their public work in many cases, it brought them into contact with others of different denominations who held other and less formalised values.³²³ Their involvement in railway ventures may well to them have seemed to be driven by business need and innovation, but this would have been largely socially scorned and the Society very much disapproved of it for a long time too. Joint-stock bank endeavours financially undid Joseph Gibbins, the Gurneys, and the Peases, but in the former case his influence seems to have saved him from rebuke, and in

³²³ See, for example, James Cropper's ethical doubts about the Stephensons in railway development: Jarvis, 'James Cropper'.

the latter two cases it was probably the passing of time which meant that the discipline was not used to rebuke them. This change was on two levels: the written discipline seems to show a practical resignation about the previously condemned speculative activities and banking failures, and society more broadly had become more accustomed to, if not content with, the new status quo by the late nineteenth century.

There was also by the late nineteenth century a class division in attitudes to speculation,³²⁴ and wealthy Quakers would have fallen on the more morally acceptable side of this, having access to information and resources and broader social networks among which to research speculations before they invested. Even though those speculating were ultimately still entering into financial risk taking little different to gambling which Quakers in early years would have been horrified by, it had developed for some at least a veneer of respectability by this time. And the Society of Friends was moving closer to society in many ways, through the increased social opportunities and relaxed rules. The theological liberalisation and associated emerging individualism in the sense of leaving Quakers to their own consciences reinforced this.

All the Quaker firms I have found which survived through to the end of the nineteenth century converted to a company from a partnership, and most then became limited liability later in the century. Lloyds even became a public company very early, in 1865.³²⁵ By limiting responsibility and introducing the possibility of many more shareholders, this further undermined some core Quaker values which had aided their business ventures, such as character, trust, and integrity, which had ultimately begun on

³²⁴ Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 214.

³²⁵ Humphrey Lloyd, *The Quaker Lloyds in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Hutchinson, 1975).

a national Quaker level with their financing of the Stockton and Darlington Railway.³²⁶ As more firms converted it made starker the potential for tension within the Society of Friends around the issues raised by such companies.

The Birmingham community had shifted and dispersed considerably in geographical terms. Whereas in the first half of the century the community had been focused on Bull Street, this changed as the century wore on and the business community generally moved out towards Edgbaston. The increasing influence of Quaker businessmen and the growth of their businesses as they moved out over the century meant that the community had somewhat brought its division on itself by encouraging the establishment of new Meetings in association with the Adult School Movement,³²⁷ and by bringing employees of larger firms into the community. This division probably had some detrimental effect on the community's interactions and mutual support.

The number of Birmingham firms changing hands between Quakers in the mid to late century attests to the enduring strength of their networks; I would suggest that the dispersal affected the mutual support given on the finer details, rather than on exchanges such as these. What was lost was the opportunity to discuss business on a weekly basis which Birmingham Preparative Meeting on Bull Street had enabled.

Quaker businessmen had become increasingly influential in public life, as well as affluent. This meant that some chose to retire or cut back their businesses considerably, or to work within the Religious Society of Friends, which was ultimately not in the interests of their business success and is another factor in a move away from business

³²⁶ Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint-Stock Company'.

³²⁷ Andy Vail, 'Protestant Non-Conformists: Providers of Educational and Social Services', in Peter Ackers and Alastair J. Reid (eds), *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain* (Cham: Springer, 2016), 133–134.

among Quakers. As their affluence increased and the discipline relaxed, there were also those in later generations such as the Palmers of Huntley and Palmers who left the Society of Friends and became Anglican and Tory, under external influences.³²⁸

Where at the beginning of the nineteenth century partnerships and close ties had existed to bolster the Quaker business community, while intermarriage remained strong, the business community left the nineteenth century in a weaker position. This was due to its geographical dispersal and the draw of public office and outside influences. Somewhat ironically, it was also due to Quaker innovation, which led to two key outcomes: the desire to experiment with company forms, which aided the rise of the joint-stock company and limited liability forms in society generally, and the need for greater investment than was easily possible through a partnership form.

³²⁸ Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty'.

3. The British and Quaker Social Business Context, 1900–1914

The period 1900–1914 was a time of great social change within and without Quakerism, as I discuss in this chapter, which serves to contextualise my next chapter on the impact of World War I on Quaker businesses. I begin by considering social and industrial change outside of the Society of Friends and its impact upon the Society, as well as the rise of Quaker MPs. This includes introducing John William Wilson, an MP and key figure in the story of Albright and Wilson. Following this section on Quakers and engagement with the world is an account of how the changing legal structure at Albright and Wilson diminished the strength of its Quaker nature.

I then assess social change within the Society of Friends, before focusing on Quaker thought on business at the time. This begins with an analysis of how the theological revival of Quakerism meant that its advices were taking a stronger line on many issues such as speculation and gambling than had been the case for many years, while simultaneously the guidance on oversight advocated no action or interference in the lives of Quakers, meaning there was no practical means of implementing the guidance. Following this I introduce William Arthur Albright, John William Wilson's predecessor at Albright and Wilson and an active Quaker, to highlight their differing interests and personalities. My focus on business thought then looks at Yearly Meeting activity in which William Arthur would have been involved, and analyses two works that shed light on Quaker views on business, one from the perspective of a businessman and the other from that of an influential liberal Quaker. This demonstrates the growing interest in and conversation around business at this time in the Society of Friends.

3.1 Quakers and Wider Social Change

3.1.1. Unions and Social Change

From around 1889 trade union activity in Britain had increased considerably, with many lengthy strikes.¹ Simultaneously, Christian and other forms of socialism were growing in their popularity and traction. Politically this led, at the turn of the twentieth century, to the creation of the Labour Representation Committee, which became known as the Labour Party in 1906. Socialism was by no means monolithic, and many Christian socialists in particular were guild socialists, at odds with unionists and the Labour Party.² Instead of advocating for state socialism, guild socialists believed in and advocated for the '*administration of industry by the producers*' in different industries.³

Between 1910 and 1913 there were many strikes nationally, including a railway strike in 1911 which closed stations,⁴ and which cannot have best pleased Quaker business investors in the railway companies. E. J. Hobsbawm goes so far as to say of strike action that there was a 'renewed, and as it turned out, permanent, expansion after 1911'.⁵

There was a major outbreak of strikes in the Black Country in 1913. This is of particular relevance here, as it surrounded and touched at least one Quaker business in the area given that the union activity began at a Quaker business, Tangye's (Allan Tangye was married to John William Wilson's sister Anna Deborah and was a shareholder in

¹ H. A. Clegg, Alan Fox and A. F. Thompson, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889*, vol. 1, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), 56.

² Peter D'Alroy Jones, *Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 277-291.

³ D'Alroy Jones, *Christian Socialist Revival*, 277.

⁴ George Ranken Askwith, *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (London: John Murray, 1920), 162.

⁵ E. J. Hobsbawm, 'General Labour Unions in Britain 1889-1914', *Economic History Review*, 1, no. 1 (1949), 125.

Albright and Wilson). This demonstrates that not all Quaker firms at the time were able to negotiate with their employees in order to avoid industrial action. The basis for the action was that experience and promotion had not been rewarded with a wage increase as had been previous policy on this occasion. There may have been an economic explanation for this. However, on the face of it, this alteration of workers' conditions runs counter to the principles many Quaker firms purported to uphold.

Eric Taylor, whose PhD thesis describes the Black Country strikes in some detail and who is my source for the information about Tangye's, suggests that the firm's base rate of pay was not especially low and that it 'was widely recognised as a good employer', though he provides no evidence for this.⁶ If Taylor's assertion is correct, then clearly being a 'good' Quaker employer did not necessarily entail paying at the upper end of the going rate for labour. I would dispute Taylor's claim about the rate of pay, for where one takes the range of the 'going rate' for 'this time to be between 20 shillings and 25 shillings per week', 21 shillings per week, the initially offered revised rate, is not at the higher end.⁷ Evidently, there must have been other ways in which Quaker employers could earn a reputation for being 'good', although not all paid particularly well.

The strike at Tangye's ran for two weeks and involved 1600 workers, or two-thirds of the workforce. It was resolved by the demand for a 23 shilling a week wage being met, and an agreement that higher-skilled workers would be given a pay rise as soon as it was due.⁸ That this took place at a Quaker firm suggests some reluctance to engage with

⁶ Eric Taylor, 'The Working Class Movement in the Black Country 1863-1914' (unpublished PhD thesis, Keele University, 1974), 342.

⁷ Clegg, Fox, and Thompson, *A History of British Trade Unions* 482; Taylor, 'The Working Class Movement', 342.

⁸ Taylor, 'The Working Class Movement', 343.

the union in this case. The next business to be affected, Chance and Hunt, neighboured Albright and Wilson.⁹ Chance and Hunt's parent company, Chance Brothers, quickly agreed to meet the 23 shilling a week demand imported from the Tangye's agreement, thus meaning that strike action was not resorted to.¹⁰

Other Quaker employers took varying approaches to union activity. Kirby has shown that Joseph Whitwell Pease was not against the unions in Durham and actually advocated on behalf of the miners and the union, believing unions to be 'an essential element in maintaining the balance between labour and capital', and becoming a 'thorn in the side' of the Durham Coal Owners Association.¹¹

Despite the agreements, strikes continued in the West Midlands and by June 1913 it was reported that strikers were starving to death. It was around this time that local employers formed the Midland Employers' Federation, in an endeavour to deal with union activism together. Albright and Wilson would join this Federation in 1915.¹² The employers at first insisted they would not negotiate until the strikes had ceased, but soon changed their tune with encouragement from another employers' federation and local politicians.¹³ The strikes spread so far and encompassed so many thousands of workers that they would have been impossible for local Quakers to ignore, from workers to businessmen, socialists to conservatives, and all those in between.

⁹ Taylor, 'The Working Class Movement', 343.

¹⁰ Taylor, 'The Working Class Movement', 343.

¹¹ Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty', 154.

¹² WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1384, 8 June 1915.

¹³ Taylor, 'The Working Class Movement', 350-351.

3.1.2 Quakers in Parliament, 1906

Nine Quakers were elected to Parliament in 1906, all of whom were likely to have been businessmen, as part of what Brian Phillips calls 'the great Nonconformist electoral triumph'.¹⁴ Eight of the nine Quaker businessmen were elected as Liberals. The other person who may have been a Quaker, Frederick Leverton Harris, was elected as a Conservative.¹⁵ As well as being a Liberal landslide, this election has been noted for being, to a considerable extent, contested over the issue of free trade. In election speeches 98% of Liberals referred to free trade as a commitment,¹⁶ so it is safe to assume that all of the Liberal Quaker businessmen elected would have been in favour of this. Turnbull has argued that this is related to and potentially a consequence of Quakers' early commitment to religious liberty.¹⁷

None of those elected represented the newly formed Labour Party. Having said this, the Labour Party won only 29 seats to the Liberals' 397, so this is not particularly surprising statistically.¹⁸

Ian Packer has highlighted the strength of the link between the politics of the Liberal Party and nonconformist religion in the early twentieth century in the context of the Rowntree family.¹⁹ He notes that 'In Warrington... of the town councillors whose

¹⁴ Phillips, 'Friendly Patriotism', 35. The businessmen I have identified as elected or re-elected in 1906 are Joseph Allen Baker, John William Wilson, Frederick Leverton Harris, Joseph Albert Pease, Harold Reckitt, John Ellis, Alfred Emmott, Alfred John King, and John Emmott Barlow.

¹⁵ See later in this section.

¹⁶ Douglas A. Irwin, 'The Political Economy of Free Trade: Voting in the British General Election of 1906', *Journal of Law & Economics*, 37, no. 1 (1994), 82.

¹⁷ Turnbull, 'Quakers, Free Trade and Social Responsibility', 97.

¹⁸ Clegg, Fox, and Thompson, *A History of British Trade Unions*, 387.

¹⁹ Ian Packer, 'Religion and the New Liberalism: The Rowntree Family, Quakerism, and Social Reform', *Journal of British Studies*, 42, no. 2, 240.

religion can be determined, in the twenty years up to 1914 the twelve Anglicans were all Tories and six of the seven Nonconformists were Liberals.²⁰ This link between politics and faith has been suggested by others such as Corley,²¹ and is also noteworthy in the local politics of nineteenth-century Birmingham Quakers, as examined above.²²

However, as we have seen, there was one Conservative Quaker MP elected in 1906. I am aware of Frederick Leverton Harris as a possible Quaker through Kennedy (calling him Frank), who refers to his abandoning peace at the outbreak of World War I.²³ However, I have not been able to verify Harris' Quaker standing or membership, besides the acknowledgement in Ede and Brodie's *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* article that his family were 'of Quaker background'.²⁴ He also does not feature in Milligan's *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*.²⁵

I therefore seriously doubt Harris' Quaker credentials. I have found no information about his possible religious affiliation otherwise, to assess whether he fits the Anglican and Tory tendency, but it seems unlikely that he was a political anomaly within Quakerism; rather, he was external to the Society of Friends. This goes some way in explaining why Harris certainly seems to have been different to his Quaker compatriots in parliament. For example, he was a protectionist in favour of tariffs rather than in favour of free trade, as were many Conservatives.²⁶

²⁰ Packer, 'Religion and the New Liberalism', 240.

²¹ Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success', 182.

²² Bailey, 'The Contribution of Quakers', 49–50.

²³ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 312.

²⁴ H. S. Ede and Marc Brodie, 'Harris, (Frederick) Leverton (1864–1926), Politician and Art Collector', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi: [10.1093/ref:odnb/33723](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33723).

²⁵ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*.

²⁶ Ede and Brodie, 'Harris, (Frederick) Leverton'.

This therefore leaves eight Quaker businessmen who were MPs, all of them Liberal, and supports those such as Corley, Packer, and Phillips who noted the nonconformist Liberal connection.²⁷ Corley provides considerable evidence of Quaker business families where in the second or third generation the shift to the Anglican church was also accompanied by a change in politics from Liberal to Conservative.²⁸ It also suggests that Packer's observation about Warrington above rings true more broadly.

3.1.3 Quakers in Parliament, 1910

In 1910, at least another two Quakers joined the ranks of MPs: Arnold Rowntree, who also worked at Rowntree's confectionery firm, and T. Edmund Harvey. Packer has shown how Rowntree used most of his time in parliament advocating for social reform, in terms of wages and conditions for railway, coal, and mine workers, for example.²⁹ This demonstrates that within the body of contemporary Quaker industrialists, and even those in parliament, Rowntree was relatively progressive in the social issues he pursued. Harvey was the first Quaker elected to parliament who was not a businessman in a long while, and possibly ever, signalling the beginning of a shift in occupations among Quakers as the twentieth century progressed.

3.1.4 An Introduction to John William Wilson: His Views and Public Roles

One of the nationally influential Quaker businessmen MPs was John William Wilson (1858–1932), a director of Albright and Wilson. In 1895 he became MP for Worcestershire North, initially as a Liberal Unionist and from 1903 as a Liberal. Like John

²⁷ Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success'; Packer, 'Religion and the New Liberalism'; Phillips, 'Friendly Patriotism'.

²⁸ Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success', 180–182.

²⁹ Packer, 'Religion and the New Liberalism', 250.

Bright, he was thoroughly committed to free trade: when protectionism, which would end free trade, was introduced by Chamberlain as leader of the Liberal Unionists in 1903, John William felt strongly enough to change parties to maintain this commitment. In 1901 he was also a Justice of the Peace (a local judge, like his father before him) and a local county councillor.³⁰ He gained some influence in parliament, being admitted to the privy council (of the monarch) in 1911.³¹

Dowd has demonstrated how George Cadbury was involved in regional parliamentary political negotiations.³² This included bringing John William onside about a Liberal/Labour pact in 1903, and consequently ensuring that a Labour candidate did not stand against him, thus securing John William's position. In the light of their faith community ties, this highlights how the Quaker business elite reinforced its power in politics as well as in business.

Arnold Rowntree's letters to his wife Mary Katherine provide valuable evidence about the relationship between himself and John William and other Quaker MPs and those close to them in parliament from 1910 to 1918.³³ In terms of shedding light on individuals' Quakerism, however, these letters tend to muddy the waters rather than to clarify. In his first letter referring to John William, written in July 1911, Arnold refers to 'getting really fond of' John William, with whom he had lunched.³⁴ This demonstrates

³⁰ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 48.

³¹ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 84; *Debretts House of Commons and Judicial Bench* (London: Dean, 1901), 161, accessed 22 January 2020, <https://archive.org/details/debrettshouseo1901londuoft/page/160/mode/2up>; *The London Gazette*, 7 July 1911, 5025, accessed 23 January 2020, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/28511/page/5025>.

³² Dowd, 'The Social and Political Activity of the Cadbury Family', 61, 65.

³³ Packer, *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree*.

³⁴ Packer, *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree*, 58.

some affinity, probably bred through their common Quaker background and both being MPs. However, his references to John William then cease, barring one further reference until March 1915, which seems a little curious as he often refers to those he lunches with in his letters.

In the case of John William, determining his faith status is not straightforward in the context of later evidence I detail below.³⁵ However, the Quaker archive records about him are superficially straightforward. For example, if membership alone determines whether someone can be called a Quaker, then John William's case is straightforward. He began life as a birth-right Quaker at Birmingham Meeting, and transferred his membership to Worcestershire and Shropshire Monthly Meeting in 1897, where he is described as a 'gentleman', two years after he moved to Perrycroft, a house in Malvern he had designed by an Arts and Crafts architect.³⁶ This suggests that despite his growing wealth he still identified as and felt Quaker at that point.

Despite his official membership, John William does not appear in any meeting records across the levels of meeting.³⁷ From this I infer that he was not an active Quaker by this time. Despite this he could still meet my definition of a Quaker if he did not persistently contravene any of the four Quaker testimonies.³⁸

³⁵ See below 4.3.1 and 4.3.6.

³⁶ In a list of the members of Gloucestershire and Shropshire Monthly Meeting from 1860 to 1899 inclusive, and from 1899 to 1922 inclusive, and 1923–1958. In the latter it is noted that John William Wilson's membership is dissolved by death. 1304, Parcel 4, 898.2. Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology service, The Hive. William Adlington Cadbury confirms this, recording the presence of John William Wilson as son of John Edward and therefore a birth-right Friend at Bull Street, but gives no further detail about his attendance: Cadbury, 'Bull Street Friends I Have Known', 82.

³⁷ Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (henceforth WAAS), 898.2, Worcestershire and Shropshire Monthly Meeting Minutes, 63, 1304, parcel 4. I have consulted Preparative, Monthly and Quarterly Meeting minutes and found no trace of John William being mentioned.

³⁸ See Section 1.5.

I discuss John William's Quakerism further and demonstrate its complexity in terms of contrary evidence below,³⁹ but here I would suggest the basis for Arnold Rowntree referring to him as a 'Friend' had more to do with John William's common links to birth-right families of the Quaker establishment or elite than to his personal faith, given the lack of evidence relating to his participation in Meetings. For members of wealthy Quaker families who had become embedded in the broader social system over a number of years, maintaining the importance of and allegiance to one's Quakerism cannot have been easy, even more so in the context of Quakerism's increased social conscience and its development of the Peace Testimony.

The most recent book of discipline at the beginning of this time from 1883 officially stated that Monthly Meetings were 'at liberty' to remove from their lists the names of those who 'make little or no profession with us, and do not attend our Meetings for Worship, and no advantage appears likely to arise from their retaining a membership in our Society'.⁴⁰ The phrasing 'at liberty' clearly suggests an element of choice here, and in the Quaker culture of the time, where businessmen held powerful positions in the Society of Friends and in public, I would suggest that in the case of birth-right Friends such as John William this would have rarely been applied.

The 'advantage' clause here certainly implies discretion and the likelihood of discrimination, and to a Society increasingly embedded in worldly concerns it would not be advantageous to remove a prominent businessman and politician from its membership for non-attendance. The previous 1861 book had been clear that discipline could be applied to those who attended worship elsewhere. However, this is no longer

³⁹ See Section 4.3.1.

⁴⁰ 1883, *Book of Christian Discipline*, 1883, 201.

explicitly addressed by 1883. This combines with the optional nature of the wording in 1883 to suggest an increasingly relaxed approach to attendance at Meetings and elsewhere, which gave Quakers the liberty to apply their discipline discriminately. Simultaneously, by continuing to confirm birth-right membership, the 1883 book reinforced the positions of key Quaker business families.⁴¹

John William's parliamentary record sheds further light on this. He clearly toed the Quaker line and was principled on slavery, in 1906 seeking, in the footsteps of his fellow (nominal) Quaker Joseph Albert Pease,⁴² to ensure that the British rule in Zanzibar led to the release of slaves.⁴³ However, what was termed his 'larger understanding' of the inward guidance of the light is visible in John William's other foci in parliament.⁴⁴ On the issue of betting, a practice long forbidden to Quakers, John William is clearly passionately against at least some forms of it, but pragmatism overruled principle for him when he stated, in a debate on a Bill in 1906 to outlaw street betting, that to attempt to go further was futile:

it was idle to suppose that even this Radical Parliament was resolved to put a stop to betting on racecourses. They were, in attempting to do it, running their heads against a brick wall, and aiding and abetting those who wished to see this Bill defeated.⁴⁵

⁴¹ 1820, 1861, *Book of Christian Discipline*, 1883, 200.

⁴² Slavery in the Zanzibar Protectorate, *Hansard*, Vol. 53, debated on Thursday 10 February 1898, Columns 294–298, accessed 30 April 2022, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1898-02-10/debates/2d34f193-ea2d-4663-8b2e-9e872656bfca/SlaveryInTheZanzibarProtectorate>.

⁴³ Slavery in Zanzibar, *Hansard*, Vol. 157, debated on Thursday 24 May 1906, accessed 30 April 2022, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1906-05-24/debates/1efbf70f-b616-4512-914f-b5abb9100793/SlaveryInZanzibar>.

⁴⁴ See Section 4.4.2.

⁴⁵ Street Betting Bill Lords, *Hansard*, Vol. 166, debated on Monday 10 December 1906, Column 1689, accessed 30 April 2022, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1906-12-10/debates/f593261d-4c03-4b75-898a-de6262f1caf6/StreetBettingBillLords>.

John William's commitment to ending street betting was also sufficient to be prioritised over a notion of individual freedom: he spoke in favour of police powers of search to enable cases of street betting to be ascertained.⁴⁶ He also specifically supported the aim of protecting 'youths, women and children' from those employed to entice them into gambling on the street.⁴⁷ Whether it was to meet his own political ends is unclear, but he also endorsed a class distinction in gambling, suggesting that an MP betting at a racecourse was acceptable, but 'bookies in the streets' were not.⁴⁸ This demonstrates that a commitment to Quaker principles could be long-lived, but also that culturally Quaker MPs were often very much part of the establishment.

In terms of a broader social conscience, John William was actively involved in the formulation of the National Insurance Bill of 1911, which would become the National Insurance Act.⁴⁹ A cynic might say that as an employer John William had an interest in splitting the burden of sick pay across employer, employee, and government. However, the evidence from his involvement in the debates is that his contributions were thoughtful and considered. He also recognised the justice of taxation, and of the problem of the wealthy, particularly Conservatives, attempting to delay paying taxes or licences for the sale of alcohol.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Street Betting Bill Lords.

⁴⁷ Street Betting Bill Lords.

⁴⁸ Street Betting Bill Lords.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Clause 4 (Rates and Rules for Contributions by Employed Contributors and Their Employers), *Hansard*, Vol. 28, debated on Monday 10 July 1911, accessed 30 April 2022, [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1911-07-10/debates/db0d63fa-9987-4f0d-a25f-d6410ea20f17/Clause4%E2%80%94\(RatesAndRulesForContributionsByEmployedContributorsAndTheirEmployers\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1911-07-10/debates/db0d63fa-9987-4f0d-a25f-d6410ea20f17/Clause4%E2%80%94(RatesAndRulesForContributionsByEmployedContributorsAndTheirEmployers)).

⁵⁰ Clause 53—Temporary Provision as to Expiration of Licences, *Hansard*, Vol. 17, debated on Tuesday 26 April 1910, Column 366, accessed 30 April 2022, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1910-04-26/debates/deab38b6-c78d-4f1e-9300-7190c94bf9ae/Clause53%E2%80%94TemporaryProvisionAsToExpirationOfLicences>.

Certainly, some of John William's contributions to parliamentary debates were driven by a combination of his role as an employer and his personal politics. He advocated for the centralisation of regulatory powers and expertise in the Factory Bill in 1901, early in his parliamentary career.⁵¹ This demonstrates his enthusiasm for managerialism, and coincides with the appointment at Albright and Wilson of Richard Threlfall as an external non-Quaker technical director who would direct the day-to-day operations of the firm. It is symbolic of a move away from the family and local context towards the external, distanced expertise which would in part lead to the demise of identifiably Quaker firms, and the undermining of their distinct ethos.

In a sense, that John William did not outright reject factory legislation is a departure from Bright and Pease in the nineteenth century. However, a Quaker-inspired commitment to freedom in trade was also never far away, and he advocated for the same Factory and Workshop Act to be properly debated in order that no 'ultimately too severe or restrictive legislation is passed affecting the industries of the country'.⁵²

It is evident, then, that for John William Quakerism was largely a badge of identity he acquired at birth and maintained almost by default, which brought him connections and status, including in parliament. The death of John William's father John Edward Wilson, one of the founders Albright and Wilson, in 1907 may have contributed to a sense of freedom on John William's part to henceforth distance himself from his Quaker roots.

⁵¹ Factory and Workshop Acts Amendment Bill, Hansard, Vol. 95, debated on Monday 17 June 1901, accessed 1 May 2022, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1901-06-17/debates/827dbaf0-0282-466c-bb6c-c588d457d143/FactoryAndWorkshopActsAmendmentBill>.

⁵² Factory and Workshops Act Amendment Bill.

3.1.5 Rowntree, Wilson, and Other Quaker MPs

The cases of Rowntree and John William Wilson show the growing reach of Quaker businessmen in political and public life on a national level, and their degree of comfort working within the state and social order from which Quakers had once sought to remain aloof. Their choices of political party demonstrate a likely unease with the more socialist thinkers emerging in the Society of Friends at this time. This fits with Brian Phillips' argument that 1890–1910 specifically was a period during which Quakers were reacting against their radical anti-establishment roots to prove their respectability by entering public life and even by embracing some forms of patriotism, suggesting that they put their public representation before their broadness as a movement and their 'autonomy'.⁵³

When this is considered alongside nineteenth-century factors in decline in the Quaker business sphere, such as the separation of work and home and changes in company law, one can imagine how a twentieth-century Quaker businessman might become much more a part of the establishment than in earlier times. All of these factors, alongside decreasing accountability to one's Meeting, combined around this period to encourage most Quaker businessmen to separate their faith and public life – the physical separation of home and business, the growing trend and desire to assimilate with others in public life, and the impetus as a result of the company law changes to accede to a capitalist mode of business.

These factors explain the presence of a Quaker businessman who sat in parliament as a Conservative: Alfred Bigland from 1910.⁵⁴ Bigland was certainly pro-Empire and protectionist, though there is no evidence that other Quaker MPs did not take this

⁵³ Phillips, 'Friendly Patriotism', 48, 69–70.

⁵⁴ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 312.

stance.⁵⁵ What is more, Kennedy demonstrates that even more progressive Quakers such as Edward Grubb, whom we encounter further below, were not entirely anti-Empire, but merely in favour of a reformed Empire.⁵⁶ Frederick Leverton Harris also sat as an MP from 1900, but as I clarified above, his Quaker standing is in doubt.

3.1.6 Businessmen, Welfare, and Social Change

As the example of Arnold Rowntree has already demonstrated, there was an increasing diversity of views among businessmen, even among ‘Liberals’, on how to engage with society and government. This was particularly highlighted by those, like the Cadburys and the Rowntrees, who were inspired by the new thinking of the ‘renaissance’ and other broader social trends to actively pursue social reform. Progressive Liberal businessmen such as these were prominent in influencing the social order in other ways, including building model villages for employees. Seebohm Rowntree’s *Poverty, A Study of Town Life*, which had a considerable impact, was published in 1901. Yet Seebohm went still further, helping Lloyd George, when the latter was president of the Board of Trade, with a land inquiry and later on several other committees, not least as director of the welfare department of the Ministry of Munitions.⁵⁷ We will see below that Seebohm, as a businessman and a sociologist, was also actively engaged in considering the ethics of Quaker engagement with business.

I have encountered few Quaker businessmen who were socialists at this time aside from the Priestmans. Arthur Priestman was a Quaker and both a Labour town councillor

⁵⁵ New Clause. (Increase of Imperial Preference on Sugar.) HC Deb 28 June 1922 vol. 155 cc2269–70, accessed 27 May 2022, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1922/jun/28/new-clause-increase-of-imperial#S5CV0155P0_19220628_HOC_735.

⁵⁶ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 269.

⁵⁷ Packer, ‘Religion and the New Liberalism’; Brian Harrison, ‘Seebohm Rowntree’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/35856.

in Bradford and a cloth manufacturer. His socialist ministry led to him being asked to refrain from speaking in his Meeting for Worship in 1898. He therefore did not attend Meeting for Worship for eight years, but continued worship privately at home.⁵⁸ He ran the family firm, which his father and uncle had established, alongside his brother, who appears also to have been active in public life as a Justice of the Peace and alderman, as well as active in the Society of Friends, though he does not seem to have been inclined towards socialism.⁵⁹

Then there were those, like John William Wilson and the Peases, who were at the more socially conservative end of the Liberal spectrum, and favoured free trade and the philanthropy of old as the best means of business and social reform.⁶⁰ Further removed still from the Priestmans was Bigland as a Conservative MP.

The period around the turn of the twentieth century was one in which welfare provision was growing and not uncommon in businesses generally.⁶¹ David Jeremy links this with paternalism and a desire to 'combine benevolence with instrumentality'.⁶² This fits with Edward Cadbury's ideals and those of scientific management, which are examined below. This period was also one in which governmental welfare provision was increasingly being implemented. For example, the first UK state pensions were introduced in 1908.⁶³ Not long afterwards, in 1911, the National Insurance Act was passed. It was means assessed, applying to wage earners earning below £160 a year only,

⁵⁸ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 340.

⁵⁹ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers*, 341.

⁶⁰ Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty'.

⁶¹ Jeremy, *Capitalists and Christians*, 126.

⁶² Jeremy, *Capitalists and Christians*, 126.

⁶³ Djuna Thurley, 'Research Briefing: Old Age Pensions Act 1908', House of Commons Library, 12 August 2008, accessed 9 April 2022, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn04817/>.

and it covered unemployment and sickness.⁶⁴ In this sense, then, some of the scope for Quaker employers to live out their ethical principles around benevolence in the workplace was beginning to diminish with the introduction of statutory support.

By the 1890s Albright and Wilson had a sick club to support its unwell employees.⁶⁵ Janet Sullivan has further investigated policies relating to employee health at Albright and Wilson in the context of phosphorus being particularly harmful, and has concluded that the firm made similar provisions to its neighbours, Chance and Hunt.⁶⁶ Aside from the provision of a convalescent home in Malvern, there was little difference between the Quaker and non-Quaker firms.⁶⁷ From around 1892, when Albright and Wilson incorporated, it had a pension scheme in place.⁶⁸ In this sense it was fairly typical among industrial firms. There are indications that at least in some cases, by the time of World War I the firm did not provide sick pay above and beyond the statutory minimum available to an employee.⁶⁹ This supports my assertion that, while John William Wilson advocated as an MP for increased taxation to support the introduction of a state pension from as early as 1907,⁷⁰ Albright and Wilson's welfare provisions were unexceptional on the whole, and did not go further than those of other firms. My impression of their provisions is that they fit with the paternalism of the time identified by Jeremy and mentioned above.

⁶⁴ Helen Jones, 'Health', in Robert Page and Robert Silburn (eds), *British Social Welfare in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 165.

⁶⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 11, Partners Minute Book 1891-1896.

⁶⁶ Sullivan, 'Paying the Price for Industrialisation', 227-228.

⁶⁷ Sullivan, 'Paying the Price for Industrialisation', 228.

⁶⁸ WC, MS 1724, Box 3, Documents from 1901.

⁶⁹ WC, MS 1724, Box 65, Letter book JWW 1911-1917.

⁷⁰ King's Speech (Motion for an Address), *Hansard*, Vol. 169, debated on Wednesday 13 February 1907, Column 239, accessed 30 April 2022, [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1907-02-13/debates/4af096a6-8c8f-4c49-ad61-c94f70dd9c89/KingSSpeech\(MotionForAnAddress\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1907-02-13/debates/4af096a6-8c8f-4c49-ad61-c94f70dd9c89/KingSSpeech(MotionForAnAddress)).

3.1.7 Section Conclusion: Quakers and Wider Change

I have shown here that in the early twentieth century Quaker firms had a range of approaches to industrial action as striking increased, and that they did not always pay particularly well. Employers in the Midlands organised an employers' federation, which the Quaker firm Albright and Wilson joined in 1915.

I then demonstrated the strong national influence of nine Quakers in parliament in 1906, with a focus on introducing John William Wilson of Albright and Wilson and highlighting his priorities, including some Quaker themes such as betting and a concern for national insurance. I demonstrate through the example of John William the complexities of Quakerism in relation to second- or third-generation wealthy birth-right Quaker businessmen in increasingly public roles. I also provide clear evidence that cultural Quakerism opened social doors for these men and provided them with a network and influence, highlighting the links between culturally Quaker MPs, regardless of whether or not they were practising their faith. I demonstrate that the most recent discipline of the Religious Society of Friends allowed it to keep these cultural Quakers in membership where it advantaged the Society, and where previously they would have been disowned for a lack of regular attendance at Meeting. This lack of accountability in turn would have further contributed to the dilution of what was left of a Quaker reputation in business, allowing anyone of influence and public standing whatever their ethical approach to be seen as Quaker if they were born into the Society. I describe how those such as the Rowntrees and Cadburys began to move into the domain of social reform and national political influence, and show that few of the growing number of socialist in the Society were businessmen. Finally, I discuss welfare provision in Quaker

firms, suggesting that on the whole it would have been little different to that of non-Quaker firms at this time.

3.2 The Impact of the Change in Legal Structure and the Influence of External Figures and Management at Albright and Wilson

After the deaths of its founders in the early twentieth century, control of Albright and Wilson passed into the hands of their sons. By 1908 the firm's business was mostly manufacturing phosphorus for matches.⁷¹ Arthur Albright had nurtured a firm which was international in character: by the outbreak of war in 1914 it had agents in Sweden, France, and Austria, each representing several countries.

The two eldest sons from each family entered the business as directors, along with the third sons, Henry Lloyd Wilson and Frank Albright, who were less actively involved as extra-ordinary directors. The sons who were active in the business were William Arthur Albright and George Stacey Albright, John William Wilson and George Edward Wilson. Arthur Albright, the chemist in the original partnership, in a maritime analogy described John Edward Wilson as the captain, his own sons William Arthur and George Stacey as 'first-mate' and 'sailing-master and chartographer', and John William and George Edward Wilson as officers.⁷²

Scholars of the history of management are agreed that the need for technical and scientific innovation was a key driver of the recruitment of external managers in family

⁷¹ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 124.

⁷² Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 46.

firms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷³ This seems to have been the case in the recruitment of Richard Threlfall, whose title was ‘technical adviser’, to Albright and Wilson. Charles David Sykes’ appointment also conforms to a theme in the rise of management which was that managers arose from the shop floor of a firm.⁷⁴

It is important to bear in mind, when considering Threlfall’s entry into the firm as a shareholder in 1899, that before 1892 it would simply not have been possible, as the firm was not a joint-stock company until that year. Further, George Gatheral’s recruitment as the first works manager occurred in 1892, thus demonstrating the significance of the change in legal status.⁷⁵ Albright and Wilson’s conversion to a private limited company was overseen by Arthur Godlee, its Quaker solicitor who was an active member of George Road Preparative Meeting, for example serving as clerk of the Meeting in 1893.⁷⁶ Gatheral’s role commenced at just the second Board meeting of the company, in order to relieve William Arthur of some of his managerial responsibilities.⁷⁷ Gatheral’s salary was high, at £1000, though as he was not a director he did not sit on the Board, nor was he on the Management Committee after its creation in 1901.

It seems too coincidental for these events to be unrelated: the move from a partnership with managing partners to a joint-stock company with directors legally freed the directors from responsibility for running a firm in a way that managing partners could

⁷³ B. Segrestin, A. Johnston, and A. Hatchuel, ‘The Separation of Directors and Managers: A Historical Examination of the Status of Managers’, *Journal of Management History*, 25, no. 2 (2019), 141–164; John F. Wilson and Andrew Thomson, *The Making of Modern Management: British Management in Historical Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 53.

⁷⁴ Wilson and Thomson, *The Making of Modern Management*.

⁷⁵ WC, MS 1724, bundle in Box 50, Agreement of employment.

⁷⁶ WC, SF 3/8/1/1, George Road Preparative Meeting Minutes 1870s-1902, Meeting of 9 April 1893.

⁷⁷ Mark Matthews, Trevor Boyns, and John Richard Edwards, ‘Chandlerian Image or Mirror Image? Managerial and Accounting Control in the Chemical Industry: The Case of Albright and Wilson, c.1892 to c.1923’, *Business History*, 45, no. 4, 43.

never have experienced under the previous system.⁷⁸ Given the personal nature of partnership agreements in the nineteenth century, as I demonstrated above (and even in the twentieth century as I demonstrate below),⁷⁹ and their association with trust and shared responsibility, I assert that the change in business status was key to the firm's expansion in terms of bringing in outsiders.

This legal change is also symbolic of the beginning of a change of approach in the directors' minds, away from the business as a wholly personal affair and to a larger-scale entity with a broader range of involvement and interests. Unsurprisingly, Threlfall sees this a necessary move for the firm towards being a 'modern organisation', and the Board minute refers explicitly to recruiting a 'man of education and experience who shall have full control and authority in the works'.⁸⁰ While according to the minutes the move to recruit Gatheral had been being considered for some time, the legal change certainly facilitated it.⁸¹

Taking on John Eliot Howard Lloyd (or Eliot as he was known), John William and George Edward's second cousin, in 1896 as secretary for the firm was a further step in distributing responsibility enabled by the change in structure. Prior to this John William had been secretary and George Edward had done much of the accounting work, so Eliot relieved both of these family members of some of their responsibility. Eliot became a director in 1901, and by 1904 he was undertaking business trips to negotiate with potential competitors on behalf of the firm. Eliot was the son of Howard Lloyd, a banker

78 Michael Lobban, 'Joint Stock Companies', in William Cornish, J. Stuart Anderson, Ray Cocks, Michael Lobban, Patrick Polden, and Keith Smith, *The Oxford History of the Laws of England*, Vol. 12, 1820–1914: *Private Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 665.

79 See Sections 2.9.1 and 5.4.

80 Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 106.

81 Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 106.

at Lloyd's in Birmingham, thus demonstrating that although some new figures in the firm had no previous links to it, Quaker family connections and business circles were still influential at this time, though there is no indication that Eliot was a Quaker.

Threlfall and his appointment buck a broader trend identified by Thomson and Wilson that professional or external managers were never involved in decision-making bodies.⁸² Threlfall was recruited from a career in academia in Sydney, Australia, by a process of bargaining over terms in 1898–1899, and had a considerable financial interest in the firm from the start, buying £1000 worth of shares in the business with an agreement to increase this to £10,000 after seven years.⁸³ He became a director just three years later in 1901, sitting on the Board of Directors and also on the Management Committee.⁸⁴ The latter was only created at this time, when William Arthur, George Stacey, John William, and George Edward resigned their managing directorships to form a body 'to exercise all the powers of the Board other than the power to make calls'.⁸⁵ Perhaps there is here a degree of diluting family ownership to gain equity.⁸⁶ But this was by no means the sole factor in Threlfall's recruitment. In the letters relating to the negotiations between Richard Threlfall and the firm, it is clear that it 'is because we want to reap the advantages which may accrue from the progress of Chemistry... that we are

⁸² Wilson and Thomson, *The Making of Modern Management*, p. 53.

⁸³ WC, MS 1724, Box 14, Papers re: Negotiations with RT.

⁸⁴ Matthews, Boyns, and Edwards, 'Chandlerian Image or Mirror Image?', 44.

⁸⁵ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 153, quoting from the Board Minutes from 1900.

⁸⁶ Julian Franks, Colin Mayer, and Stefano Rossi, 'Spending Less Time with the Family: The Decline of Family Ownership in the United Kingdom', in Randall K. Morck (ed.), *A History of Corporate Governance around the World: Family Business Groups to Professional Managers* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 581–612.

tempted to strengthen ourselves by what you offer',⁸⁷ and that the family directors did not want 'his money without his brains!'⁸⁸

Alfred Chandler and Takashi Hikino somewhat curiously consider Threlfall to be in the same category as the Albrights and the Wilsons, rather than as an external manager.⁸⁹ While in terms of ownership this may be true, for my purpose here Threlfall obviously does not have the same history or background in the firm as the founding families, and he is not a Quaker. I therefore suggest that it is misleading and lacking in nuance to consider him, as Chandler and Hikino do, as part of the establishment of personal capitalism at Albright and Wilson. He was brought in as a scientific adviser, with a job description which was intentionally very open, and ultimately became a senior manager. Threlfall is not part of the 'personal management' of the firm, but an outsider.

It was much easier for Albright and Wilson to acquire interests in other firms after becoming a company, and it joined with its Anglican neighbours to form a further company, the British Cyanides Company Limited, in 1894.⁹⁰ The business also had subsidiaries across the Atlantic. In New York State it had opened the Oldbury Electro-Chemical Company, at Niagara Falls, in 1896, and begun the manufacture of phosphorus there by electric furnaces. It did this in partnership with its longstanding US agents the Rikers, but William Arthur Albright owned 60% of the shares. Not long afterwards, in 1902, it gained a controlling interest in the Electric Reduction Company (ERCo), a

⁸⁷ Letter of 23 July 1898 from John William Wilson to Richard Threlfall, in Papers re: Negotiations with RT.

⁸⁸ Letter of 1 August 1898 from John William Wilson to John Edward Wilson in Papers re: Negotiations with RT.

⁸⁹ Chandler and Hikino, *Scale and Scope*, 357.

⁹⁰ Sullivan, 'Paying the Price for Industrialisation', 99, 252.

struggling competitor in Buckingham, Quebec, Canada.⁹¹ Albright and Wilson then fully owned ERCo from 1914 onwards.⁹² Matthews, Boyns, and Edwards have shown clearly that Oldbury oversaw all the firms.⁹³

However, not everything changed at Albright and Wilson in the early twentieth century: it maintained its employment of a Quaker solicitor, Arthur Godlee,⁹⁴ and in early 1915 it also had a Quaker accountant in Wilfrid Littleboy, though I suspect he withdrew his services due to his pacifist commitment.⁹⁵ Arthur Godlee also held shares in Cadbury's in 1914, as did Walter Barrow, whom we will encounter in Chapter 5, further demonstrating the enduring closeness of many Quaker business links and the strength of the network at this time.⁹⁶

3.3 Social Change within the Society of Friends

3.3.1 Theological and Social Revival

The Manchester Conference of 1895 was a high point in the revival within the Society of Friends which had begun around 1860. It was the fruition of the many small steps which had occurred over the past forty-five years. It also gave considerable momentum to the revival and led to its broadening in the twentieth century. John Wilhelm Rowntree's speech called for a deepening of Quaker faith based in love, and suggested that the challenges of the modern age could be a strength rather than a

⁹¹ Sullivan, 'Paying the Price for Industrialisation'.

⁹² Matthews, Boyns, and Edwards, 'Chandlerian Image or Mirror Image?', 32.

⁹³ Matthews, Boyns, and Edwards, 'Chandlerian Image or Mirror Image?', 30–33.

⁹⁴ WC, MS 1724, Box 73, Private letters 1920, Letter of 28 February 1920.

⁹⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Management Committee weekly minute book, Minute 1329, Meeting of 9 Feb 1915. Littleboy was arrested and imprisoned for refusing to serve in the military forces in 1916. See Rebecca Wynter and Pink Dandelion, *A Quaker Conscientious Objector: Wilfrid Littleboy's Prison Letters, 1917–1919* (Birmingham: Handheld Press, 2020).

⁹⁶ Annual Return, Cadbury Brothers, 1914.

weakness. However, the vast majority of Friends at the conference were less radical than John Wilhelm, and plenty were still evangelical and politically conservative.⁹⁷

The conference also highlighted the importance of women and gender equality within the Society of Friends, and a third of the speakers were women.⁹⁸ However, this rarely transferred to the Quaker business world at this time. While Alice Clark became a director of Clark's shoes in 1903, she is the only example of a woman in leadership at a major Quaker firm that I have found until 1919, when Dorothy Adlington Cadbury became a director at Cadbury's.⁹⁹ Alice Clark has been the focus of attention for her other life activities and activism.¹⁰⁰ However, neither woman has received attention for her role in business. Further, at Yearly Meeting 1912's discussion on Christianity and business, women are referred to solely in the context of their status as buyers, rather reinforcing gender stereotypes.¹⁰¹

A socialist tendency or sympathy emerged within Quakerism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, following society more broadly. The most obvious example of this was the Socialist Quaker Society (SQS), founded in 1898. Its two principal founders, Mary O'Brien and J. Theodore Harris, both worked in education. The SQS was considered by most Quakers to be too extreme in its socialist ideals, which probably deterred some Quaker businesspeople from joining. Indeed, one later observer noted in personal conversation with Peter D'Alroy Jones 'the inner dynamic of Quaker socialism to be a status conflict between a group of young, unestablished, intellectual

⁹⁷ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 153, 156.

⁹⁸ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 225.

⁹⁹ Personal correspondence with Tim Crumplin, business archivist at Alfred Gillett Trust.

¹⁰⁰ Hilda L. Smith, 'The Legacy of Alice Clark', *Early Modern Women*, 10, no. 1 (2015), 94–104.

¹⁰¹ *The British Friend*, June 1912, 173.

radicals of modest means and the great, sturdy Quaker business families, deep-rooted, socially conservative, pious, and rich'.¹⁰² This certainly seems to portray some Quaker business families, but as I show here, there were also clear differences and even divisions between some of them.

The SQS was not given a platform by the Society of Friends at first, and its membership remained small. The only businessman I have found evidence of within its ranks is Arthur Priestman, whom I mentioned above. Women were very much involved, and its existence demonstrates that there was a small contingent of Quakers seeking to replace the capitalist social order.

While not convinced by socialism, Edward Grubb, in a work based on a discussion of 'business morality' at Quaker Yearly Meeting 1911 which I examine further below, suggests that the majority of Quakers would have engaged with it:

All generous and candid minds must be grateful to the Socialists for their criticism of existing society, and for the ideal of brotherhood which they have held before us. Without their aid it is doubtful whether the real evils of our present life would ever have been brought home to the comfortable classes; whether the complacent optimism that marked the middle of the nineteenth century would ever have been shaken. No one can read the books... without feeling that there is much in the ideals they present that is very close to the heart of Christianity.¹⁰³

This is supported by its consideration at Yearly Meeting 1912 within the broader discussion of Christianity and business and as reported in *The British Friend*.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² D'Alroy Jones, *Christian Socialist Revival*, 378.

¹⁰³ Edward Grubb, *Christianity and Business* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912), 89.

¹⁰⁴ *The British Friend*, June 1912, 172-173.

As I examine his work *Christianity and Business* further below, it is worth giving greater attention here to Edward Grubb (1854–1939). He was in fact a leading liberal Quaker, dedicating much of his life's energy, particularly after he left teaching in 1901, to promoting some of the tenets of the Quaker revival, in his case particularly the concept of the light within, and the application of science and progressive thinking to social problems from a Quaker perspective.¹⁰⁵ A friend to those such as John Wilhelm Rowntree and Rufus Jones who had featured even more prominently in the liberal scientific revival, he dedicated his time to ministry and writing.¹⁰⁶ Rufus Jones credits him as being 'among the foremost of those who brought light and leading in the Society of Friends in our time'.¹⁰⁷ As editor of *The British Friend* and a contributor to Yearly Meetings, Grubb was undoubtedly influential.

More moderate progressive liberal Quakers such as Grubb were drawn to social reform based on science, such as that which would be advocated by Rowntree and which is detailed above.¹⁰⁸ The Friends' Social Union (FSU) was consequently founded in 1903 by prominent Quakers including Seebohm Rowntree and George Cadbury, and included others such as Grubb.

Perhaps because of George Cadbury's involvement, or possibly if it met in Birmingham or the West Midlands, the FSU had a distinctly West Midlands slant: between 1909 and 1914 roughly half of the committee members each year were drawn from the

¹⁰⁵ Thomas C. Kennedy, 'Edward Grubb', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi 10.1093/ref:odnb/71530.

¹⁰⁶ James Dudley, *The Life of Edward Grubb* (London: J. Clarke, 1946).

¹⁰⁷ Dudley, *The Life of Edward Grubb*, 11.

¹⁰⁸ See Section 3.1; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 280.

area.¹⁰⁹ The Quaker directors of Albright and Wilson therefore could not have failed to be aware of it, but did not themselves get involved; a noteworthy absence.

It organised lectures and reading circles on diverse topics, including child labour, housing, and unemployment, and sought to educate fellow Quakers and to prepare them for social service.¹¹⁰ While its committee and ranks were made up mostly of 'heavyweight' respectable Friends, it also included socialists. However, Kennedy laments that for all its ideas, it was not particularly productive in terms of social consequences.¹¹¹

Simultaneously to the Rowntree and Cadbury involvement in the FSU, it was revealed in 1906 that the cocoa used by these firms was being produced by imperially controlled workers in 'conditions of virtual slavery'.¹¹² This must have been deeply embarrassing for liberal Quaker businessmen who prided themselves on their credentials around social reform.

3.3.2 The Development of the Peace Testimony

Another development in the revitalisation of Quakerism which was taking place at the opening of the twentieth century was the renewal of the Quaker commitment to not take up arms, and its transformation from the Testimony Against War of the seventeenth century into the Peace Testimony as it is known today.¹¹³ Elaine Bishop and Jiseok Jung note that practices officially prohibited to Friends in the nineteenth century included 'Bearing arms, fighting, talking about war, making loans or accepting profit from war,

¹⁰⁹ Library of the Society of Friends (henceforth LSF), Friends Social Union Annual Reports.

¹¹⁰ Friends Social Union Annual Reports.

¹¹¹ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 280; Friends Social Union Annual Reports; Friends Social Union Annual Reports, Members of Committee for 1909; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 281.

¹¹² Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 305.

¹¹³ For more detail on this see Bishop and Jung, 'Seeking Peace', 115.

arming or carrying guns on ships, hiring substitutes for militia training, providing transport for any military purpose, and using armed men to protect property.’¹¹⁴

Despite this being official policy of the Society of Friends, re-stated as late as 1883,¹¹⁵ Bishop and Jung do not go into great detail about British Friends specifically. Kennedy, however, demonstrates that by the advent of the Boer War in 1899 Quakers were not willing to be vociferous in their opposition to war, instead simply regurgitating their somewhat half-hearted statement of opposition from the Crimean War forty years earlier.¹¹⁶

Edward Grubb was a clear critic of this stance on peace in the early stages of the Boer War.¹¹⁷ John Wilhelm Rowntree was a companion of his in this, asserting clearly in *The Friend* that:

Our testimony against war... must cut at the roots of war, at the pride of Empire, the narrow... popular patriotism rendered ignoble by its petty hatreds and the insatiable hunger for wealth which visibly threatens our ruin.¹¹⁸

This very much ties in with and is reminiscent of my argument above around John William Wilson – like other prominent Quakers at this time whom Kennedy mentions such as Thomas Hodgkin and John Bellows, my sense is that John William would have been in the sights of John Wilhelm Rowntree’s caricature.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Bishop and Jung, ‘Seeking Peace’, 109.

¹¹⁵ Bishop and Jung, ‘Seeking Peace’, 110.

¹¹⁶ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 254–255.

¹¹⁷ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 256.

¹¹⁸ *The Friend*, 26 January 1900, 56–57, quoted in Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 259.

¹¹⁹ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 257–258.

Even the Peace Committee of Yearly Meeting, in its 1912 minute on the renewed Peace Testimony, considers patriotism 'a primary moral duty', but this body stressed that this was 'in no way inconsistent with a fervent belief in the brotherhood of all men'.¹²⁰ This view on patriotism is perhaps reflected in Henry Lloyd Wilson as Clerk of the Society of Friends accepting an invitation to the coronation of King George V in 1912 – he clearly saw no conflict in upholding patriotic values while maintaining his commitment to peace.

Despite this Quaker stance, distancing oneself from militarism must have been harder for those Quakers in parliament, in the face of increasing expenditure on the military and discussion of this. However, there was certainly some Quaker resistance in parliament to the worst excesses of militarism, for example with Joseph Allen Baker putting forward a 'resolution deploring the increased spending on armaments reflected in the Naval Estimates for 1909'.¹²¹ The evidence of Baker's commitment to pacifism is further demonstrated below.¹²²

This resistance among Quakers has also been noted by Kennedy, who shows that by 1906 Quaker pacifist tendencies were reviving amid increasing militarism in society more broadly.¹²³ These militarist tendencies were often tied in with protectionism and imperialism.¹²⁴ The period saw a drive towards national military service, and the Quaker Peace Committee reacting and responding to this.¹²⁵ Kennedy notes that it was mostly

¹²⁰ Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 117.

¹²¹ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 300.

¹²² See Section 4.3.3.

¹²³ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 294–298.

¹²⁴ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 296.

¹²⁵ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 296–297.

older Quakers who advocated modifying the testimony around peace, and younger Quakers such as Edward Grubb who defended it.¹²⁶

Another Friend who fell on the pacifist end of the spectrum emerging among Quakers at this time was John William Wilson's younger brother, Henry Lloyd Wilson. In addition to being Clerk of Yearly Meeting and declining an invitation to the Coronation Naval Review on grounds of conscience,¹²⁷ he formally recognised other elements in the movement against militarism, such as the importance of Norman Angell's *Europe's Optical Illusion*.¹²⁸ This demonstrates the range of positions on peace within the families involved in Albright and Wilson, even between siblings; John William exhibited no pacifist leanings.¹²⁹ It is possible that as the third son of John Edward Wilson, Henry Lloyd had more freedom of conscience than did John William, who was the oldest son. Certainly, in terms of the business and its activities there was less at stake for Henry Lloyd should he wish to take a stand, as a fairly peripheral director not involved in the day-to-day running of the firm.

Henry Lloyd presumably spent a considerable amount of time during these years with William Arthur Albright, the eldest son of Arthur Albright, the other founder of the firm. I suggest this partly because they were cousins, but also because they had not only the connection of the firm but their shared involvement in the Society of Friends nationally: both sat on the Meeting for Sufferings in 1911. This body determined the

¹²⁶ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 301–302.

¹²⁷ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 221.

¹²⁸ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 302.

¹²⁹ See Section 4.3.5.

direction and priorities of the Yearly Meeting. As I show in the next chapter, they clearly shared an outlook on the Peace Testimony.

Brock describes British Friends as ‘almost united behind their peace testimony, although there may be differing views concerning its practical implementation’ by 1914.¹³⁰ However, Kennedy notes that while young Friends were generally more peace inclined, some ‘were joining the Territorial Army and justifying this action on the twin grounds of fulfilling their patriotic duty and preserving the Nation from compulsory military service’.¹³¹ The Peace Committee of Yearly Meeting gave ‘a loving caution’ against this in 1912,¹³² clearly feeling compelled to speak out in some sense.

Here I analyse the proceedings of this part of Yearly Meeting 1912 to provide more detail on the emerging sense of a commitment to peace during this time. The minute begins by acknowledging the diversity of views in the Society. In the introductory section of the minute by the Peace Committee, it is asserted that:

To leave our attitude in regard to Peace and War entirely to the individual conscience, means that the Society as such abandons any distinctive testimony on the matter, and ranges itself, so far as this question is concerned, side by side with most of the other Christian bodies.¹³³

The minute maintains that it is the duty of Quakers ‘to lead the world forward towards Universal Peace’. What is more, the following section states: ‘We are deeply convinced that the Testimony for Peace... is not an artificial appendage to our Faith, which

¹³⁰ Peter Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 361.

¹³¹ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 307.

¹³² Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 111.

¹³³ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 112.

can be dropped without injuring the whole'.¹³⁴ Stronger still, the minute avers that the testimony 'cannot be abandoned without mutilating our whole message for the world'.¹³⁵

Crucially for assessing businesspeople and their activities at this time, the minute also clearly states that 'The same spirit that leads us to abandon War must animate our *business* and social *relations*' [emphasis mine]. This is part of my justification for including alignment with Quaker principles (or testimonies) in my model for defining a Quaker business.¹³⁶

In the section 'What Is Our Testimony for Peace?' the minute's intent and meaning for the testimony are further clarified: 'that fighting, and preparation for fighting, even in self-defence, are *wrong*'.¹³⁷ Therefore, any Quaker business which engaged in preparation for war, in any sense, would fall foul of this revitalised, corporately agreed, and official testimony.

Both William Arthur Albright and Henry Lloyd Wilson, the chair and a director of Albright and Wilson, were almost certainly present at Yearly Meeting in 1912 to agree to the minute on the Peace Testimony, so would have been aware of it. In 1911, at least, prominent businesspeople and their families made up a disproportionate number of the members of the Meeting for Sufferings.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 113.

¹³⁵ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 113.

¹³⁶ See Section 1.5.

¹³⁷ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 114.

¹³⁸ In addition to Henry Lloyd and William Arthur, there were five members of the Gibbins family, one of the Southall family, a Cadbury, and Robert Impey, the founder of a firm of solicitors. This is judging by the Warwick, Leicester, and Stafford nominees, where members of five prominent local business families made up twelve out of fifteen nominees.

Before World War I, then, many business families still held considerable influence within the Society of Friends. There would have been much that united them, not least often shared business interests. A few Quaker businesspeople were Members of Parliament.

3.4 Quaker Thought on Business

3.4.1 The Books of Discipline, Railways, and John William Wilson in parliament and business

The first twentieth-century revision to the Quaker book of discipline came in 1906, a long time after the 1883 edition when one considers the amount of social change inside and outside of the Society of Friends. However, the advices regarding business and trade remained unchanged. The only impactful change in 1906 was a further weakening of the advice around oversight in the second volume: in 1883 there had remained advices on oversight which, although less precise and practical than those in 1861, still gave some guidance such as a general 1701 exhortation to help, instruct, and admonish Friends displaying ‘weakness, shortness, failure or unfaithfulness’.¹³⁹ In contrast, the 1906 discipline gave no guidance as to such duties whatsoever.¹⁴⁰

The 1906 book does maintain a theoretically strong line on ‘delinquencies’ generally and on business failure in the ‘delinquencies’ section, in terms of an investigation being carried out, but makes no mention of disownment with regard to business failure, though it does remain a general measure. However, I am aware of no

¹³⁹ 1701, *Book of Christian Discipline*, 1883, 233.

¹⁴⁰ *Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends in Great Britain and Australia: Consisting of Extracts on Doctrine, Practice, and Church Government from the Epistles and Other Documents Issued under the Sanction of London Yearly Meeting, 1672 to 1906*, vol. II (London: Headley Brothers, 1906), accessed 29 March 2023, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002030830443&view=1up&seq=9>.

evidence of the discipline being practised in this area at this time: individual Quakers were increasingly left to their own consciences with regard to business ethics.

This and the lack of oversight guidance are symbolic of an increasing and creeping individualism,¹⁴¹ where Friends performing such a role directly would likely have been seen as interfering in the activity of the Inward Light within another Friend; therefore, there was by this time a hesitation to judge or admonish individuals, symbolised also by the verdict of the Monthly Meeting regarding Joseph Whitwell Pease upon his business failure, which I detailed above.

Come 1911, the doctrine and practice section of the discipline was revised and contained a new section on betting and gambling. In relation to this subject, we saw above that John William Wilson was active in the 1906 parliamentary debate on street betting. The very nature of the debate in parliament, in its explicit recognition of a distinction between working-class gambling in the street and betting by rich people, highlights Taylor's argument about the growing class-based divide between types of gambling and speculation.¹⁴² John William Wilson did not seek to undermine this distinction, and rather enforced it when he 'said he did not object to the hon. Member betting, but he disagreed with the system of allowing "bookies" in the streets'. To what extent this was pragmatism or toeing the party line is impossible to know, but unlike the claim of the speaker before him at one point in the debate, John William was not seeking class-based equality.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Dandelion, *The Cultivation of Conformity*, 68.

¹⁴² Taylor, *Creating Capitalism*, 214.

¹⁴³ The other speaker was Mr Lupton: Street B[e]tting Bill Lords, *Hansard*, Vol. 162, debated on Wednesday 1 August 1906, accessed 29 March 2023, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1906-08-01/debates/4c9cb196-35e7-429e-9e3c-7fbc77100157/StreetButtingBillLords?highlight=street%20betting#contribution-296025d9-4a52-49c9-b6bb-988813862a39>.

By the point at which this section entered the discipline in 1911, then, betting and gambling were largely divorced from speculation in public opinion. Yet the first advice on the subject in the 1911 discipline acknowledges the widespread nature of the problem which 'now permeates all classes of society; commerce, finance and the press are tainted by it'.¹⁴⁴ Compared to parliament's thoughts in 1901, this was radical in acknowledging that gambling had become an inseparable part of commerce and finance. The Society, it seems, as a formal body, still remembered and was reviving its earlier writings and feelings around the rise of the joint-stock company and its hazards. In the context of the liberalisation of the body and of the growing conversation around business ethics, perhaps this should not be a surprise.

This approach is confirmed by the second advice, which denounces 'all merely speculative means of obtaining money' as against the Christian spirit.¹⁴⁵ This is the strongest formal stance on speculation since the 1834 book of discipline, and demonstrates the widening gulf between a socially progressive Society and wealthy, socially influential, Quaker businessmen.

John William Wilson and Ernest Palmer, who were almost certainly nominal but cultural Quakers by this time, were both directors of the Great Western Railway in the early twentieth century.¹⁴⁶ Channon has demonstrated that this was a prestigious and relatively high-profile position at this time, for which they would have received a fee of

¹⁴⁴ *Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends of London Yearly Meeting, Part II: Christian Practice* (London: Headley Brothers, 1911), 100.

¹⁴⁵ *Christian Discipline*, 1911, 100.

¹⁴⁶ John William Wilson was appointed in 1908: *The Railway News: Finance and Joint-stock Companies Journal*, Saturday 18 January 1908; *Debrett's House of Commons and Judicial Bench*, 178; Geoffrey Channon, 'The Recruitment of Directors to the Board of the Great Western Railway, I', *Journal of Transport History* 17, no. 1 (1996), 3, accessed 30 March 2023, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/recruitment-directors-board-great-western-railway/docview/1304357254/se-2,3>; Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law'.

£362 annually on top of their dividends as shareholders.¹⁴⁷ This demonstrates that those in Quaker circles were still engaging with railways and speculation in the early twentieth century and benefitting therefrom. The name of the newspaper which announced John William's appointment as a railway director, with its subtitle 'Finance and Joint-stock Companies Journal', highlights that railways were still mass-funded speculative projects at this time and were presented as such. What is more, the Great Western Railway did not have the best reputation among some in parliament and by this time owned many other companies and was a relative monopoly.¹⁴⁸ This therefore emphasises the growing differences between people in Quaker circles, for example between those sitting in parliament as wealthy liberals and those who were socialists.

This perception of newspaper reporting is shared in the third 1911 betting and gambling advice, which acknowledges the link between the press and gambling, where it is desired 'that the business of newspaper management may be purged of this growing evil'.¹⁴⁹ George Cadbury, as a forward-thinking liberal, perhaps saw fit to single-handedly attempt to alter the situation regarding the press with his ownership of several national papers around this time, partly in a desire to change the narrative regarding the Boer War.¹⁵⁰ This relative authoritarianism demonstrates again a perhaps misplaced desire to do good and bring Quaker values to the fore.

¹⁴⁷ Channon, 'The Recruitment of Directors', 6.

¹⁴⁸ Fishguard and Rosslare Railways and Harbours Bill, *Hansard*, Vol. 51, debated on Thursday 10 April 1913, accessed 30 April 2022, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1913-04-10/debates/ca9bb130-abc9-4ac1-a462-d4fa51b6e45f/FishguardAndRosslareRailwaysAndHarboursBill>; Fishguard and Rosslare Railways and Harbours Bill—(By Order), *Hansard*, Vol. 60, debated on Tuesday 31 March 1914, accessed 30 April 2022, [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1914-03-31/debates/c5c7738a-0d33-4b9b-9589-82cc6af0eeb7/FishguardAndRosslareRailwaysAndHarboursBill%E2%80%9494\(ByOrder\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1914-03-31/debates/c5c7738a-0d33-4b9b-9589-82cc6af0eeb7/FishguardAndRosslareRailwaysAndHarboursBill%E2%80%9494(ByOrder)).

¹⁴⁹ *Christian Discipline*, 1911, 101.

¹⁵⁰ Dowd, 'The Social and Political Activity of the Cadbury Family'.

The 1911 advices on business and trade retained many of the older advices and took a fairly strong line on personal business conduct. There was an advice warning against the danger of the influence of others with worldly standards.¹⁵¹ However, there is no new advice to attempt to discipline or involve oneself in another's affairs, other than the broad injunction to 'watch over one another' from 1675.¹⁵² Besides this, there is considerable continuity around advices as to personal behaviour, with the maintenance of the injunctions around inspection of affairs, payment of debts, fictitious credit, moderation of profit, and the reintroduction of the warning against entering into joint securities.¹⁵³ The importance of integrity is maintained and some new practical advice is offered, including an advice deploring 'secret gifts' or bribes and guidance on how to safely hold money on behalf of others. Finally, a long new advice is added against hastily entering business and advocating written as opposed to verbal agreements, aimed particularly at a partnership-style firm of close directors:

Let Friends, before entering into relationships involving such far-reaching consequences, not only assure themselves of the solvency and credit of the other parties, but also consider that the happiness and success of this intimate relation depend upon mutual confidence, unselfishness and forbearance; and also upon the partners holding similar standards of business conduct.¹⁵⁴

Here we see a Society desiring to uphold a manner of business that, in big business at least, was fast disappearing, being replaced with the impersonal company, which had in turn contributed to the disintegration of the Quaker reputation and, in the latter part of

¹⁵¹*Christian Discipline*, 1911, p. 112.

¹⁵² *Christian Discipline*, 1911, p. 109.

¹⁵³ *Christian Discipline*, 1911, 109–114.

¹⁵⁴ *Christian Discipline*, 1911, 114–115.

the nineteenth century, to the discipline bending to accommodate the new reality of big business.

3.4.2 An Introduction to William Arthur Albright

At Albright and Wilson, while director John William Wilson was very active in public life, as a local Justice of the Peace, an MP, and on the privy council from 1911, his cousin William Arthur Albright (1853–1942) was active elsewhere. As well as being chair of the business, William Arthur was busy within the Religious Society of Friends, to the extent that he sat on the national Meeting for Sufferings body in 1911, which approved the issue of the book of discipline.¹⁵⁵ This highlights the stark contrast between these two cousins, one playing a role in the creation of the discipline and the other contravening it, while still being considered part of the Quaker community although almost certainly not personally being of Quaker faith, as I show below. This demonstrates the importance of the personal faith of the chairman in shaping a business, its faith allegiance, and its ethics, as my next chapter on World War I further exemplifies.

William Arthur Albright certainly carried the influence of his Quakerism over into business activities in some regard as chair of the firm. For example, he heeded the advice of the Society of Friends around joint securities with others when, in a 1912 letter to a Mr Lennard about a suggested joint business venture, he wrote that as directors ‘we should want to see our way much more clearly than we do as to what would be the probable results and how the joint enterprise would work out in practice. Perhaps we are over cautious but after all we can only act by our own light and experience.’¹⁵⁶ This expresses

¹⁵⁵ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 58–62, 71.

¹⁵⁶ WC, MS 1724, Box 65, Private Letter Book 4, 1910-1913, 420-421, Letter from WAA to a Mr Lennard.

very clearly the individualistic focus on the inward light which had experienced a recent resurgence within the faith.

3.4.3 London Yearly Meetings 1911 and 1912, and Seebohm Rowntree's Address

Furthered no doubt by broader social change,¹⁵⁷ from around 1911 Yearly Meeting and Quakers more broadly were actively considering the morality of their businesses and business interactions. In 1911, Richard Westrope, a member of the SQS and a former congregationalist,¹⁵⁸ suggested to Yearly Meeting a conference to consider Christianity and the Social Order.¹⁵⁹ Rather than recommend this, Yearly Meeting established 'Christianity and Business' as a specific topic for further consideration at Yearly Meeting 1912.¹⁶⁰

Three short sittings, which comprised the whole of one day at Yearly Meeting 1912, were given over to the subject of Christianity and business. Around 1000 Quakers were in attendance.¹⁶¹ This demonstrates considerable interest among Quakers in reflecting upon the subject, and that Edward Grubb, Seebohm Rowntree, and Edward Cadbury, whose writings I analyse below, were definitely writing to an audience of some size. Grubb in particular was impressed by Seebohm Rowntree's address which opened this session.

Seebohm Rowntree's address began by arguing that business pursuits often come to take on greater importance than life more broadly, and can even be actively antisocial.

¹⁵⁷ See Section 3.1.

¹⁵⁸ As far as I can ascertain, Westrope was not himself a businessman.

¹⁵⁹ D'Alroy Jones, *Christian Socialist Revival*, 346.

¹⁶⁰ Minutes of London Yearly Meeting, 1911, 95.

¹⁶¹ Edward Grubb, *The British Friend*, June 1912, 171.

In contrast, he sees business as a form of social service, not separate from broader life.¹⁶² He seems here to be yearning for an approach to business which had begun to disappear and become less possible in Quaker business circles with the demise of the business partnership and the widespread introduction of the corporation in the mid to late nineteenth century. He describes unrestricted competition as a 'grievous obstacle to the extension of brotherhood' and that its 'emphasis on livelihood rather than on life has a far-reaching spiritual effect'.¹⁶³ This directly contradicts the spirit of free-trade Liberalism which had been core to the identity of most Quaker employers over the previous seventy years.¹⁶⁴

Not only that, Rowntree pronounces that the difficulties of life as a worker seriously inhibit their very faith and the building of brotherhood, as well as describing 'some of the effects of the competitive system' as 'intolerable to the Christian consciousness'.¹⁶⁵ He highlights pressure on the worker and poor conditions as two of the ill-effects of competition in this regard.¹⁶⁶ Perhaps this is unsurprising, coming from a Quaker who was at the forefront of the progressive liberal 'renaissance' and who had studied poverty and the lives of workers. However, it is significant in light of the earlier commitment to free trade, and in that Yearly Meeting as a body was ready to welcome this message, or at least to receive it openly.

Rowntree encourages attempts to act collectively and exhorts that 'meanwhile it is urgent that Christians should unite in efforts to remove the evils which press upon

¹⁶² Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 87.

¹⁶³ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 88.

¹⁶⁴ Turnbull, 'Quakers, Free Trade and Social Responsibility', 99.

¹⁶⁵ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 89.

¹⁶⁶ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 89.

us'.¹⁶⁷ He begins by giving examples of ways in which there are already limits to competition, including very recent ones such as the 'granting of old-age pensions and the provision for insurance against sickness, disablement and unemployment', calling these 'collectivist'.¹⁶⁸ Next Rowntree shows how the tendency to combine rather than compete limits competition, in terms of both fixed prices on the part of employers and agreed trade union wage rates.¹⁶⁹

Rowntree urges Quakers to be part of the broader body of Christians guiding these limits. Noting the need to improve the condition of the least well-off workers, he proposes that since all benefit from their labour, 'All of us... therefore share the responsibility for making a worthy life possible for all.'¹⁷⁰ Concluding this section, Rowntree suggests that Christian churches could combine to 'become one great Conciliation Board whose influence would permeate all human relations'.¹⁷¹

Going on to address employers specifically, Rowntree recommends thinking beyond a living wage and acknowledging that people benefit from having more than their basic physical needs met. He then deals briefly with advertising, acknowledges issues of pricing, and issues caution in employers' use of power with regard to competitors.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 89.

¹⁶⁸ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 89.

¹⁶⁹ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 89–90.

¹⁷⁰ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 90.

¹⁷¹ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 91; J. R. Hicks, 'The Early History of Industrial Conciliation in England', *Economica*, 28 (1930), 25–39, [doi 10.2307/2548328](https://doi.org/10.2307/2548328). The purpose of these boards was to be a bridge between employers and employees in particular industries.

¹⁷² Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 91–92.

In his section for employees, it remains very clear that Rowntree's address is guided by and imbued with his faith and an assumption that others too have a deep spiritual life:

As we come into... discipleship to the Master, we may find ourselves taking part in methods which we cannot believe to be in accordance with the Divine will, and at the same time realise our powerlessness to alter such methods.¹⁷³

This section suggests that employees might consider leaving employment where it is 'dangerous to the higher life', or 'face the dangers boldly'.¹⁷⁴ This seems to assume, in the former instance, that it would be easy to find other, more ethical, or more Christian employment. It is noteworthy that Rowntree does not suggest ceasing to be an employer in similar circumstances – in this instance this seems like a double standard, though of course the stakes for employers ceasing to operate extend beyond themselves.

Rowntree next considers ethical considerations for buyers, suggesting that the two conditions of buying what one needs and at the least cost should be subject to ethical considerations, and that this is easier in the context of a smaller firm where trust can exist, rather than 'great department stores'.¹⁷⁵ Turning to consumers, Rowntree advocates for simplicity of living and the avoidance of wealth and extravagance.¹⁷⁶ This must have been hard for wealthy Quaker businesspeople to hear and may have sounded somewhat hypocritical to some, given that Rowntree lived in a large, valuable home.

Beginning his conclusion, Rowntree seeks to direct the Society in concrete actions it can take to assist those who wish to reflect on their ethics around business in the

¹⁷³ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 92.

¹⁷⁴ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 93.

¹⁷⁵ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 93.

¹⁷⁶ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 94.

broadest sense of the word, and to put them into practice. He states that 'the most pressing need of all is to arouse and foster an enlightened conscience upon the subject'.¹⁷⁷

For Rowntree, Jesus 'requires that all our possessions, talents and opportunities must be regarded as a sacred trust for the good of our fellow men. But there is a duty even beyond this, to use our best endeavours to remove or remedy the faults of the industrial system.' Further, 'We have been reminded that we should regard business as a vocation in which we can serve God and the community, not simply as a means of obtaining a livelihood'.¹⁷⁸ Rowntree is here continuing to exhort a clear moral position on the part of the Society and its Friends in business. He even concedes that opposition to current practices 'will entail loss and suffering', reminding Quakers of the difficulties faced by their forebears. This is noteworthy – while he does not suggest ceasing to be an employer, he does suggest that it may not be an easy path:

this call to uphold a lofty standard of business morality, and to introduce better conditions of labour, is one of our greatest privileges and responsibilities, and we urge friends to use their opportunities to the utmost, whatever cost it may involve.¹⁷⁹

In concluding after Seebohm's speech, Yearly Meeting appoints a committee to help those struggling in business on account of ethical misgivings. Finally, they ask that the FSU bring the subject of business ethics to Friends across the country whenever possible.¹⁸⁰ These are positive steps, though unfortunately I have been unable to access further evidence about their success or otherwise.

¹⁷⁷ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 94–95.

¹⁷⁸ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 96.

¹⁷⁹ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 96.

¹⁸⁰ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 97.

Following Rowntree's speech, time was given to further discussion. Views here ranged from Edward Vipont Brown advocating following the Sermon on the Mount through socialism, and accepting that Quakers at the time were falling short of this, to George Arthur Pickard defending the current system.¹⁸¹ Alfred H. Brown went on to note that 'There is no game between a man with £500 a year and a man with 20s. a week.'¹⁸² Richard Westrope asserted that 'We have to realise the meaning of *the meek* inheriting the earth', where at present 'The ordinary Christian standard is to get on and become a master and be in a position to be philanthropic and assist missions.'¹⁸³ This was certainly the case for most Quakers in the nineteenth century, but the increase in statutory welfare provision in the early twentieth, as well as conversations such as this at Yearly Meeting, were arguably beginning to change that.

Edward Grubb pointed out issues such as the lack of a rise in wages to reflect the rise in wealth.¹⁸⁴ J. St. George Heath critiques the economic ideology governing the current social order, suggesting that the motivation of private gain should be replaced by that of service, and that fear of failure is a flawed motivator.¹⁸⁵ In an endeavour to have Yearly Meeting agree some element of SQS rhetoric, 'J. Theodore Harris hoped that *at least* [emphasis my own] we should put on our books that the present social system is contrary to the will of God', though there is no evidence that this was minuted or agreed.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Grubb, *The British Friend*, June 1912, 172.

¹⁸² Grubb, *The British Friend*, June 1912, 172.

¹⁸³ Grubb, *The British Friend*, June 1912, 172.

¹⁸⁴ *The British Friend*, June 1912, 172.

¹⁸⁵ *The British Friend*, June 1912, 173.

¹⁸⁶ *The British Friend*, June 1912, 173.

This is part of the shift from an active discipline regarding business until the mid-nineteenth century towards a conversation around business and its ethics, with no seeming resolution or particular conclusion. At the same time as reinvigorating its Peace Testimony, and what Kennedy has called its 'Renaissance Years' between 1902 and 1914,¹⁸⁷ the Society of Friends maintained a Victorian comfort with the establishment in some regards, such as sending the Clerk of Yearly Meeting as a representative to attend the Coronation Thanksgiving Service in 1911.¹⁸⁸

This growing conversation and the year 1912 also heralded the publication of two books by prominent Quakers which give us further insight into the type of contemporary thought taking place in the Society of Friends. These books are *Experiments in Industrial Organisation* by Edward Cadbury and *Christianity and Business* by Edward Grubb. Grubb was not personally involved in business, but was a Quaker social reformer born in 1854, who began his career as a teacher and then in 1901 became the editor of *The British Friend* until its closure in 1913.¹⁸⁹ He was also a pacifist, and Thomas Kennedy has examined this facet of his thought in some detail.¹⁹⁰ That he was not personally a businessman demonstrates, with the waning of the discipline and increasing social awareness, that business ethics was receiving broader interest in the Society of Friends. Edward Cadbury was the son of George Cadbury and became a director of the chocolate firm in 1899.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 270–311.

¹⁸⁸ Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1912, 58.

¹⁸⁹ Kennedy, 'Edward Grubb'.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas C. Kennedy, 'The Ubiquitous Friend: Edward Grubb and the Modern British Peace Movement', *Peace Research*, 17, no. 2 (1985), 1–10.

¹⁹¹ Personal correspondence with Sarah Foden, archivist at Cadbury's.

3.4.4 Edward Grubb's Christianity and Business

Christianity and Business was originally written as a series for *The British Friend* and consists of a statement of 'The Problem', followed by a series of questions and pronouncements: 'What Is the "Present System"?', 'The Co-operative Movement', 'The Christian Spirit', 'Is Competition Anti-Christian?', 'Is Socialism the Solution?', 'The Justice of Socialism', and 'What Are We to Do?'.¹⁹²

Here I examine it in some detail, to demonstrate how one prominent liberal renaissance Quaker viewed business and the moral dilemmas around it. I suggest that these views or similar ones are those towards which many in the Society of Friends were and would be moving, especially in the context of the outbreak of World War I, as is evident from letters in *The Friend* in 1914, concerning which I go into more detail in the following chapter. Grubb seems to sit somewhere near the middle of the range of views of Quakers by the early twentieth century, particularly in terms of his opinions on areas related to business, capitalism, and Christianity: he is neither a radical socialist nor a libertarian capitalist, but sees the benefits of both systems. Like many in the Society he symbolised the move away from pious social conservatism to living more liberally guided by the Inward Light of Christ.¹⁹³

In 'What Is the Present System?', Grubb discusses types of competition created by a free market, such as that between businesses, between employers and the employed, and between buyer and seller. He notes the tendency for businesses to merge and form

¹⁹² Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 5.

¹⁹³ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*.

combinations, and the consequent danger to the consumer of monopolies, and puts the basis of competition down to private property and free enterprise:

in any developed human society, we may say that Private Property and Free Enterprise necessarily give rise to Competition, and that Competition in its turn necessarily tends to pass over into some of the many forms of Combination – which forms, while they lessen the stress of some kinds of competition, may intensify it in other ways. As soon as ever combination among former competitors secures a Monopoly, another form of competition arises.¹⁹⁴

Following this Grubb describes ways of managing the conflict between monopolies and consumers, such as municipal enterprise, laws and rules, and collective bargaining on the part of employee and employed, as well as the possibility of trade boards.¹⁹⁵ Grubb is therefore clearly, from the outset of his work, a critic of true free trade or enterprise. This certainly distinguishes him from those Quaker businessmen who would have sat in parliament representing the Liberal Party around this time and whose views were likely in the minority among Quakers.

The next chapter, 'The Christian Spirit', defines striving for justice as 'to aim at securing that every one may have his due – whatever that may be; that each one who works for the common good shall have a reasonable return for his labour'. Further, 'The Christian spirit, then, is (broadly speaking) the spirit of justice, of service and of progress'. Grubb finishes by suggesting that Jesus 'took the idea of universal

¹⁹⁴ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 37.

¹⁹⁵ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 38–41.

brotherhood... and made it current coin among men'.¹⁹⁶ Grubb's book is here seeking to guide Quaker businesspeople and to suggest ideas and ideals to aid in this.

In 'Is Competition Anti-Christian?', Grubb recognises that there are some benefits to a competitive system, despite it often working badly.¹⁹⁷ He credits competition with putting the right people in the right places and suggests that this would be impossible without it.¹⁹⁸ A further aspect he praises is proportioning of reward to service.¹⁹⁹ However, he asserts that competition 'is not *in its essential nature* unbrotherly or unchristian, but that it may very easily become so, when selfishness is allowed to get the upper hand, and to set the pace which all the competitors are obliged in some degree to follow'.²⁰⁰

Grubb's conclusion in this chapter is that 'great capitalistic combinations' prioritise the few at the expense of the many, and that while there is a beneficial force to free enterprise it must be checked legally by whichever party is in government.²⁰¹ This provides some balance of perspective, but concludes by clearly arguing for strong regulation of the market, seeking a middle path.

Further, Grubb asserts that it is not within the scope of the individual to overcome the problems of competition, but that he 'should use his efforts, as a Christian citizen, to help on all changes, whether through voluntary combination and cooperation, or through State and municipal action, that can be widely advocated for checking the evils

¹⁹⁶ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 68.

¹⁹⁷ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 72.

¹⁹⁸ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 76.

¹⁹⁹ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 76.

²⁰⁰ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 80–81.

²⁰¹ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 82.

of competition and giving more free play to the working of the Christian spirit'. Grubb firmly upholds Quakers' Christian responsibilities throughout *Christianity and Business*, making clear his view that faith and business should be inseparable.

On socialism, as well as suggesting that it would have been considered by most Quakers, Grubb notes that we 'really do not know enough to assume with safety that society would work smoothly if organised, as a whole, on an entirely different basis from that of which we have experience',²⁰² and claims that in the absence of a market rate 'everything will be arbitrary', by which he means determined independently by as yet to be determined people.²⁰³

Grubb asserts that 'Justice and Christian principle alike demand that reward shall be for service only'²⁰⁴ and notes that landowners provide no service but reap great rewards. This says nothing to those who were unable to work. One of the areas in which Grubb is more radical is concerning land ownership, asserting that 'The only real remedy for the injustice is to make all land and capital public property, instead of private property', though he notes that this would not be straightforward.²⁰⁵ Though radical, this largely fits with Lloyd George's land reform agenda of the time, the formulation of which Seebohm Rowntree assisted with.²⁰⁶ Therefore, among liberal renaissance Quakers it was probably not an uncommon position.

Grubb summarises the justice of socialism by suggesting 'it would be inexpedient, by any hasty measures, to displace the present system by collective ownership of land

²⁰² Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 95.

²⁰³ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 97.

²⁰⁴ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 103.

²⁰⁵ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 104.

²⁰⁶ Packer, 'Religion and the New Liberalism', p. 247.

and capital. Gradual and tentative progress in that direction, when any portion of our industry is ready for it we may all welcome; but Socialism as a panacea proves illusory.’²⁰⁷

Grubb’s final chapter, ‘What Are We to Do?’, proposes that all Christian business owners should ask themselves whether they have attempted profit sharing or co-partnership, and suggests that many who complain about it have not in fact tried it. He goes on to state:

If, after fair trial, you are convinced that your business can only live by what is really oppression – to which circumstances drive you against your will – it is for you to consider whether society would not be better without such a business, and whether, even at the cost of severe sacrifice to yourself and your family, you ought not to find something else to do.²⁰⁸

He also questions whether advertising is right, and whether it is appropriate to charge what the market will bear and to engage labour at the going rate if that is insufficient for living.²⁰⁹

In concluding his work, Grubb gives his thoughts about how a Quaker businessperson might act for good, suggesting that the ‘Christian ideal would seem to be to stop when you have enough, to give others a chance, and to use your increased leisure in social or religious service of your fellows’.²¹⁰ Here, then, are concrete questions and suggestions for Quaker businesspeople in the early twentieth century.

²⁰⁷ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 111.

²⁰⁸ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 124.

²⁰⁹ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 121.

²¹⁰ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 125.

His final paragraph sums up Grubb's views on how a liberal Quaker might approach business:

In judging what movements are to have our support, two considerations have to be balanced one against the other. We must seek to restrain in every practical way the abuses and injustice of the competitive system, while not rashly destroying the fundamental benefits secured by private enterprise. We must seek to secure for all our fellows an ordered and worthy life, in which their best powers may find scope for full development, while retaining what is essential of the bracing air of Liberty.²¹¹

3.4.5 Edward Cadbury's 'Experiments in Industrial Organization'

Cadbury's *Experiments in Industrial Organization*, published in the same year as Grubb's work, is a detailed description of welfare and other practices undertaken by the Cadburys or their managers.²¹² In this sense it is very different from Grubb's work in coming from a practical business perspective, rather than a largely philosophical one. However, Cadbury begins, like Grubb, by acknowledging the pressures if not the problems of the free market for employers, before noting the lack of attention he believes most employers give to their workforce.²¹³

Of the guiding philosophy behind the firm, Cadbury explains that 'The supreme principle has been the belief that business efficiency and the welfare of the employees are but different sides of the same problem.'²¹⁴ The premise here, or 'supreme principle', sounds remarkably close to Frederick Winslow Taylor's principle of Scientific Management, established in 1911 in his book *The Principles of Scientific Management*,

²¹¹ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 128.

²¹² Cadbury, *Experiments in Industrial Organization*.

²¹³ Cadbury, *Experiments in Industrial Organization*, ix.

²¹⁴ Cadbury, *Experiments in Industrial Organization*, xvii.

which was influential in management thought.²¹⁵ The direct similarity is in analogising the interests of employer and employee – Taylor’s fundamental principle is as follows:

Scientific management, on the contrary, has for its very foundation the firm conviction... that prosperity for the employer cannot exist through a long term of years unless it is accompanied by prosperity for the employé²¹⁶

However, as he observes in *Experiments in Industrial Organization*, and as Rowlinson notes, there is a distinction between Cadbury’s overall view on the interests of the two parties and that of Taylor: Cadbury goes on to note the power dynamic between the parties and that this to an extent undermines their interests being identical.²¹⁷ Therefore, while superficially and in some senses Cadbury and Taylor appear to adopt the same principle, Cadbury’s assumption is less crude and more nuanced. In 1914 Cadbury was trying to distance himself visibly from Taylor in an article he wrote about scientific management, but by 1918 the firm was giving a series of lectures on ‘efficiency’ which referred explicitly to Taylor.²¹⁸

Rowlinson has assessed Cadbury’s application of Scientific Management, based largely on archival documents from the firm and Edward Cadbury’s writing between about 1900 and 1912, and argues that the firm was an early adopter of the technique.²¹⁹

²¹⁵ See, for example, C. Wrege and R. Greenwood, ‘Frederick Winslow Taylor: The Father of Scientific Management’, *Industrial Management*, 33, no. 3 (1991), 23, accessed 29 May 2023, <https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/frederick-winslow-taylor-father-scientific/docview/211613416/se-2?accountid=8630>.

²¹⁶ Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications 1997), 10.

²¹⁷ Cadbury, *Experiments in Industrial Organization*, 271–272; Rowlinson, ‘The Early Application of Scientific Management’, 385.

²¹⁸ Edward Cadbury, ‘Some Principles of Industrial Organisation: The Case For and Against Scientific Management’, *Sociological Review*, 7, no. 2 (1914), 99–117; Rowlinson, ‘The Early Application of Scientific Management’, 380.

²¹⁹ Rowlinson, ‘The Early Application of Scientific Management’.

This analysis sheds light on practice within the factory and on Cadbury's assertions in *Experiments in Industrial Organization*. Using other evidence, Rowlinson observes that from around 1900 Cadbury's was scrutinising piece rates and introducing cuts focused on efficiency.²²⁰ This demonstrates, as Rowlinson notes, that 'systematic' management had been taking place in the firm long before Taylor's Scientific Management emerged.²²¹ In practice there was considerable overlap between the two, as to an extent Cadbury shows and as Rowlinson evidences.²²²

To give an idea of his agenda, Cadbury's chapters in *Experiments in Industrial Organization* include 'The Selection of Employees', 'Education of Employees', 'Discipline', 'Provisions for Health and Safety', 'Methods of Remuneration', 'Organization', 'Recreative and Social Institutions', and 'Industrial Conditions', as well as an introduction and conclusion.

In the beginning Cadbury claims that a living wage, decent hours, and factory hygiene are taken for granted, explaining what more Cadbury's does above and beyond this.²²³ However, he gives no specific definition of a living wage, besides that it should be 'adequate' and, in the case of those paid by piece rates, fixed according to the average speed of work.²²⁴ Cadbury does talk in vague terms about a minimum wage meeting at least that expected by trade unions and the 'best employers'.²²⁵ Further, Rowlinson has

²²⁰ Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management', 380.

²²¹ Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management', 391.

²²² Cadbury shows this in methods used in *Experiments in Industrial Organization*, and concedes a degree of overlap in 'Some Principles of Industrial Organisation'; Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management'.

²²³ Cadbury, *Experiments in Industrial Organization*, 1.

²²⁴ Cadbury, *Experiments in Industrial Organization*, 141, 142.

²²⁵ Cadbury, *Experiments in Industrial Organization*, 153.

highlighted problematic practices in regard to piece work and that these did in fact lead to run-ins with trade unions.²²⁶

Citing *Experiments in Industrial Organization*, Rowlinson notes that unions were reluctant to accept piece work at all, and that the firm's response to resistance was to financially motivate the foremen to increase the productivity of their workers, a practice which seems dubious at best.²²⁷ After J E Bellows, who Rowlinson asserts is a Quaker and who joined Cadbury's in 1912 as head of a new Works Organisation Department, began introducing more piece work there were at least two noteworthy union disputes.²²⁸ During one of these Bellows would not cede terms despite a rate cut because he felt that he had already been generous to the workers.²²⁹ This demonstrates that although the firm and the Quakers within it recognised the importance for workers of collaboration to endeavour to secure their rights, they were by no means always receptive to workers' requests.

The local press also noted in 1913 that union disputes were numerous and across various grades of worker.²³⁰ It seems that the goodwill of the workers towards the business enabled it to press ahead with these cuts without major industrial strife.²³¹ Cadbury's welfare and facility provisions cannot have hurt in this regard. However, the level of union activity and resistance at this time demonstrates that although Cadbury claims a positive relationship with unions and that he encouraged workers to join them,

²²⁶ For example, in 1901 a piece work rate adjustment meant that rates were cut for ninety-five women, while being raised for only fourteen: Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management', 380.

²²⁷ Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management', 386.

²²⁸ Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management', 387.

²²⁹ Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management', 386–387.

²³⁰ Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management', 390.

²³¹ Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management', 390.

the relationship was not unequivocally positive. Further, even in one of the most positively ethically portrayed Quaker firms, workers' rights were not necessarily or universally upheld. In fact, 'good' Quaker employers could use their positive public perception and persona to take action to the detriment of their workers.

In some sense the appointment of Bellows at Cadbury's as a senior manager seems to be a contrast to the management decisions at Albright and Wilson: by appointing a Quaker in this role the firm had more chance of maintaining and distilling a Quaker ethic through its business to its workers than did its fellow Quakers at Albright and Wilson. Bellows' appointment led to the effective demotion of (presumably non-Quaker) Tom Hackett, the works foreman, to 'personnel manager'.²³² As businesses such as these grew, they needed more people (who were often not Quakers) to assume greater managerial responsibility.

Bellows is here a probable exception among non-family managers in being Quaker and it is possible that Cadbury's took the decision to hire a Quaker intentionally in an effort to maintain their Quaker ethic. However, as can be seen from the disagreement between the business and unions about the ethics of piece work, being a Quaker by no means meant agreement with workers around their rights and best treatment.

Threlfall's appointment at Albright and Wilson marks a clear distinction from Cadbury's, as he became a director and shareholder as well as sitting on the Management Committee. This contrasts to Bellows' position at Cadbury's, whose entry into the firm did not affect its Quaker status in that he was a Quaker, but also he did not have a say at

²³² Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management', 388.

the meetings of the Board of Directors, which were still held regularly and included family members only.

In his conclusion, Cadbury speaks of the good that has come of legislative change concerning factory conditions.²³³ As for unions, he notes that until recent years, despite the firm looking favourably on them, workers had been reluctant to join. However, he is pleased that a few unions had started to be represented within the factory recently.²³⁴ Kimberley very much trusts in Cadbury's perspective here, not seeking to fully acknowledge Rowlinson's evidence to the contrary.²³⁵ Probably predictably, Cadbury's portrayal of the business does well in highlighting many positive practices at the firm. However, as an insider account it omits or skims over some of the less socially acceptable practices at the business, as highlighted by Rowlinson.

Rowlinson argues that Edward Cadbury's contribution to the development of scientific management has been largely overlooked.²³⁶ While there has been much discussion of ethics, welfare and culture, it is true that besides Kimberley's recent work, Cadbury's pioneering of systematic or scientific management techniques in the UK has gone largely unnoticed.²³⁷ This is despite Cadbury having written a later article on scientific management specifically, in which he described managers as keepers of knowledge.²³⁸

²³³ Cadbury, *Experiments in Industrial Organization*, 264–265.

²³⁴ Cadbury, *Experiments in Industrial Organization*, 269–270.

²³⁵ Kimberley, 'Towards a Set of Quaker Business Values'.

²³⁶ Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management', 392.

²³⁷ Rowlinson and Hassard, 'The Invention of Corporate Culture'; Kimberley, 'Towards a Set of Quaker Business Values'.

²³⁸ Cadbury, 'Some Principles of Industrial Organisation', 99.

Experiments in Industrial Organization, while obviously written by a director of the company and therefore to be treated with a degree of caution, shows in its factual presentation of information the relatively positive practical impact which social liberalisation and awakening within Quakerism could have among established Quaker business families running large firms. Cadbury's, Rowntree's, and Reckitt's stand out particularly in this regard, and are consequently often highlighted, but by no means represent most Quaker businesses.²³⁹

Comparing Cadbury to Grubb, due to the fact that Grubb is not personally a businessman, it is easier for Grubb to critique approaches and responses to the business and economic climate. That he is heavily influenced by Quaker liberalisation and sense of responsibility for social and scientific reform also directs his approach. He does a worthy job of straddling the line between radical socialism and Quaker capitalism in a way which might have appealed to all sides.

Ultimately, because of his freedom from dependence on business for his livelihood, Grubb is able to make the suggestion that Quaker businesspeople should at least consider forgoing business success if it contributes to oppression, even if it causes them suffering to do so. This places Grubb firmly in a more radical current of thought than either Cadbury or Rowntree. Thus, it demonstrates that even those with considerable desire for social reform, and with the wealth to carry it out, were falling out of step with the radicalising Society of Friends more broadly. The Cadburys and Rowntrees had ultimately become part of the establishment and, as Maclean, Shaw, Harvey, and Booth note, 'Quail (2000) observes that Rowntree was something of a contradiction in terms, for although ostensibly he extolled management efficiency, he was fiercely protective of

²³⁹ For more information on Reckitt's see Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success', 174.

proprietary dynastic rights.²⁴⁰ While in some senses Seebohm Rowntree is very radical in questioning the current economic system at Yearly Meeting 1912, and in suggesting that Christians should ensure their businesses do not hurt their community, he stops short of Grubb's standards.

3.5 Conclusion

By the outbreak of World War I in August 1914, considerable recent political and social changes both within and outside the Society of Friends had led to clear distinctions between different Friends in business and between those in business and not. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, the Society had transformed into a more socially progressive and reflective body on many issues such as peace, business ethics, and questioning classical economics. Accordingly, it had revised its discipline and its Peace Testimony, taking a stronger line on business and pacifist ethics than it had for decades. However, Quakers had simultaneously further weakened their guidance around oversight of Friends and accountability to these standards, the new liberalisation meaning that each was left to their own inward light.

Many of the Society's members had been challenged by the rise of socialism and trade unions. This cannot have sat easily with many Quaker businessmen who had grown comfortable with the social establishment, such as most of those sitting in parliament, still committed to free trade. Although most Quakers in business would have been becoming more distant from the Society's values in this way, there were some exceptions. These included socialist Quaker businessmen such as Arthur Priestman, who was almost

²⁴⁰ Maclean, Shaw, Harvey, and Booth, 'Management Learning in Historical Perspective', 15. J. Quail, 'The Proprietary Theory of the Firm and Its Consequences', *Journal of Industrial History*, 5 (2000), 1-28.

certainly in a very small minority, Arnold Rowntree as a Liberal MP, and many of the Rowntrees, Cadburys, and Bakers more broadly.

The Quaker conversation around business was continuing, with Seebohm Rowntree, Edward Cadbury, and Edward Grubb all expressing varying radical views. William Arthur Albright and John William Wilson were growing into roles in the Society of Friends and in parliament, as well as in their shared business. However, in the context of the newly affirmed Quaker Peace Testimony, the coming of war would bring great challenges to all Quaker businessmen and their families, regardless of their political persuasion.

4. Albright and Wilson and Change in the Quaker Business

Environment during World War I¹

4.1 Introduction

World War I represented a huge shift for British industry broadly, particularly for those businesses which could be converted to the manufacture of munitions.² Many Quaker businesses at this time were industrial in nature. They were therefore particularly vulnerable to the changes wrought by World War I. This chapter explores the implications of the Peace Testimony specifically, and World War I generally, for change in Quaker businesses, largely through the lens of Albright and Wilson, a chemical manufacturing firm.

The case of Albright and Wilson particularly demonstrates the complexities of the commitment to pacifism for Quaker businesses during the war. It brings together analysis of the impact of the Peace Testimony and other changes to suggest that World War I was a key agent of change in the contemporary Quaker business environment.

This chapter begins by assessing Quaker responses to the war in relation to business, including the reaction at Cadbury's. I then move on to a detailed analysis of Albright and Wilson, highlighting some key figures within the business at the time. After this I give a brief profile of the business from just before the outbreak of war through to May 1915. I then use a relatively detailed analysis of business affairs from June and July 1915 to demonstrate the divisions caused by the business's war work. Following this, I

¹ This chapter is a revised and extended version of a journal article: Nicola Sleafwood, 'Albright & Wilson and Change in the Quaker Business Environment during World War I', *Quaker Studies*, 24, no. 2 (2019), 189–210.

² Lloyd-Jones and Lewis, *Arming the Western Front*.

continue a broader analysis of Albright and Wilson's activities during the later period of the war, and look at the rise of two key figures – Charles David Sykes and Richard Threlfall. Finally, I highlight perceptions around cultural and/or nominal Quakers through an analysis of John William Wilson's eulogy, and consider what happened at other Quaker firms during the war.

4.2 Business in Wartime and Quaker Reactions

Kennedy asserts that the early twentieth-century debate around peace, socialism, and justice in industry was greatly intensified by the outbreak of war, and this is confirmed by several contemporary letters in *The Friend*, one of which includes the following:

Before we can have peace we must establish justice in our midst. In modern states the people are robbed by the inroads made upon their wages by unjust taxation, and by profiteering employers.³

The war forced Friends, individually and corporately, to engage with their history of resistance to war. Capitalism was the problem to which some of these Friends sought a solution. Others resigned from the Society of Friends and wholeheartedly joined the war effort. Of course, many more sat somewhere in between. The war also brought tensions in the Society's relationship to the state and permanently altered it: conscription in 1916 forced Quakers of military serving age to choose whether to comply or resist, and led to the Society of Friends as a formal body actively campaigning against the government's decision. However, Kennedy notes that about a third of Friends were pro-

³ Letter from John Moyle entitled 'The Roots of War', *The Friend*, 4 September 1914, bound volume for 1914, 656. See also Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 360.

war and a similar proportion enlisted. This demonstrates that a fair proportion of Quakers did not seek radical social change.⁴

The War and the Social Order Committee was founded in 1915, tasked with considering the link between the social order and the outbreak of war, and considering alternative forms of social order.⁵ Its work continued throughout the war and it merged with the FSU. Henry Lloyd Wilson attended some of its meetings and Harrison Barrow, another Birmingham businessman from the political left whom I discuss further below, also attended.

In February 1917 the committee held a weekend conference which discussed industrial reconstruction and saw a problem with the very existence of employers as opposed to employees, asserting that the committee needed to produce a scheme for equality to present to Quaker employers. The conference report also mentions Arnold Rowntree coordinating with union officials through the Adult School Movement, suggesting that Rowntree's was not hostile to trade unions.⁶ The committee did not suggest that Quakers should not make investments, but did express understanding that to invest ethically was difficult due to the connection of most investments to the war through the government, and suggested assisting Friends to find ethically positive investments.⁷ This particular conference further demonstrates the continuing desire of Friends to have a conversation around and take a decisive ethical position on business in the absence of a concrete discipline.

⁴ See, for example, letters in *The Friend* of 14 August 1914 (William E. Wilson) and 4 September 1914 (John Moyle), as well as the activities of the SQS; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 4, 314.

⁵ LSF, War and the Social Order Committee Minute Book, 1915-1917.

⁶ War and the Social Order Committee Minute Book, 65.

⁷ War and the Social Order Committee Minute Book, 45.

It was this committee which began to work towards the All Friends Conference which would take place in 1920, to consider 'The Implications of Friends Peace Testimony in Individual and Social Life'.⁸

The broader desire for social change is evident in some developments at businesses like Albright and Wilson, where unions became more active and a Works Committee was established during the war as an attempt to give employees more of an active say in the running of their areas of the business.

Upon the outbreak of war, in theory government control over business generally was fairly immediate, thanks to the Defence of the Realm Act passed in August 1914. However, governmental recording of intervention during World War I was poor and late to begin, particularly when compared to what happened in World War II, so it is hard to ascertain exact details about its progress generally. The Ministry of Munitions, to centralise and coordinate industrial production for the war effort, was not even established until May 1915.⁹ My analysis of Albright and Wilson sheds light on this and the impact of its establishment below. Some other examples of early government interventions and other general effects of the outbreak of war which affected Quakers are apparent in the pages of *The Friend*. For example, in the section entitled 'Current News Among Friends' from 21 August 1914 we find the following information:

A few days' tour in Ulster last week illustrated ways in which Friends are being at once affected by the war. In Bessbrook are the large flax spinning works founded by the late John Grubb Richardson and now carried on by members of his family and others. The cutting off of Continental supplies of the raw material had necessitated the

⁸ War and the Social Order Committee Minute Book, 79.

⁹ Lloyd-Jones and Lewis, *Arming the Western Front*.

institution of short time at the works for the present. At Richhill a Friend fruit farmer and preserver was feeling the sudden rise in the price of sugar and the probability of serious limitation of supplies. In Belfast a call on the Friend Secretary of the leading steamship company brought home the fact that all its steamers had been requisitioned by the government for war transport purposes, and that the company's business was for the time restricted to the conveyance of goods possible in two small cargo boats which they had chartered.¹⁰

This short excerpt alone, written barely a fortnight after the declaration of war, picks up several of the key difficulties businesses faced and demonstrates how quickly they took effect. Supplies, prices, and government control are recurring themes. While these would have affected all businesses, the price rise in sugar would have affected the several Quaker businesses that were confectioners in particular.¹¹ Another writer to *The Friend*, a shopkeeper, highlights the impact on his business:

Shopkeepers have been blamed so much for advancing prices that perhaps the following will explain the position that most of them find themselves suddenly placed in. A grocer before the war was buying sugar at 1 3/4 d. per lb. and selling it at 2 d., so that if he turned £1000 a year in sugar he made £125. Now sugar has doubled in price, yet he is expected to retail it at the official price of 3 3/4 d., which means that at one slap his profit goes down to £62 10s., With the probability that owing to dearth of employment it will be impossible at the greatly increased price to maintain his turnover of £1000.¹²

¹⁰ *The Friend*, 21 August 1914, bound volume for 1914, 623.

¹¹ E.g. Fry's, Cadbury's, Rowntree's.

¹² Letter from Ernest H. Bennis entitled 'Rising prices -- the case for the shopkeeper' in *The Friend*, 28 August 1914, bound volume for 1914, 638.

4.2.1 Cadbury's

At Cadbury's, as a demonstration of the significance of the outbreak of war for the firm, in a calendar for 1914 which had few other events marked on it in the directors' minute book, 4 August 1914 had 'WAR with Germany' written in red beside it and was circled in red.¹³ The directors were due to meet on 5 August, but this meeting was postponed until 8 August, exceptionally meeting on a Saturday.

Like the shopkeepers referred to in *The Friend*, the directors were also immediately conscious of the sugar shortage, agreeing at their meeting on 8 August to attempt to buy 4000 tons from Java.¹⁴ One cake line was also cancelled so as to conserve sugar stocks.

By the time of the directors' meeting on 10 August the government had already compulsorily bought five horses and harnesses from Cadbury's, for which the firm was seeking replacements.¹⁵ This demonstrates that in practice government control of business began very early, although in a piecemeal fashion. Come the meeting on 18 August the directors had decided it was necessary to reduce the proportion of sugar in their lines and to discontinue other items, further demonstrating the almost immediate impact of war on confectionery firms.¹⁶

¹³ Cadbury Board Papers 1914, Committee of Management Book 15.

¹⁴ Cadbury Board Papers 1914, Committee of Management Book 15, 103.

¹⁵ Cadbury Board Papers 1914, Committee of Management Book 15, 106.

¹⁶ Cadbury Board Papers 1914, Committee of Management Book 15, 109.

4.2.2 *The Response of Businesspeople*

Many prominent Quaker businesspeople were at the fore of efforts to provide relief in some form or other within a few months of the start of the war. Among these were Joseph Allen Baker, whose firm Baker and Sons provided bread machines for supplying troops, as well as manufacturing shells. He was president of a group of international church representatives in a conference aimed at securing international peace in Switzerland just as war broke out.¹⁷ His sons Philip (later Philip Noel-Baker), and Allan Richard, were founders of the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU).¹⁸ Other members of the family issued an appeal for service with the Prince of Wales' National Relief Fund.¹⁹ William Arthur Albright was heavily involved with the Friends' War Victims Relief Committee.²⁰ Like most Quakers, then, many Quaker businesspeople seem to have felt called to act in some way at the outbreak of war. Their business success and wealth meant that they usually had the resources to do so, as well as considerable influence.

¹⁷ From 'Current News Among Friends', *The Friend*, 21 August 1914, bound volume for 1914, 622.

¹⁸ The Friends Ambulance Unit was a Quaker-organised 'civilian volunteer ambulance service', About the Friends Ambulance Unit, accessed 15 May 2023, <https://fau.quaker.org.uk/>; 'Current News Among Friends', *The Friend*, 21 August 1914, bound volume for 1914, 626. See also Augustus Muir, *The History of Baker Perkins* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1968), 61.

¹⁹ From 'Current News Among Friends', *The Friends*, 21 August 1914, bound volume for 1914, 626.

²⁰ This body provided 'International Humanitarian Relief': 'The Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee', *Quakers & the First World War*, accessed 15 May 2023, <https://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/livesandlegacies-reliefcommittee.pdf>.

4.3 Albright and Wilson

4.3.1 Key Members of the Business at the Outbreak of War in 1914²¹

William Arthur Albright was a committed Quaker throughout his lifetime. He was active in the Society of Friends both nationally and locally.²² He entered the business in 1877 initially as an engineer, was also works manager for some years, and was chairman of Albright and Wilson from 1903.

John William Wilson, who was not an active Quaker by this time, had entered the business in 1879 in the commercial and sales sphere, taking charge of contracts before long.²³ This was a significant responsibility in the firm at this time.

George Stacey Albright (1855–1945) joined the business in 1879 as a chemist like his father. I can find no record of him remaining an active member of the Religious Society of Friends, though his obituary in the *Journal of the Chemical Society* credits him with membership. When George Stacey took over the laboratory, Richard E. Threlfall attributes to him considerable research development, and responsibility for recruiting more scientists.²⁴

George Edward Wilson (1860–1927) moved to a manor near Kidderminster, Worcestershire, in 1890.²⁵ Cadbury suggests that he moved his membership to Stourbridge Quaker Meeting in Worcestershire, presumably at this time, though it seems

²¹ See Figures 2 and 3.

²² In his biography of Friends he knew at Bull Street Meeting in Birmingham, William Adlington Cadbury says of William Arthur that he 'lived a life of devoted service for his Master and for the Religious Society of Friends: firstly in his own meeting at Bull Street, also for smaller groups of Friends in the Quarterly Meeting': Cadbury, 'Bull Street Friends I Have Known, 2; see Section 3.4.2.

²³ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 83. See Sections 3.1.4 and 4.3.6 for considerably greater detail around John William's Quakerism.

²⁴ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 85.

²⁵ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 88.

unlikely that he maintained this as he is not present in the Worcestershire members list.²⁶ George Edward joined the business in 1882, having trained as a chemist, but gave up working in the workshop around 1897 in favour of office work, particularly with accounts at first.²⁷

Having been granted shares in 1906, George Edward's oldest son Kenneth Henry Wilson (1885–1969) had joined the company in 1908 and was given a place on the Board of Directors just a year later.²⁸ Kenneth Henry seems to have been active in the Religious Society of Friends for a considerable chunk of his life; whereas his father transferred his membership to Stourbridge, Kenneth Henry was active in Bull Street Quaker Meeting in Birmingham throughout World War I.²⁹

In 1899 George Stacey Albright had recruited Richard Threlfall (1861–1932), an experimental physicist, engineer, chemist, and technologist, to the firm.³⁰ Threlfall joined the Board of Directors in 1901. By this time he had become an important force in the business, as its chief technologist, driving innovation. He was not a Quaker.

Another member of the Board of Directors who joined in 1901 was John Eliot Howard Lloyd (1872–1933) of the Quaker Lloyd branch and son of a banker.³¹ Eliot acted largely as the firm's secretary, bearing this title. He was second cousin to John William

²⁶ Cadbury, 'Bull Street Friends I Have Known', 82; WAAS, 1304, Worcestershire and Shropshire Monthly Meeting Minutes, parcel 4.

²⁷ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 87.

²⁸ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 157, 160.

²⁹ EC, SF/3/4/1/1/17, Birmingham Preparative Meeting Minute Book, 1914.

³⁰ Papers re: Negotiations with RT.

³¹ C. E. G. Pease, 'Descendants of Ivan Teg Lloyd of Dolobran', 108, accessed 29 May 2023, <http://www.pennyghael.org.uk/Lloyd.pdf>.

and George Edward Wilson and he seems not to have been active in a Quaker meeting, though Threlfall credits him with being of Anglican faith.³²

Henry Lloyd Wilson (1862–1941), John Edward's third son, was a very active Quaker who had performed numerous local roles and been Clerk of Yearly Meeting, as well as serving on the War and the Social Order Committee during World War I.³³ He was not active in the day-to-day running of Albright and Wilson and instead, along with his younger brother Alfred, was a director of J & E Sturge, a Quaker chemists in Edgbaston out of which Albright and Wilson initially grew.

In addition to these directors, the works manager at the outbreak of World War I was Charles David Sykes, a non-Quaker, probably of another nonconformist denomination.³⁴ Among key employees in the business at the outbreak of the war was a research chemist, A. A. King, who attended and was active within George Road Preparative Meeting in Edgbaston, Birmingham,³⁵ and who was assistant works manager from 1913.³⁶ Threlfall credits King with having 'flashes of genius' and with being behind various key chemical and other developments at the firm.³⁷

4.3.2 The Outbreak of War to April 1915: Quaker Reactions in Parliament and at Albright and Wilson, and Union Relations

Thus, in the period immediately preceding the outbreak World War I, the regular attenders at the monthly Board of Directors' meetings were William Arthur Albright as

³² Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 152.

³³ War and the Social Order Committee Minute Book, 1915-1917.

³⁴ WC, MS 1724, Box 65, Private Letter Book 4, 1910-1913.

³⁵ WC, SF/3/9/1/3, George Road Preparative Meeting Minute Book 3.

³⁶ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 144.

³⁷ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 143-145.

chair, John William Wilson, George Stacey Albright, Henry Lloyd Wilson, Richard Threlfall, George Edward Wilson, Kenneth Henry Wilson, and John Eliot Howard Lloyd.³⁸

The role of the Board of Directors was principally to approve decisions or actions suggested by the Management Committee, which usually met weekly. This committee consisted principally of William Arthur, John William, George Stacey, George Edward, Richard Threlfall, and Kenneth Henry.³⁹ Thus, at least two of these six, William Arthur and Kenneth Henry, were active Quakers, with others such as John William being birth-right Quakers.

This governance structure differed from that at other Quaker firms of the time, such as Cadbury's. At Cadbury's the Board of Directors was the only decision-making body, directly running day-to-day affairs. At this time it consisted solely of five family members, who were all members of the Religious Society of Friends.⁴⁰

Upon Britain's declaration of war in August 1914, Albright and Wilson's international nature and its finances were the prime cause for concern among the Board and Management Committee. Financially, Albright and Wilson was a growing and prosperous business at this point. The Management Committee considered reducing production 'in view of the difficulty of shipping and lack of foreign orders'.⁴¹ The report, written by Sykes, which would confirm the precise decision regarding production has been lost, but we do know that most plants closed on Mondays and Saturdays, though no

³⁸ These were George Cadbury, George Cadbury, Jr, William Adlington Cadbury, Edward Cadbury, and Barrow Cadbury. WC, MS 1724, Box 61, Board of Directors' Minute Book 1913-1925.

³⁹ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916.

⁴⁰ Cadbury Board Papers 1914, Committee of Management Book 15.

⁴¹ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1247, 11 August 1914.

men were laid off.⁴² The business committed to leaving posts open for those men who were called up as territorials or ambulance men, and to ensuring their dependants did not suffer financially in the meantime.⁴³ The decision on what to do with regard to men who joined the armed forces was taken by the Works Committee, whose minutes from this period do not survive.

I examine briefly here the response of different culturally Quaker and Quaker businessmen and MPs in parliament. At this point in time these were Arnold Rowntree and Joseph Allen Baker, who were active Quakers; John William Wilson, who was culturally Quaker; and Joseph Albert Pease, who was probably a worldly nominal Quaker in that he appears to have remained in membership and was buried in a Friends' Burial Ground, but was not a pacifist and took a title like his father. In practice John William Wilson and Joseph Albert Pease seem to have been of very similar heritage and views: both were from longstanding Quaker business families, both had a close friend in the Quaker George Newman, and neither was particularly pacifist, though John William's burial in a church cemetery and active collusion in the manufacturing of munitions in peace time are the key factors in my distinction here between them in terms of one being Quaker and the other not (as well as there being no Quaker meeting records of John William).

Probably unsurprisingly, the Quaker or culturally Quaker MPs who even attempted to speak out in parliament against the war were Joseph Allen Baker and Arnold Rowntree, in a somewhat heated debate, though even they voted for the emergency financing of war-related costs including for the military itself, on the pragmatic grounds

⁴² WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1247, 11 August 1914.

⁴³ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1248, 11 August 1914.

of securing the functioning of commerce in the country.⁴⁴ In this debate, both asserted their disagreement with previous military policy and that they believed this to be a factor in the war beginning, and Rowntree prioritised 'unity' over his personal views.

When John William spoke in the debate on 'War in Europe' towards the end of August, he did not express regret for the war as the other two Quaker MPs had,⁴⁵ and in another debate on intoxicating liquor he even talked of trying to 'arouse... [the] enthusiasm' of young men for war.⁴⁶ One T. M. Healy in turn accused him of being a member of 'a group of temperance people who are taking advantage of this war to carry out their own peculiar views'.⁴⁷ As I noted above, the rise of the Quaker view on alcohol and temperance had clearly had some impact upon John William, even if the Peace Testimony had largely not.

Joseph Albert Pease's first act upon the outbreak of war was to seek to extend voting rights to some members of the armed forces who had been excluded during the Boer War, without any comment on the war itself.⁴⁸ The culturally and nominally Quaker businessmen and MPs were therefore some distance from the absolutist pacifist wing of the Society, seeing fit to endorse military spending for the sake of national unity and

⁴⁴ Vote of Credit, £100,000,000, *Hansard*, Vol. 65, debated on Thursday 6 August 1914, accessed 1 May 2022, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1914-08-06/debates/1ab0c452-5ee7-4966-9914-3cd3f5ce0781/VoteOfCredit%C2%A3100000000>.

⁴⁵ War in Europe, *Hansard*, Vol. 65, debated on Wednesday 5 August 1914, accessed 30 April 2022, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1914-08-05/debates/a869d142-8056-4551-aeb6-2849b8114e8b/WarInEurope>.

⁴⁶ Intoxicating Liquor (Temporary Restriction) Bill, *Hansard*, Vol. 66, debated on Thursday 27 August 1914, accessed 31 March 2023, [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1914-08-27/debates/cb932f32-acf5-4079-aa71-c344f9af848a/IntoxicatingLiquor\(TemporaryRestriction\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1914-08-27/debates/cb932f32-acf5-4079-aa71-c344f9af848a/IntoxicatingLiquor(TemporaryRestriction)Bill).

⁴⁷ Intoxicating Liquor (Temporary Restriction) Bill.

⁴⁸ Electoral Disabilities (Removal) Bill, *Hansard*, Vol. 65, debated on Thursday 6 August 1914, accessed 31 March 2023, [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1914-08-06/debates/733bf4ac-38c7-48ed-8a63-9c3ebbe5bb65/ElectoralDisabilities\(Removal\)Bill?highlight=pease#contribution-bbc589f4-f6e5-4221-8c08-4749b14ca890](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1914-08-06/debates/733bf4ac-38c7-48ed-8a63-9c3ebbe5bb65/ElectoralDisabilities(Removal)Bill?highlight=pease#contribution-bbc589f4-f6e5-4221-8c08-4749b14ca890).

commercial functioning. Joseph Allen Baker highlights his personal interest in this as a businessman by referring to speaking to his workers that very morning, the day after war had been declared.⁴⁹ Therefore, for the most principled Quaker businessmen in parliament there was a conflict between their businesses' commercial needs and the increasingly prominent Peace Testimony of their Religious Society. Very few businessmen, it seems, were as strong in their pacifism as William Arthur.

In the meantime, over the next few months Albright and Wilson struggled with regard to communications and affairs with German business contacts particularly. At the December meeting of the Board of Directors it agreed to write off a considerable debt owed to it by one German company.⁵⁰ Sales to Switzerland also suffered.⁵¹ In February the firm was in negotiations with the government about the sale of land for a factory; this seems to be the first hint of any interactions which were directly related to the war.

It is from the angle of his centrality to the war effort that Threlfall became heavily involved in decision making within the firm, almost to as great an extent as the chairmen. For example, by the end of 1913 Threlfall's salary had increased to £1500, the highest at the firm by some margin, indicating his importance to and responsibility at the firm.⁵² And not long after the outbreak of war, in October 1914 the Board nominated him for two further positions of responsibility: to be on the committee of the Associated Chemical Products Co., and to be a director of the Electric Reduction Co., a key Albright and Wilson

⁴⁹ Vote of Credit, £100,000,000.

⁵⁰ WC, MS 1724, Box 61, Board of Directors' Minute book 1913-1925, Minute 107, 22 December 1914.

⁵¹ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1330, 9 February 1915.

⁵² This is up from £1000 when he began at the firm around the turn of the century, and is considerably higher than the next highest earner's salary, at £1000. WC, MS 1724, Box 65, Private Letter Book vol 5 1913-1915.

subsidiary which had considerable responsibility for its phosphorus production.⁵³ It was frequently Threlfall who attended meetings on behalf of the business in this period, including for negotiations with other firms, in addition to him doing work with the government on munitions development.⁵⁴ Negotiations and liaisons with the government about munitions seem to have all come through Threlfall, as the key contact with the scientific knowledge to assist the government in their development. Threlfall's participation on this level, as an external non-Quaker, furthered the erosion of the firm's Quaker status and values, particularly when it was put to the test during war time and he became more central.

By March 1915, due to uncertainty about business prospects the firm had looked into a process for the manufacture of zinc and baking powder, and it was not long before the company began producing both of these products.⁵⁵ The Management Committee was in two minds about what amount of production to undertake initially, noting the scarcity of labour due to the war. Simultaneously, the acquisition of raw materials also proved hard: according to John William in a letter to the managing director of Bryant and May, a Quaker-founded supplier and customer of which he was also a director, 'Manufacturing conditions are getting more difficult here every day, especially in coal & labour, and if this continues we shall have to take steps to protect ourselves.'⁵⁶ John William's presence on the Bryant and May Board would have helped Albright and Wilson commercially in terms

⁵³ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minutes 1277 and 1285, Meeting of 13 October 1914.

⁵⁴ See, for example, WC, MS 1724, Box 1, item 1354 in Management Committee File for 1915, and Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minutes for meeting of 26 August 1915.

⁵⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1349, Meeting of 9 March 1915, and Minute 1361, Meeting of 20 April 1916.

⁵⁶ WC, MS 1724, Box 65, Private Letter Book vol. 5 1913-1915, 330, John William Wilson, letter of 16 March 1915.

of securing links between these firms, and demonstrates his personal position and authority.

There is no evidence of the business recognising unions until this month: in the context of labour scarcity, and a demand for higher wages and lower hours, it was felt that negotiating via a union by this point was the best course of action.⁵⁷ Charles David Sykes, the non-Quaker manager, met with the union representative in late March about a workers' union.⁵⁸ He also told the Management Committee that he had informed a deputation of union workers that they could not work one hour less a week (fifty-three hours instead of fifty-four) since they were given time to wash their hands, which took around an hour in total.⁵⁹ A letter from George Edward to William Arthur written two days later describes a conversation with their neighbour Clifton Chance, who reassured Albright and Wilson that unions would only be brought in when 'masters & men could not agree' and took the view that 'where more than 50% of the men in any works belong to unions it saved trouble & had advantages to deal with the union'.⁶⁰ This suggests some wariness around unions on the part of the firm, though I would not propose that this could be attributed to its Quakerism (though it does seem somewhat similar to the approach at Cadbury I described above), given the apparent range of approaches that Quaker firms took to unions, with for instance the Peases being very pro-union.⁶¹ What is more, the firm's stance was clearly partly informed and represented by Sykes, the non-Quaker manager: for example, he made the decision about the reduction in hours.

⁵⁷ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minutes 1353 of Meeting of 23 March 1915 and 1363 of Meeting of 20 April 1915.

⁵⁸ WC, MS 1724, Box 1, Management Committee File for 1915, Item 1355.

⁵⁹ WC, MS 1724, Box 1, Management Committee File for 1915, Item 1363.

⁶⁰ WC, MS 1724, Box 65, Private Letter Book vol. 5 1913-1915, Item 246.

⁶¹ See Section 3.1.1.

In relation to their labour-related difficulties, the Management Committee also decided to join the Midland Employers' Federation in order to coordinate a wage scale and a response to unions in June, as well as have the Federation present during negotiations.⁶² The influence of the non-Quaker neighbour Chance on this decision suggests that the Management Committee was not actively seeking to treat its workers differently or better on account of Quakerism, but rather was influenced by its broader commercial context. In other spheres of decision and power at this time, the Management Committee agreed to raise the wage of one employee in order for him to be able to educate his son, demonstrating a concern for the welfare of individual workers and their families.⁶³

Albright and Wilson received a letter dated 5 March 1915 from the War Office requesting phosphorus supply for the army.⁶⁴ And by around this time the business had also begun to supply the Admiralty with phosphate of calcium, presumably for some war-related purpose.⁶⁵ One wonders how William Arthur felt at this time: I strongly suspect that he would have felt conflicted about this decision and about the War Office's request, given his Quaker pacifist leanings, and that these events would have begun to trigger his thoughts about resignation.

Also in March, and in contrast to William Arthur, John William further endorsed the war in parliament and was sufficiently concerned about temperance to seek to verify

⁶² WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minutes for Meeting of 8 June 1915.

⁶³ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, 1377, Meeting of 11 May 1915.

⁶⁴ WC, MS 1724, Box 1, Management Committee File, 1915, Letter between items 1354 and 1355.

⁶⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 1, Management Committee File, 1915, Item 1386.

the progress of restricted pub opening hours,⁶⁶ and to extend restricted pub opening to factory workers as well as to the military, for efficiency's sake.⁶⁷ It is abundantly clear that John William had no concern for peace but considerable concern for temperance by 1915. Temperance with regard to factory workers would also have been in Albright and Wilson's business interests in terms of efficiency, of course; it was probably therefore doubly important to John William.

4.3.3 Seeds of Division and the Loss of Control: May–June 1915

By mid-May 1915 it was abundantly clear that Richard Threlfall, a non-Quaker, did not share William Arthur's inherited Quaker pacifist leanings. In an indirect response to a mother enquiring whether there might be any work for her son at Albright and Wilson, Richard Threlfall abruptly declares that 'At the present moment... when every decent young fellow in England is doing something for his country, when the universities are empty, and when my own three sons are on service you will understand that there can only be one kind of advice that I could offer.'⁶⁸

Almost simultaneously, the War Trade Department issued an edict banning the export of phosphorus without licence except to British colonies and protectorates as from 20 May.⁶⁹ This was presumably to prevent the supply of chemicals for weapons to enemy

⁶⁶ Intoxicating Liquor (Temporary Restriction) Act, *Hansard*, Vol. 70, debated on Thursday 4 March 1915, accessed 31 March 2023, [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1915-03-04/debates/8094a0b3-9bf6-42e5-bfad-5d65c3ab639a/IntoxicatingLiquor\(TemporaryRestriction\)Act](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1915-03-04/debates/8094a0b3-9bf6-42e5-bfad-5d65c3ab639a/IntoxicatingLiquor(TemporaryRestriction)Act).

⁶⁷ Clause 1—(Powers for Expediting Production of War Material), *Hansard*, Vol. 70, debated on Wednesday 10 March 1915, accessed 30 April 2022, [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1915-03-10/debates/3d484fc2-2e60-41af-9a6e-668f5fe59547/Clause1%E2%80%94\(PowersForExpeditingProductionOfWarMaterial\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1915-03-10/debates/3d484fc2-2e60-41af-9a6e-668f5fe59547/Clause1%E2%80%94(PowersForExpeditingProductionOfWarMaterial)).

⁶⁸ WC, MS 1724, Box 65, Private letter book vol. 5 1913-1915, 371–372, Richard Threlfall, letter of 18 May 1915.

⁶⁹ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1380, Meeting of 1 June 1915.

countries, after their use had begun and been noted. This clearly had the potential to be devastating for Albright and Wilson's trade with non-enemy countries such as Japan and Sweden, which had largely been unaffected up to that point.

At the Management Committee meeting of 1 June, this edict was reported and discussed. A request from another chemical firm for large quantities of white phosphorus for government war use was also reported.⁷⁰ This evidently triggered William Arthur's uneasy conscience, as by the Board of Directors' meeting later that afternoon he had decided to donate '£500 to the [pension] fund by way of defence to himself from war transactions'.⁷¹

From the spring of 1915, the business came increasingly under government control. The nature of Albright and Wilson's chemical manufacture increased the degree and speed of this control because the government could use its products for war purposes, such as smokescreens and grenades. In practice, while the staff remained the same, by June 1915 the government determined both the nature and quantity of Albright and Wilson's production.⁷² This loss of control was fundamental in altering the direction and the character of the business in all its areas, and ultimately in its ceasing to be Quaker.

While shipping had become more difficult from the outset, as the war went on international trade became increasingly difficult too. The War Trade Department issued an edict banning the export of phosphorus without licence except to British colonies and protectorates as from 20 May 1915.⁷³ This thereby prohibited the majority of Albright

⁷⁰ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1380, Meeting of 1 June 1915.

⁷¹ WC, MS 1724, Box 61, Board of Directors' Minute Book 1913-1925, Minute 123, 1 June 1915.

⁷² WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minutes of meetings in June 1915.

⁷³ WC, MS 1724, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1380, 1 June 1915.

and Wilson's business as licences were hard to come by, though it was granted licences to supply phosphorus to Italy and to the French government, the latter for war purposes.⁷⁴ However, some transport routes had to be changed due to government suspicion. By June 1915 Albright and Wilson was forbidden from even providing a quote to one of its Danish customers, Erikson, due to government suspicion and hostility around exports.⁷⁵ This must all have made the government's demand for Albright and Wilson to supply phosphorus for munitions that month harder for those of a pragmatic mindset in the business to resist.

Also in June 1915, Richard Threlfall was appointed by the Ministry of Munitions to a new committee established to advise the War Office on chemical capacity for war. We hear from him about exploring options for bombs with War Office chemists and, crucially, about the business's decision to carry on down that path:

My trouble was that W.A.A. [as William Arthur was known] said he would leave us if we helped with experiments, etc. – but to-day we decided that I was to do what I liked; but I am afraid it will end in W.A.A. clearing out. The rest of us can't see why the Germans should kill our chaps with Cl and H₂SO₄ [sulphuric acid] and we make no reply.⁷⁶

There was also, of course, the probability to consider that war work would help to reverse the firm's decreasing profits. I suspect 'the rest of us' in the quote above to be an oversimplification: it was not just William Arthur from the Board who had doubts about the business's munitions work, as we will see shortly. However, Threlfall tells us that two

⁷⁴ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1411, Meeting of 13 July 1915, and Minute 1420, Meeting of 27 July 1915.

⁷⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1397, Meeting of 22 June 1915.

⁷⁶ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 167; WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 297, Meeting of 24 September 1917.

other family members, also members of the Management Committee, George Stacey Albright and George Edward Wilson, had sons who had signed up for military service, implying that they were therefore sympathetic to the cause.⁷⁷ Regardless of any personal allegiance they held to Quakerism, they were clearly not absolute pacifists, and neither was Kenneth Henry, who was active in Bull Street Quaker Meeting (alongside William Arthur) at this time. This did leave William Arthur alone in his view from those family members on the Management Committee. Still, for the absolute pacifist William Arthur this went further than merely carrying out government orders: Richard Threlfall would be directly aiding the development of weapons. At this point, though, the business was not yet ordered to produce munitions.

4.3.4 The Resignations and Unravelling of a Quaker Business Identity: June–July 1915 and Beyond

For a short while, then, during June and some of July, the Board and Management Committee were in a limbo of sorts. By the Management Committee meeting of 22 June, the commercial situation had worsened: due to government hostility around exports, the firm was no longer even permitted to provide quotes to its Swedish agent Erikson. It was at this meeting too that Richard Threlfall reported a direct request to the business for large quantities of phosphorus for war purposes. While William Arthur was at the meeting, he seems to have stopped acting as chair, since George Stacey signed the minutes in his place.⁷⁸ At the Board Meeting that followed on that day it became apparent that funds were insufficient to pay ordinary shareholders the half-yearly dividend.

⁷⁷ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 168.

⁷⁸ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minutes 1397 and 1400, 22 June 1915.

A couple of weeks passed with no further Management Committee meetings, but by early July William Arthur made his feelings very clear in a letter written to a colleague in one of the subsidiary businesses:

We (A and W) are being pressed to aid the Government in supplying horrors to meet the German chlorine gas and this is making me feel very uneasy, for as you probably know I would not take part in the war in any way directly or indirectly if I could help it. Indirectly we are all mixed up and involved inextricably with what is going on but this direct taking part in the affair is more than I can stand and I know at least one of our directors feels the same while others feel that the only right thing to do is to back the Government up in every possible way.⁷⁹

William Arthur in fact submitted his resignation as chair and from the Board of Directors that very day, as did his cousin Henry Lloyd four days later for the same reasons.⁸⁰ Up to this point Henry Lloyd had been a regular attender at Board meetings. William Arthur did not attend the Management Committee meeting of 13 July 1915, and the resignation letters are mentioned and referred to at the next Board meeting. A copy of the notice that went up in the works concerning the resignations was featured in the 30 July edition of the Quaker magazine *The Friend*, stating that William Arthur and Henry Lloyd had resigned because they believed all war to be wrong.⁸¹ The magazine also noted William Arthur's role as chairman of the Friends' War Victim Relief Committee.⁸²

⁷⁹ WC, MS 1724, Box 65, Private Letter Book vol. 5 1913-1915, 390–391, William Arthur Albright, letter of 6 July 1915.

⁸⁰ WC, MS 1724, Box 7, Misc Directors Papers, Letters of resignation.

⁸¹ *The Friend*, 30 July 1915, 595.

⁸² *The Friend*, 30 July 1915, 595.

Contextually, it is worth remembering that William Arthur and Henry Lloyd would have been present at Yearly Meeting 1911, when the new advices on peace were formed, and this one had entered the book of discipline that year:

Friends are urged to consider their responsibility in relation to all questions incidental to the military system, whether these arise in connection with trade or in public or private life;⁸³

Thus, as public and active Friends it would have been very difficult for them to do other than resign.

At the next Board of Directors' meeting on 27 July 1915, the minutes state that the resignations are regretted, and the other directors expressed hope that both members might return to the Board later, their places remaining open for them. John William took over as chair of the firm⁸⁴ and Kenneth Henry remained an active Quaker and involved in the business, illustrating perhaps pragmatism, as well as the diversity of views and divisions among Friends at the time. A. A. King, a Quaker chemist in the business, also maintained both his work and his religion.⁸⁵ According to Threlfall he even designed and operated 'a number of special war-time products and apparatus'.⁸⁶ Similarly, Arthur Godlee, the firm's solicitor, maintained both his Quakerism and his representation of the firm. Kenneth Henry and William Arthur both continued to be active in Bull Street Quaker Meeting, further demonstrating this diversity of response.⁸⁷ While the resignations were

⁸³ *Christian Discipline*, 1911, p. 141.

⁸⁴ WC, MS 1724, Box 61, Board of Directors' Minute Book 1913-1925, Minute 146, Meeting of 27 July 1915.

⁸⁵ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 172; WC, SF/3/9/1/3, George Road Preparative Meeting Minute Book 3.

⁸⁶ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 144.

⁸⁷ WC, SF/3/4/1/1/17, Birmingham Preparative Meeting Minute Book, 1914.

decisive, the actual process of withdrawing from the business, particularly for William Arthur, was more complex.

The first government order for phosphorus for munitions became a reality in August 1915 with an order for the manufacture of 350,000 grenades filled with amorphous phosphorus.⁸⁸ Some of this demand was met by importing from one of Albright and Wilson's subsidiary businesses in the United States.⁸⁹ The expected output for the government was 20,000 grenades per week, and the business needed to extend its furnace house in order to reach this demand. In September 1915 Albright and Wilson's non-government production amounted to around 50,000 lb of phosphorus, and the quantity demanded by the Ministry of Munitions was similar to this, therefore doubling output demand almost overnight.⁹⁰ Though the government implied the business could still maintain its other customers, this became increasingly hard as the war went on, as is explained below.

Financially, the government orders boosted profits by around £20,000 compared to the previous year, to more than £100,000. However, increased taxation and the new Excess Profits Duty consumed a considerable amount of the additional profits.⁹¹

⁸⁸ WC, MS 1724, Box 1, Management Committee File, 1915, Document for minute 1440.

⁸⁹ WC, MS 1724, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1440, Meeting of 26 August 1915.

⁹⁰ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Minute 1446, Meeting of 14 Sept 1915.

⁹¹ WC, MS 1724, Box 48, Annual Reports 1892-1931, Annual report for 1915.

4.3.5 Government Control and Shifts in Power: August 1915 to 1918

As of 31 January 1916, Albright and Wilson officially became a Controlled Establishment, under the government's oversight.⁹² At the Board meeting of 22 February 1916 it is reported that William Arthur had chosen to remain chair of the pension fund, but had returned his dividend.⁹³ Somewhat ironically given the whole basis for its return was William Arthur's objection to war, the firm decided to invest this dividend on behalf of the pension fund in war stocks to help the government fund the war, though this decision was not taken until after the meeting with William Arthur in December 1916 detailed below.⁹⁴

The vast majority of William Arthur's ordinary shares were transferred to Richard Threlfall. This share transfer is symbolic of a shift, caused by the war, in the balance of power in the firm out of Quaker and into non-Quaker hands. However, the whole process was very protracted, and although William Arthur had sought to dispose of all his shares, behind the closed doors of a family conference in December 1916 he was persuaded to retain 50 of his 536 ordinary shares.⁹⁵ This demonstrates how difficult it must have been for even a very principled pacifist Quaker to manage the conflict between conscience and family or business. It seems he felt unable to defy his family completely on this, although besides the pension fund he left the business well alone until 1918 from not long after his resignation in 1915.

⁹² WC, MS 1724, Box 61, Board of Directors' Minute Book 1913-1925, AGM minutes, 1 February 1916.

⁹³ WC, MS 1724, Box 61, Board of Directors' Minute Book 1913-1925, Meeting of 22 February 1916, Minutes 160 and 161.

⁹⁴ WC, MS 1724, Box 61, Board of Directors' Minute Book 1913-1925, Meeting of 30 January 1917, Minute 178.

⁹⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 61, Board of Directors' Minute Book 1913-25, Meeting of 30 January 1917, Minute 179.

Meanwhile Richard Threlfall was becoming more deeply involved in war work: before long he had invented the 'Threlfallite' grenade, made with a mixture of phosphorus and petrol.⁹⁶ Alongside Threlfall's increasing power, over the course of the war but particularly 1918 Charles David Sykes rose within the firm, writing almost all its reports and seeking and acquiring a title change from works manager to general works manager. His reports largely determined the action the business would take; it was fairly rare that they were not agreed to by the Management Committee. This therefore gave this non-Quaker manager considerable power in day-to-day decisions within the business. That was further consolidated by making Sykes a shareholder at the 1917 Annual General Meeting (AGM), giving him 500 ordinary shares and thus making him formally invested in the firm.⁹⁷ By February 1919 he had been given a place on the Management Committee, thus changing his role from one of input via report to a direct participant in management decisions.⁹⁸

In December 1915 the firm was told that it was no longer permitted to quote for business in China or Japan.⁹⁹ By November 1916 exports to Sweden were also being restricted, and by October 1917 Jonkoping, the main match company that Albright and Wilson supplied in Sweden, had combined with another local match company to acquire phosphorus from France because of the difficulty in getting supplies from the UK.¹⁰⁰ However, this was not the end of the damage to Albright and Wilson's customer base, as

⁹⁶ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 169, also mentioned in WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Meeting of 26 August 1915, Minute 1440.

⁹⁷ WC, MS 1724, Box 48, Annual Reports, Annual Report for 1917.

⁹⁸ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920.

⁹⁹ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1908-1916, Meeting of 21 December 1915, Minute 1506.

¹⁰⁰ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 28 November 1916, Minute 113, and Meeting of 23 October 1917.

in January 1918 it learned that phosphorus production had begun in Sweden, presumably partly because of the impossibility of acquiring supplies from Albright and Wilson.¹⁰¹ While this is understandable, it created a new competitor for the firm and deprived it of a key market.

During 1916 the quantity of phosphorus the government demanded increased still further, and one request from the Admiralty was simply impossible to meet. In August 1916 the Ministry of Munitions took control of the distribution of tungsten powder, further extending its control over Albright and Wilson.¹⁰² In 1917 there was talk of the Ministry directly taking over phosphorus production and this seems to have largely taken place around July 1917.¹⁰³ The Ministry of Munitions even ordered the purchase of land and construction of a whole new plant in December 1916, though production did not start until mid-1917.¹⁰⁴ An extension to the plant at Oldbury was also ordered, with production starting in September 1917.¹⁰⁵ The business's US sister company, the Electric Reduction Company, for whom many of Albright and Wilson's directors also acted as directors, supplied the US government with phosphorus for war purposes in 1918.¹⁰⁶

In 1917 there was also a shortage of cartons and a power supply deficiency.¹⁰⁷ All of this was pushing the business to its limits, but in October 1917 its contact at the Ministry of Munitions insisted on phosphorus production remaining as high as possible,

¹⁰¹ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Meeting of 1 January 1918, Minute 363.

¹⁰² WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Meeting of 7 August 1916, Minute 49.

¹⁰³ WC, MS 1724, Box 102, Ministry of Munitions Draft Contract 8536/2B, 21 July 1917; see also Box 102, 1917 Correspondence re: Munitions Work.

¹⁰⁴ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 28 December 1916, Minute 174, and Meeting of 1 June 1917, Minute 222.

¹⁰⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 10 September 1917, Minute 530.

¹⁰⁶ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 9 April 1918, Minute 431.

¹⁰⁷ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 27 February 1917, Minutes 164 and 165.

despite concerns that the firm would soon be producing more than necessary.¹⁰⁸ In early 1918 the business began to investigate the possibility of the production of magnesium,¹⁰⁹ a sign that the directors were considering the firm's production after the war, in light of the overproduction. Simultaneously the Management Committee, fearing the consequences of overproduction of phosphorus, again sought the Ministry of Munition's permission to reduce production at Oldbury slightly, but to no avail.¹¹⁰

Over this period the government formally controlled exactly which foreign businesses Albright and Wilson could communicate and trade with. This process was far from straightforward and consumed considerable time and energy.¹¹¹ The government also controlled wages and prices, for example objecting to an advance for the men in the gas plant in September 1916, as well as many other incidents.¹¹² John William exchanged letters with Winston Churchill at the Ministry of Munitions to object to finding out about pay rises determined by the government through the press; Churchill, addressing his fellow MP as 'My dear Wilson', defended this by saying the number of businesses involved made it nigh on impossible to notify them individually, though the government did attempt this.¹¹³

In 1916 Albright and Wilson made huge profits of £190,930 5s 4d, from which about £75,000 was deducted in additional taxation. This still left a considerable amount,

¹⁰⁸ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 9 October 1917, Minute 307.

¹⁰⁹ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 12 February 1918, Minute 392.

¹¹⁰ WC, MS 1724, Box 5, Management Committee File, 1918, Documents 389 and 412; also Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 12 March 1918, Minute 412.

¹¹¹ See letters in WC, MS 1724, Box 55, Bundle 40 of papers re suspension of Trade w/ Europe.

¹¹² WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 19 September 1916, Minute 72.

¹¹³ WC, MS 1724, Box 5, Management Committee File 1918, Item 370.

much of which was invested in war loans and elsewhere.¹¹⁴ War loans were loans from firms or individuals to the government to finance the war effort, with an attractive rate of interest. The choice to invest in war loans came in July 1915 after the pacifist William Arthur's departure,¹¹⁵ and it is hard to imagine this decision to fund military activity being taken were he still present. The shareholder dividend also increased in 1916 to 30%, compared to 25% in 1911 and 27.5% in 1913.¹¹⁶ In 1917 increasing government control and further taxation restricted profits somewhat, to £113,582 13s 3d.¹¹⁷ By 1918 profits were at roughly pre-war levels at £85,090 18s 2d.¹¹⁸ However, as is evident below, the situation otherwise was vastly altered for the worse as a result of the war.

Over the course of the war, as was the case generally, some men at Albright and Wilson were being called up for military service, though many gained exemptions as they were doing war work at home. Albright and Wilson needed to take on more women to replace the men who had gone and to meet the increase in demand. Total staff numbers almost tripled to 1355. The number of men employed nearly doubled to 864, and the number of women employed rose more than fifty times to 426.¹¹⁹ This consequence of the government demand for increased production led to the need for more physical space, such as a new tea room, which would add to costs once staff numbers inevitably decreased after the war ended.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ WC, MS 1724, Box 48, Annual Report for 1916 in Annual Reports 1892-1931.

¹¹⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 61, Board of Directors' Minute Book 1913-1925, Meeting of 27 July 1915, Minute 145.

¹¹⁶ WC, MS 1724, Box 48, Annual Reports 1892-1931.

¹¹⁷ WC, MS 1724, Box 48, Annual Report for 1917.

¹¹⁸ WC, MS 1724, Box 48, Annual Report for 1918.

¹¹⁹ WC, MS 1724, Box 5, Management Committee File for 1919, Document relating to minute 612, 'no. of employees', 8 January 1919.

¹²⁰ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 13 November 1917, Minute 338.

Over this period Richard Threlfall became increasingly involved with research and advice for the government concerning munitions. In this way the business was indirectly being drawn further and further into war work, and therefore away from the Quaker commitment to peace.

As the war progressed, the influence of the non-family, non-Quaker figures Threlfall and Charles David Sykes rose considerably. By the end of the war many key decisions were being made or heavily influenced by these two people. This could be for various reasons. I would suggest that John William had some considerable role in their rise, given its timing after he became chair, and that he seems to have had less of an interest in the business remaining notably Quaker.

4.3.6 John William Wilson: A Eulogy and the Peace Testimony

John William Wilson, who took over from William Arthur as chair in 1915, is a central figure in any discussion of Albright and Wilson and its status as a Quaker business. This is because he became chair of the business at the time it began its manufacture of weapons, and he oversaw its continued involvement with the military after the war. It is also because the story of his faith and religious values is a complex one. Part of my argument that the business ceased to be Quaker during, and in some measure due to, World War I rests on my determination that he was by this point not in fact an active Quaker, but rather merely a nominal birth-right one.¹²¹ It necessitates discussion of the

¹²¹ Though regardless of this the fact that the business continued to manufacture munitions during peace time means that it fails the Quaker business test using my model, ultimately due to its wartime change in production.

nature of being a Quaker in some depth. I therefore explore this further with reference to John William here.

It was John William's close friend George Newman who wrote his death notice, published in *The Friend* in July 1932 and in greater detail in the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*.¹²² Newman was a medical doctor who was knighted in 1911, and thus very much an establishment figure. He was a friend of John William's, active with him in the FAU as its chair, and they shared a belief in the League of Nations. He was also editor of the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, which goes some way in explaining the lengthy eulogy in that publication. The notice in *The Friend* suggests that the Society was keen to retain its claim to influential nominal Quakers and to endorse their hagiographies, or at least not examine them more closely.¹²³

Unsurprisingly given that the notice is being published in Quaker periodicals, Newman impresses John William's Quakerism upon the reader, stating that he 'remained all through his life a staunch Quaker, in spirit and in manner of life'. However, even Newman seems to concede on this in some sense, admitting that John William was guided more by his own vague sense of Quakerism than by its actual particulars:

Quakerism seemed to be in his blood and bone, not as a doctrine so much as a way of life. His practical sense, combined with circumstance, led him out of its controversies, its theories or dogmas, even its institutionalism, into the larger understanding of its inward guidance, its application, its catholicity, and its higher endeavour. As his adherence to particulars grew less his large-hearted sympathies expanded, his innate common-sense wisdom and judgement matured, and his

¹²² George Newman, 'John William Wilson', *The Friend*, 1 July 1932, 575–576; George Newman, *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, No. 264, October 1932.

¹²³ See Section 3.1.

‘concern,’ though less labelled or talked about, became wider and more comprehensive.

However, as I demonstrate here, John William’s ‘larger understanding of its inward guidance’ is incompatible with Quaker identity and principles at this time.

To cast further doubt on John William’s Quaker credentials, or at least to his dedication to Quakerism alone, Newman tells us that the words from the morning service of the Church of England ‘Guide our feet in the way of peace’ ‘had a personal application’ to John William; he must have been very familiar with the service for this to have acquired such significance to him.¹²⁴ Evidence that John William attended the established church further supports the dubiousness of labelling him a Quaker,¹²⁵ given the absence of any reference to ‘Meeting’ in his letters in the Albright and Wilson archives, and to attendance or positions at any level of institutional Quakerism.¹²⁶

John William meets the membership requirement for Quakerism, and was therefore arguably nominally (and culturally, due to his upbringing and networks) Quaker. He was in the relevant membership list with no indication that he left membership at any point. As with many such eulogies I have come across for Quaker businesspeople, there is no comment whatsoever on his business affairs. This suggests that in the mind of many Quakers there was a separation between the person’s business life and their personal and civic life. This is curious in the context of a religious society which prided itself on living out the values of truth and integrity: one would expect work

¹²⁴ Newman, *The Friend*, 1 July 1932, 575.

¹²⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 73, Private Letters, 1918.

¹²⁶ I have consulted local and monthly Meeting records for the Meeting where John William Wilson was a member, and found no trace of him being mentioned in any context aside from the one-line evidence of his membership from the late nineteenth century.

activities to feature as part of an account of a businessperson's life more broadly. However, the truth of John William's complicity in weapons production would not have sat well with the vast majority of Quakers.

The eulogy suggests that at least earlier in his life, John William may have been an active Quaker, for there is a quote concerning him from a woman who sat on business committees with him.¹²⁷ Newman reiterates John William's commitment to peace in other places in the eulogy. His involvement in the FAU, sitting on its committee,¹²⁸ could be seen to be evidence of this, in providing an alternative to active combat and in its mitigation of the effects of war. Certainly, the FAU occupied a position roughly in the middle of the various views on pacifism among Quakers. John William's presence as a high-profile Quaker is credited by Newman as contributing to public confidence in the Unit.¹²⁹ While I do not doubt his desire to do some good in regard to the war, given that his friends Arnold Rowntree and George Newman were also forerunners in the founding of the unit and that Newman was its chair by 1916,¹³⁰ I suspect their influence played a role in John William's involvement. He took at least two trips to France on FAU business with Arnold Rowntree in 1915.¹³¹

¹²⁷ This was probably within a Quaker context such as his adult schools work or Quaker Meeting involvement, since there were no women on committees at Albright and Wilson. Newman, *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, p. 295.

¹²⁸ Meaburn Tatham and James E. Miles, *The Friends' Ambulance Unit 1914-1919: A Record*, (London: Swarthmore Press, 1919).

¹²⁹ *Friends Quarterly Examiner*, p. 302.

¹³⁰ Linda Palfreeman, 'The Friends' Ambulance Unit in the First World War', *Religions*, 9, no. 5 (2018), 165.

¹³¹ Packer, *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree*, 181–183, 197; Packer notes that it was due to a joint letter between Arnold Rowntree and John William that Philip Baker reduced his FAU responsibilities, suggesting some disagreement about approach between these Quaker business families: Packer, *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree*, 183.

If one were to read this account alone, it would be impossible to doubt John William's Quakerism. Newman also makes the claim that 'His large, tolerant and catholic spirit found communion with many men of varying ideal and doctrine, but, like Lord Lister and John Bright, he remained Quaker to the end.'¹³² However, despite this eulogy painting a picture of John William as almost a pacifist, and certainly a Quaker, there is little evidence of his living out his Quakerism in his business conduct, besides a common Quaker commitment to free trade.

In fact, there is evidence to the contrary: the description of John William in this piece conflicts with the evidence of his actions at Albright and Wilson, as has been shown above. It is the testimony to peace which is most visibly contentious in John William's case.¹³³ It is therefore worth reflecting here on the Peace Testimony. As the words of George Newman about John William in the context of his life and decisions make clear, the testimony to peace could be variously interpreted,¹³⁴ especially by individuals desiring to remain within a culture and not to concede that they had strayed from its bounds. It seems unlikely that George Newman, as a close friend of John William, was unaware of Albright and Wilson's activities in terms of munitions manufacture and military involvement. And yet he describes him as a man who walked 'in the way of peace'. How can these things be reconciled? I would suggest that what Newman and John William shared was a hypothetical desire for peace, but that this was not absolute and involved no commitment to resist war, or at the very least not all war, especially if seen as a means

¹³² Newman, *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, October 1932, 300-301.

¹³³ Pease, Descendants of William Wilson; J. Fagg, 'The Growth of Population in Victorian Colwall', *Herefordshire Past*, Series 2, 22 (Autumn 2016), 10-12, accessed 15 March 2023, <https://eprints.worc.ac.uk/5318/1/Draft%20of%20Newsletter%20Article.pdf>; he also lived in a conspicuously large home with many servants, especially in the context of having no children, arguably undermining a commitment to simplicity.

¹³⁴ See Section 3.3.2; see also Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 312-315.

to an end or a 'necessary evil'. Few militarists would say they actively want war, and I would suggest that Newman and John William were no different. However, they are at the very opposite end of the spectrum from Quakers who went to prison for their absolute pacifist beliefs, and probably also from William Arthur Albright and John William's own brother Henry Lloyd.

However, John William's decision and ultimate responsibility for the business continuing work with the government on the manufacture of munitions of war led the firm and him into shaky ground with regard to Quakerism, though within institutional Quakerism there was regret and forgiveness regarding the disownment of some of those who enlisted, and even some who recruited.¹³⁵ This varied across Monthly Meetings, as the case of Walter Thomson shows. He was a birth-right businessman who was disowned by Darlington Monthly Meeting for actively securing army recruits while being publicly identified as a member of the Society. The problem for Darlington Monthly Meeting was that 'while actual military service might be forgiven, appearing on recruiting platforms and attempting to convince others to join in acts of war and killing could not be'.¹³⁶ The Friends Service Committee also averred that they saw no exceptions for not carrying pacifism over into business activities.¹³⁷

Reading what Kennedy has to say about George Newman sheds further light on the views of Quakers whom John William Wilson was close to and mixed with.¹³⁸ Newman joined Lord Gainford (Joseph Albert Pease, another Quaker businessman and MP, like John William) and other similar Quakers in establishing the Friends League of Nations

¹³⁵ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 399–401.

¹³⁶ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 400.

¹³⁷ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 322.

¹³⁸ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*.

(FLNC) in support of the League of Nations, with Gainford as chair. Newman asserts that John William too supported the League of Nations, though this detail is omitted from the eulogy in *The Friend*, perhaps unsurprisingly given the official view I detail below.¹³⁹ The FLNC sought to secure Yearly Meeting sanction for the League of Nations.¹⁴⁰

According to *The Friend*,

Ten days after the war ended, Newman chaired a Conference on the League of Nations which met at Devonshire House. Picturing the league as the only viable means for ensuring the future peace of the world, Newman expressed hope that the Society of Friends would 'give a sincere, a united and a determined support to the idea and the principle of the League of Nations.'¹⁴¹

Kennedy goes so far as to label these Friends 'pro-war', and Newman and the others seem to have differed from the feeling among Friends, at least at Yearly Meeting, which considered the League of Nations as a scheme to enforce peace through coercion.¹⁴² Yearly Meeting therefore did not endorse the group and the clerk took 'the view that to be pro-league was to be, in effect, pro-war'.¹⁴³ The Religious Society of Friends more broadly was worried that the FLNC would embarrass it and the Peace Committee was particularly concerned. When the group met US President Wilson, the architect of the League, the Society was keen to distance itself from the FLNC.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Newman, *Friends Quarterly Examiner*, October 1932, 297.

¹⁴⁰ Newman, *Friends Quarterly Examiner*, October 1932, 402.

¹⁴¹ *The Friend*, 29 November 1918.

¹⁴² Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 401.

¹⁴³ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 401.

¹⁴⁴ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 402–403.

Therefore, this serves to suggest that when Newman talks of John William as a man of peace, we should not read this as implying that John William shared the Society's views on peace and pacifism. It in fact supports my assertion of the opposite: John William's views were at the extreme of those found within the Society, demonstrating that he was far from a middle-of-the-road Quaker. The evidence about Newman is a broader precautionary tale about taking eulogies at face value.

In this case, John William's actions as chair of the firm, in determining the business's overall direction, were pivotal in his and its ceasing to be Quaker. That as chair John William did not seek to cease military involvement at Albright and Wilson, even after the end of World War I, is key. While there was some room for manoeuvre within the testimony during the war, its position in peace time is clear. In fact, arguably driven by Richard Threlfall, John William actively continued that involvement, seeking further collaboration with and contracts for government munitions manufacture.¹⁴⁵ It is this continued involvement in peace time which would have taken John William and the business certainly outside of the realms of definition as Quaker, though the seeds were sown and watered in 1915 by the non-Quaker Threlfall.

In spite of his personal identity as a birth-right and nominal Quaker (whose name is on a membership list), John William does not meet either of the two discernible elements which could make one a practising Quaker: active Quakerism or not persistently contravening any of the Quaker testimonies. While it can be argued that Quakers could exercise personal choice around the pacifist question during war time and retain their Quaker identity,¹⁴⁶ it appears difficult to reconcile the Quaker Peace Testimony with

¹⁴⁵ See Section 5.7.

¹⁴⁶ Bishop and Jung, 'Seeking Peace', 115–116.

actively choosing militarist involvement in peace time, even for commercial reasons. That John William was buried in the Priory Church, Malvern, rather than in a Friends' Burial Ground is the final evidence as to where his faith affiliations lay.¹⁴⁷

4.3.7 Other Quaker Businesses

Looking more broadly at other Quaker businesses which had different functions and usually were not required to manufacture munitions (though Baker and Sons was), the war still usually touched their activities in some way, from making chocolate for the troops at Cadbury's to gloves for them at Clark Son and Morland.¹⁴⁸ As with most other businesses, Quaker firms by no means escaped commercial difficulties in some form, such as wage and price control, and they often experienced severe difficulties with supply. Were these difficulties severe enough, they could of course have spelled the end for a business. Some Quaker firms either began talks about mergers or merged with other firms during the war, which, depending on management and control, could lead to loss of a Quaker identity at the firm. These include Baker and Sons, who worked together with another firm during the war and merged with it in 1919.¹⁴⁹ It also included Cadbury's and Fry's, which merged in September 1918 after years of talks.¹⁵⁰ The latter merger obviously reduced the number of Quaker firms by one, though in the former case the Bakers maintained control.¹⁵¹ With regard to the Cadbury–Fry merger, Fitzgerald asserts

¹⁴⁷ Newman, *Friends Quarterly Examiner*, October 1932, 576.

¹⁴⁸ Cadbury, *Chocolate Wars*, 235–236; Alfred Gillett Trust, HC 3/1, Letter from William Stephens Clark to Hilda Clark, 26 February 1916.

¹⁴⁹ Muir, *The History of Baker Perkins*, 55–68.

¹⁵⁰ Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution*, 138.

¹⁵¹ Baker Perkins Historical Society, *History of Joseph Bakers Sons and Perkins Ltd*, accessed 12 June 2023, <http://www.bphs.net/GroupFacilities/J/JosephBakerSonsAndPerkins.htm>

that this 'adversely determined' the future for Rowntree's, which refused to merge.¹⁵² This again demonstrates Quaker firms working against one another as competitors within the same industry.

Considering Cadbury's position on the war, on 6 August 1914 the firm issued a notice to its employees about various aspects of the outbreak of war and their potential consequences. The directors' position on the war generally, and engaging with it, was as follows:

Much as we deplore and strongly as we protested against the intervention of this country, we feel that it is the duty of every one of us to be willing to sacrifice our own immediate interests on behalf of our country. Some have felt it their duty to go to the front, but it is no less incumbent on those who, for conscientious or other reasons, cannot let their patriotism take this form, to bear their share.¹⁵³

Firstly, the directors' mention of patriotism and duty is a clear endorsement of the socially acceptable position, demonstrating that these Quakers, while paying lip service to the stance associated with their faith, were not willing to take a stand for that faith. This therefore supports my assertion of the priorities even of those Quakers now held up as models in business towards the establishment around this time.

Perhaps there was some disagreement on the Board about responses to the war, but this clearly reflects that they came to a consensus of sorts, that in times of national crisis responding to and where possible ameliorating that crisis should take priority over personal or religious ethics such as pacifism. The directors' collective understanding of the Peace Testimony was that while they should not directly or indirectly contribute to

¹⁵² Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution*, 138.

¹⁵³ Cadbury Board Papers 1914, Committee of Management Book 15, document 618, 104.

the production of weapons or munitions, they and their employees must do what they could to aid those fighting once war was under way.¹⁵⁴ This is a fairly moderate Quaker position, less pacifist than those who would not engage at all, but far more so than the few like Kenneth Henry Wilson at Albright and Wilson who tolerated the firm's production of munitions.

In line with this view, the directors at Cadbury's actively collaborated with the government by updating it about stocks from the outset of the war, and they contributed £5000 to the National Relief Fund.¹⁵⁵ They also chose at this point not to increase prices.¹⁵⁶ Commercially during the war, Cadbury's initially acted in its own economic interests by refusing to agree price increases with Rowntree's (in whose economic interests an agreement would have been) when approached by it from January 1915 onwards, until the middle of 1917 when the firms began coming to arrangements, though even then Cadbury's was accused of not sticking to one agreement.¹⁵⁷ This demonstrates that even among fellow Quakers and in a time of working in the national interest, there was still commercial self-interest.

At Reckitt's, Basil N. Reckitt has suggested in the history of the firm that the one 'sincere Quaker' on the Board, Sir James Reckitt, eased his conscience by 'wisely' pursuing 'a policy of turning a blind eye to certain [war-related] manufactures for the Government which his fellow Directors had agreed to supply'.¹⁵⁸ It strikes me that this is similar to what William Arthur possibly initially did at Albright and Wilson between March and June

¹⁵⁴ Kennedy describes the objection to any involvement, even in terms of raw materials, in munitions or weapon production: *British Quakerism*, 390.

¹⁵⁵ Cadbury Board Papers 1914, Committee of Management Book 15, 103–104.

¹⁵⁶ Cadbury Board Papers 1914, Committee of Management Book 15, 103–104.

¹⁵⁷ Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution*, 128–135.

¹⁵⁸ Basil N. Reckitt, *The History of Reckitt and Sons Limited* (London: A. Brown and Sons, 1951).

1915. Though Sir James was quite probably not chair at the time, the scale of war work at Reckitt's was not on the level of that at Albright and Wilson, where it clearly became impossible to ignore and not to hold responsibility for. Sir James seems to be the epitome of the Victorian Quaker: born in 1833, he was clearly very committed to his faith, but still took a title and even incorporated his firm early in 1879 and made it public in 1899.¹⁵⁹

While many Quaker businesspeople seem to have wanted to do something with regard to the war in terms of Quaker or military support, it was the outworking and development of their views, especially as the war went on, which proved divisive for families and businesses. This is confirmed in splits of one kind or another in the Baker family, the Cadburys, and the Clark family as a result of the war.

Some of these splits had a considerable effect on business leadership. In the case of Clark Son and Morland, a rug manufacturing firm related to C & J Clark's, for example, it seems highly likely that William Stephens Clark resigned as chair and Roger Clark as director as a matter of conscience; by February 1916 they felt unable to continue involvement in a firm manufacturing gloves for workers in ammunition factories.¹⁶⁰ This would undoubtedly have had a considerable impact on the firm's business activities, as well as being a personal wrench as both had had senior roles in the firm for more than twenty years.¹⁶¹

Among lesser-known Quaker businesses and their families, the Quaker Bakers of Joseph Baker and Sons, a firm which manufactured devices and machinery for the food industry, are a case in point regarding the impact of the war on business and differences

¹⁵⁹ Roy Church, 'Reckitt, James, First Baronet' (1833–1924), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 1 April 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/48144>.

¹⁶⁰ Letter from William Stephens Clark to Hilda Clark, 26 February 1916.

¹⁶¹ Milligan, *Biographical Dictionary*, 109, 110, 310.

of views around the war. Of the sons of Joseph Allen Baker (a pacifist Quaker MP), Allan Richard Baker remained working in the firm at Willesden, north London, Philip Noel-Baker was a founding member of the FAU, and Joseph Samuel enlisted and served in France.¹⁶²

Until 1916 the work of Joseph Baker and Sons continued much as usual. As this was the year that conscription was introduced, it saw the transition of some jobs from men to women as more of the men were sent to fight. This year also saw the coming into law of the Munitions Act. Despite its directors' Quaker principles and objection to war, this Act meant that the firm was taken over by the government as a Controlled Establishment. Joseph Baker and Sons began to manufacture shells. This meant considerable upheaval for the firm; much reorganisation took place and half of the machines were converted for the manufacture of shells, funded by an advance from the Ministry of Munitions.¹⁶³ Augustus Muir notes that 'the older generation, Joseph Allen Baker and his three brothers on the Board, would not have tolerated the manufacture of munitions of war at Willesden if they had their way'.¹⁶⁴

Among the main products on the line at Joseph Baker and Sons before the Munitions Act was machinery to prepare dough and bake bread. Early in the war the directors of the firm had encouraged the War Office to place an order with them for this machinery, as it would reduce the manpower needed at the field bakeries. In 1917 this finally came about, and Joseph Baker and Sons collaborated with another firm with whom they would eventually merge to manufacture the promised machinery on a large scale.

¹⁶² Muir, *The History of Baker Perkins*, 61.

¹⁶³ Muir, *The History of Baker Perkins*, 61–62.

¹⁶⁴ Muir, *The History of Baker Perkins*, 61.

Eventually all of the British Army on the Western Front was fed with bread baked by machinery supplied by this Quaker business.¹⁶⁵ In a demonstration of the close links between Quaker businesses, Joseph Baker and Sons had been supplying Cadbury's with chocolate processing machinery since the nineteenth century.¹⁶⁶

Here, we see not resignation from the firm, but from the Religious Society of Friends: it is recorded by those who went to interview him that by April 1916 Allan Richard Baker (who had helped to establish the FAU) and his wife (who remains unnamed) regarded

participation in the present war as a national duty, and recognise that they are in consequence at variance with an important principle of the Society of Friends. They have no other disagreement with those principles; but they feel it to be the honest and straight-forward course to resign their membership.¹⁶⁷

Allan Richard would go on to become chairman of the business in 1918,¹⁶⁸ so his departure from the Society would have had some impact on its Quaker character, at least for his time in the firm. As these examples alongside that of Albright and Wilson make apparent, the issue of defining a Quaker business is not in itself simple. What is more, the tension between the war and the Peace Testimony had profound consequences for Quaker businesses. Allan Richard's brother-in-law J. B. Braithwaite Jr was also pro-war,¹⁶⁹ and his Quaker colleague at Baker and Sons, E. H. Gilpin (the writer of his

¹⁶⁵ Muir, *The History of Baker Perkins*, 63–65.

¹⁶⁶ Baker Perkins in the Chocolate and Confectionery Business, Baker Perkins Historical Society, accessed 29 September 2014, <http://www.bphs.net/HistoryOfKeyBusinesses/Confectionery/index.htm>.

¹⁶⁷ LSF, Westminster & Longford Monthly Meeting Minutes, vol. 29, Letter attached to minutes, addressed to Westminster & Longford Monthly Meeting from R. Hingston Fox and Elizabeth Hingston Fox from London on 13 April 1916, 115.

¹⁶⁸ Muir, *The History of Baker Perkins*, 209.

¹⁶⁹ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 391–393.

obituary) also resigned his membership over the war.¹⁷⁰ Allan Richard did not return to membership after the war.¹⁷¹ The joint departure of Allan Richard and E. H. Gilpin probably sealed the fate of Baker and Sons as a Quaker firm.

4.4 Conclusion

Albright and Wilson acts both to demonstrate the commercial implications of World War I for manufacturing firms, and as an acute study of the ethical dispute in Quaker firms triggered by the war. This latter point also has implications for other ethical issues for Quaker firms and their effects, though few could be so emotive and divisive as war. It highlights the importance of a shared ethic between partners or directors, and how damaging division can be to this ethic.

At Albright and Wilson, the rise of non-Quakers over the course of the war, and the resignations of William Arthur and Henry Lloyd Wilson, meant that World War I shifted the balance at Board meetings and on the Management Committee from roughly equal representation to non-Quakers and non-practising Quakers being in the majority over Quakers. While there was still one active Quaker, Kenneth Henry Wilson, in an influential position in the firm, those Quakers who were strongly pacifist and who felt the need to put principles before pragmatism had gone. The few other Quaker shareholders it is likely there were, such as other family members and one or two employees, showed no real interest in the business's affairs during this time. For example, none of them attended the Annual General Meetings during the war, though more did attend after the business made a loss in 1921, suggesting their main motivation may have been

¹⁷⁰ Packer, *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree*, 134.

¹⁷¹ Obituary for Allan Richard Baker (1879–1942), *Peterborough Standard*, Friday 23 October 1942.

financial.¹⁷² World War I's raising of the pacifist question at Albright and Wilson, heightened by the commercial situation the firm faced and combined with the influence of non-Quaker, non-family members, ultimately ended the business's status as Quaker.

Commercially, the war and government control of the firm caused significant harm at Albright and Wilson, though it did briefly bring high profits. The loss of business brought about by severe restrictions to international trade was an initial and severe detrimental factor which worsened as the war went on. The consequential securing of alternative suppliers by their overseas customers made this worse still, as there was not the business to pick back up after the war. The total takeover by the government, Bryant and May work excepted, compounded these problems and ensured that the firm needed to build the business back up almost from the ground. What is more, it made maintaining some military work highly attractive commercially. There was probably no commercially viable option to return to or continue as a Quaker firm after the war by ceasing military work.

Whether Edward Grubb's suggested path of leaving business in the case of causing oppression could have been an alternative path is a consideration.¹⁷³ Arguably, coming back as a business of any kind in these circumstances was a significant challenge. By providing an in-depth study of one business during World War I, this case study demonstrates in detail how devastating war could be for business, especially when government control was also involved.

The resignations and divisions I have demonstrated in other Quaker businesses confirm the additional difficulties and divisions a commitment to pacifism could bring to

¹⁷² WC, MS 1724, Box 48, Annual Reports 1892-1931.

¹⁷³ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 124.

Quaker businesses during war time. As we have seen in the more detailed case study of Albright and Wilson, it was not simply changes in business leadership brought about by issues of conscience which impacted Quaker firms during World War I. However, these changes, particularly when combined with commercial difficulties, could go so far as to render a business no longer Quaker. Crises of personal conscience and ethics triggered by World War I are a key reason for the decline in the Quaker business environment in the twentieth century.

5. The Quaker Business Outlook beyond 1918

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I address the outlook for Albright and Wilson and other Quaker or formerly Quaker businesses in the period after World War I. Largely through an analysis of the Quaker Employers' Conferences of 1918, 1928, 1938, and 1948, I also consider the impact of societal and internal Quaker changes upon the Quaker business outlook, covering economic and political factors as well as the likely interplay between Quaker businesspeople and the Society of Friends.

The approach of the end of World War I heralded a period during which British Quakers consolidated their testimonies and social stance, particularly around peace. Two key events for Quakers took place just months before the end of the war. Both emerged as a consequence of the War and the Social Order Committee attached to London Yearly Meeting. The first of these, in April 1918, was the first in a series of conferences of Quaker employers held at Woodbrooke.

This conference was very clearly a product of its time in terms of reflecting upon the social tumult brought about by a world war, and it considered the consequences of this for Quaker employers and how they might respond as specifically Quaker businessmen. While the conferences were certainly of value to Quaker employers as a space to explore issues around employer responsibility in its social context, they also highlight the need for this space arising from a lack of general business oversight within the structure and routine of the Society of Friends. If these nineteenth-century structures had still been in place, my sense is that there would have been much less need for these conferences.

The conferences generally were dominated by the Rowntree and Cadbury families, largely benevolent capitalists grown wealthy and seeking to consider their Society's role in the national business scene.¹ To some extent this is the case because they had the financial and physical resources to do so: Woodbrooke was largely still under the Cadburys' influence, and both families were wealthy enough to support the events. As I demonstrated above, both families were both active in politics, and in producing literature on social ills and business. Their organising of the conferences meant that to some extent they set the vision and sought to spread their methods and morals to others.

5.2 The 1918 Employers' Conference

The opening address at the 1918 conference was given by Arnold Rowntree, the same MP and businessman we encountered above.² In it he spoke of how the war had 'revolutionised the industrial outlook', condemned the laissez-faire, free-trade approach to business, and endorsed a living wage.³ He was clear that the days of the Quaker paternalist and his power should be over:

Autocracy tempered by benevolence, however charmingly pictured, was nevertheless bad for both parties, and one does not wonder that men are in revolt against the system which places the joy of daily life and labour at the whim and

¹ Rowlinson also noted the dominance of these two families and the local Cadbury influence, 'Cadburys' New Factory System', 85.

² See Section 3.1.3.

³ *Quakerism and Industry: Being the Full Record of a Conference of Employers, Chiefly Members of the Society of Friends, Held at Woodbrooke nr Birmingham 11-14 April 1918. Together with the Report Issued by the Conference*, (London: Quaker Employers' Conference, 1918) 9, 12, 15.

hazard of a small number of employers, however benevolently inclined some of them may be.⁴

It is perhaps unsurprising given Rowntree's stance and John William Wilson's commitment to free trade that despite their being acquainted and fellow MPs, John William did not attend the conference on behalf of his firm; conferring with other Quaker businesspeople about their response to the changing social order was not a priority for him. Charles H. Feinstein, Peter Temin, and Gianni Toniolo argue that businessmen 'and industrialists were almost everywhere divided between those who favored an immediate return to a laissez faire economy and those—usually the suppliers to the army—who argued in favor of a slow "return to normality," with strong state help in the process.'⁵ Yet this does not fit with the position generally advocated by the 1918 Quaker Employers' Conference where a change in the system was being contemplated, though those such as Albright and Wilson would certainly not have objected to state help, as we see below. Still, this is an example of signs that some Quakers in business were increasingly diverging in their views on approaches to business and the economy from the mainstream business milieu, which simply sought a return to the pre-war social order. It should be borne in mind though, that there were other Quaker businesspeople at this time, such as the active directors of Albright and Wilson, who gave no indication of changing views on business and the social order, and almost certainly many in between.

The conference attracted eighty-five participants from a wide range of firms, including the former Albright and Wilson directors William Arthur Albright and Henry

⁴⁴ Arnold Rowntree, 'The Industrial Outlook with Special Reference to the Responsibility of Quaker Employers', in *Quakerism and Industry*, 17.

⁵ Charles H. Feinstein, Peter Temin, and Gianni Toniolo, 'The Shock of Economic Restructuring and Social Unrest' in Charles H. Feinstein, Peter Temin, and Gianni Toniolo (eds), *The World Economy between the World Wars* (New York: Oxford Academic, 2008), ch. 2.

Lloyd Wilson.⁶ Somewhat surprisingly, William Arthur was there officially to represent Albright and Wilson. Presumably this was on account of his gradual reintroduction to the firm in some ways in 1918; in February he had attended his first company AGM since 1915. However, his responsibilities there were still very minimal, so I suspect his attendance was largely out of personal interest. Indeed, this clearly demonstrates his enduring commitment to considering the interaction between his faith and business activities among other Quakers.

The first section of the conference on the claims of labour heard directly from three representatives of the labour movement.⁷ This demonstrates recognition from those organising the conference of the importance of the rising labour and unionist movements and of engaging with them, in a manner that seems unimaginable for earlier paternalistic Quaker employers. However, Rowlinson has highlighted that one of the representatives was in fact a long-standing foreman at Cadbury's, and therefore hardly disinterested.⁸ The conference also acknowledged the rise in legislation, which left less of a place for paternalism. The fact that employers began meeting in this way shows a collective desire to alter the social order, and an increase in their engagement with broader social movements.⁹

The second section of the conference featured Seebohm Rowntree and a discussion on wages. It accepted Seebohm's suggestions around rates of pay, which he specifically

⁶ Kimberley, 'Employee Relations and the Quaker Employers Conference', 231–232; *Reimagining a True Social Order*, accessed 24 January 2020, <https://quakersocialorder.org.uk/home/basics/>; *Quakerism and Industry*, 1918, 15. Henry Lloyd was present to represent his own chemical manufacturing enterprise (the one out of which Albright and Wilson had grown in the nineteenth century), J & E Sturge Ltd.

⁷ Kimberley, 'Employee Relations and the Quaker Employers Conference'.

⁸ Rowlinson, 'Cadburys' New Factory System', 84.

⁹ Kimberley, 'Employee Relations and the Quaker Employers Conference', 235–240; *Quakerism and Industry*, 1918, 18.

calculated to enable a single earning man to support a wife and three children. He argued for a wage based on human need, not on the value of service provided. The ‘basic’ wage on which Seebohm settled and argued his case around was 44 s per week for men and 25 s per week for women. *Hansard* provides data for average wages across various sectors from 1914 and 1920, with which this can be cautiously compared. If we compare Seebohm’s figure with the 1914 values, his suggestion seems fairly generous.¹⁰ Comparing to 1920 averages, which increased hugely from 1914 after a massive rise in inflation,¹¹ his figures seem to place his recommendation within the average range for an ordinary labourer at the time, but well below the likely average for a building labourer.¹²

A third, more reliable measure would be to use the consumer price index, for which data are available in 1914 and 1918. This assumes the accuracy of Feinstein, Temin, and Toniolo’s assessment, which indicates a doubling of prices between 1914 and 1918 according to the consumer price index.¹³ If we use this guide, Seebohm’s basic wage figure does not look as progressive and generous as might have been imagined for a socially progressive Quaker, sitting at about the mid-range for labourers.¹⁴ As it was based on a calculation of need, it would also not be viable for long, given the further rises in the consumer price index. If accepted nationally it would have raised the wage level floor, but its value for many would have been limited.

¹⁰ This figure is considerably higher than averages across many sectors, but particularly that of ‘ordinary labourers’, which stood at 14 s–22 s per week.

¹¹ Wages increased to an average for ordinary labourers of 42 s–46 s.

¹² Wages (Principal Industries), Volume 155: debated on Tuesday 20 June 1922, accessed 11 June 2023, [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1922-06-20/debates/224673aa-4164-4313-9f26-8ddf562a3633/Wages\(PrincipalIndustries\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1922-06-20/debates/224673aa-4164-4313-9f26-8ddf562a3633/Wages(PrincipalIndustries)).

¹³ Charles H. Feinstein, Peter Temin, and Gianni Toniolo, *The World Economy between the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁴ The average wage in 1918 for an ordinary labourer would have been 28 s–44 s, for a building labourer 52 s, and for an engineering or shipbuilding labourer 44 s.

The influence of the rise of Seebohm Rowntree and others like him, such as members of the FSU, in the early twentieth century is clearly visible here, and he was bringing his research into poverty directly to a Quaker business audience. This suggests that the group of employers here were at least somewhat receptive to Quaker thought around broader social concerns. Or perhaps it is more that prominent socially minded Quaker businesspeople of this time such as the Cadburys and Rowntrees led the conference and sought to take their message to other Quaker employers. I would suggest that both are at play – if those attending had been unlikely to be receptive to the ideas, they would not have chosen to attend. This conference consolidated the sense of a move away from the internal Quaker legislation around business practice and ethics of the nineteenth century, towards a conversation in which there was no binding commitment for employers, or explicit oversight, but merely a ‘loose organisation for the dissemination of information’.¹⁵

Not long after the conference, Kavanagh and Brigham have highlighted that at London Yearly Meeting in 1918 considerable concern around limited liability was expressed, and their point that the vocal objections came far too late rings true.¹⁶ The social awakening in Quakerism brought this realisation about, but by this time too many Quaker firms had converted in form under the sway of the earlier evangelical tendency and worldly engagement.

¹⁵ A. Rowntree, 16 April 1918, in Packer, *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree*, 242.

¹⁶ Kavanagh and Brigham, ‘The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company’, 119.

5.3 Attendance across the Conferences

Contrary to Karen Tibbals' suggestion that fewer employers attended the next conference in 1928, the list of attendees numbers 100, 15 more than in 1918.¹⁷ Indeed, the numbers grew at each of the two following conferences too, with 115 attending in 1938 and 119 in 1948.¹⁸ This suggests that the interest in considering business questions increased as the century progressed. There is a degree to which one might question the audience for consideration of these questions: while in 1918 attendance was limited to those attending on behalf of businesses with at least fifty employees,¹⁹ the lists of attendees at later conferences seem to have been considerably and increasingly relaxed.

Further examining these lists, whereas in 1918 those attending very much represented 'industry' in terms of manufacturing, banking, accountancy, solicitors, insurance, and sometimes retail, in 1928 other types of organisations were represented. For example, in that year Bournville Village Trust was represented, which demonstrates the broadening of the type of organisation considered welcome and being led by Quakers. This trend gained traction, and by 1948 Quakers could simply attend in a 'personal

¹⁷ Tibbals, 'Quaker Employer Conference of 1918', 71; *Quakerism and Industry*, 1918, 93–95, 84; *Quakerism and Industry: Being the Full Record of a Conference of Employers, Chiefly Members of the Society of Friends, Held at Woodbrooke, Birmingham 12-15 April, 1928, Together with the Report Issued by the Conference* (London: Quaker Employers' Conference, 1928).

¹⁸ This surprised me when I thoroughly reviewed the numbers, as my own impression had matched Tibbals'. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic I was unable to confirm this in my book chapter written with Thomas D. Hamm, which will therefore contain this inconsistency; *Quakerism and Industry: Being the Papers Read at a Conference of Employers, Members of the Society of Friends, Held at Woodbrooke, Birmingham 22-25 April, 1938, Together with a Report of the Conference* (London: Quaker Employers' Conference, 1938); *Quakerism and Industry: Conference of Quaker Employers, Held at Woodbrooke, Birmingham 2-5 April, 1948, With Lecture by Sir Oliver Franks, K.C.B on Central Planning and Control and the Conference Conclusions* (London: Quaker Employers' Conference, 1948); Thomas D. Hamm and Nicola Sleafwood, 'Quakers and the Social Order', 1830-1937, in Stephen W. Angell, Pink Dandelion and David Harrington Watt (eds), *The Creation of Modern Quaker Diversity, 1830-1937* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2023) 173-190; Rowlinson also noted these increasing numbers: 'Cadburys' New Factory System', 84-85.

¹⁹ Tibbals, 'Quaker Employer Conference of 1918', 67.

capacity', but also as representatives of various kinds of educational establishments. The number of these types of non-classical Quaker employers roughly doubled each conference. So while in 1948 there were still only approximately 10% from alternative spheres, this increase and relaxation in requirements for attendance were also symbolic of the broadening vocations among Quakers at the time. The conferences, by not having any firm conclusions or agreements, also further solidified the move towards a conversation from a legislature determined by employers.

5.4 The 1920 Books of Discipline and the 1928 Employers' Conference in the Context of the Eight Foundations of a True Social Order

In 1921, Yearly Meeting published the first part of its revised discipline, consisting of an introduction with two extracts on a 'renaissance' liberal understanding of the Quaker faith in the early twentieth century. These extracts themselves are characteristic of their context, and very much emphasise the growing individualisation of inward religious experience, over and above any common doctrine, observing in one place that 'It is not in the life itself, but in the attempt to formulate its implications... that divisions arise.'²⁰ Yet it was the very formulation of a common business ethic and a corresponding disciplinary and oversight process which benefited Quakers in business in Quakerism's earlier history. And while the renewed strength of the general ethic around business practice in 1911, 1921, and 1925 is noteworthy, if inward experience is in practice prioritised to the exclusion of all else, it means little; Quaker businesspeople of the

²⁰ *Christian Life, Faith and Thought in the Society of Friends: Being the First Part of Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends in Great Britain. Approved and Adopted by the Yearly Meeting* (London: Friends House, 1921), 13.

twentieth century could very justifiably ignore the advice, on the basis of their inward religious experience, with no accountability.²¹

Somewhat ironically in two senses, the subsequent section of this first volume of the revised discipline includes a quote from, and relative hagiography of, the Quaker businessman and politician John Bright. The irony comes first in that the book quotes him as an exemplar saying that he holds the 'doctrine' 'that the moral law is intended not for individual life only, but for the life and practice of States in their dealing with one another'.²² And yet, aside from the testimonies, liberal British Quakerism almost essentially was (and is) without doctrine. How can this exemplary quote that bodies need a moral law be reconciled with a body of people which had firmly rejected doctrine?

The second sense of irony comes in holding John Bright up as an exemplar, with no acknowledgement of the damage his parliamentary vote for and voice on limited liability ultimately contributed to Quaker business prospects. Without doubt, John Bright believed himself to be making the right decision in terms of equality and freedom, but it seems that Quakers since have not acknowledged his views, perhaps being unaware of his parliamentary record on the matter. This is despite the Yearly Meeting of 1918 having lamented the introduction of limited liability.²³

The Eight Foundations of a True Social Order,²⁴ issued by London Yearly Meeting not long after the 1918 Employers' Conference, were a high point for the War and the Social Order Committee, which had written the document. They formed part of the book

²¹ *Christian Discipline*, 1911; *Christian Life, Faith and Thought*; 1921; *Christian Practice: being the second part of the Christian discipline of the Religious Society of Friends in Great Britain. Approved and adopted by the Yearly meeting* (London: Religious Society of Friends, 1925).

²² *Christian Life, Faith and Thought*, 1921, 55–56.

²³ Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company', 119.

²⁴ See Section 1.3.3, Table 1, for a full list of the Eight Foundations.

of discipline of 1925. The hand of the socialists on the committee is visible within the foundations. It has been criticised as vague; I do not dispute this, but maintain that some of its points still merit analysis here.²⁵ The sixth foundation refers to the 'whole problem of industrial control'. The seventh was more explicit, advocating that 'Mutual service should be the principle upon which life is organised. Service, not private gain, should be the motive of all work.' The eighth foundation exhorted that 'The ownership of material things, such as land and capital, should be so regulated as best to minister to the need and development of man.'²⁶ To summarise, then, the national Quaker body affirmed that there was a problem with industrial control, that business as well as the social order more broadly should be organised for service rather than private gain, and that land and capital within industry should be 'regulated' to benefit all.

The foundations demonstrated great boldness. For employers they must have been very challenging and thought-provoking, by ultimately suggesting a fundamental problem with private control of industry, land, and capital. Friends as a body had moved from feeling that they should remain distant from public life in the mid-nineteenth century to, by 1918, feeling that it was imperative that they act to reform it.

To further demonstrate this shift, the book of discipline released by the Society in 1925, and the message given by the All Friends' Conference which was held in 1920 and spoke of cooperation instead of domination, both reinforced the message given in the foundations.²⁷ The 1925 book of discipline arguably went further still, proposing that

²⁵ Revolution or Reform, Big Picture or Small Steps?, *Reimagining a True Social Order*, accessed 29 May 2023, <https://quakerssocialorder.org.uk/home/revolution-or-reform/>; Tibbals, 'Quaker Employer Conference of 1918', 72.

²⁶ *Reimagining a True Social Order*, accessed 29 May 2023, <https://quakerssocialorder.org.uk/>.

²⁷ From 'To Friends and Fellow Seekers', message of All Friends Conference, 1920, in *Christian Practice*, 1925; *Christian Practice*, 1925.

‘Natural resources, property, credit and service would be socially organised for common advantage.’²⁸

This demonstrates that there was very much still support for radical social change among members of the Society of Friends by the mid-1920s. It is hard to imagine many Quaker business owners of this time feeling comfortable with the idea of giving their resources and property over to society more broadly, especially when some of the more publicly recognised ‘progressive’ leaders such as Edward Cadbury cannot imagine effective shared control.²⁹ Therefore, during this time there was growing incongruity between the majority of Quaker businessmen’s commercial activities and the social attitude of the Society of Friends which had begun to gain momentum in the early twentieth century.

The book of discipline’s advices relating to business by this time do not have their own section, but come under the broad heading of ‘Outward Affairs’. This demonstrates that despite the ongoing conversations around it, business was less prominent within the Society by this time and suggests its waning significance in the lives of Friends and the Society more broadly.

The general message of those advices which do concern business in 1925 remains strong and clear, as did the 1911 book, with the retention of many older advices from the early to mid-nineteenth century and before.³⁰ Yearly Meeting also issued an advice

²⁸ *Christian Practice*, 1925, 128–129.

²⁹ See Section 3.3.5.

³⁰ There were new advices cautioning against engaging in mortgages and hire purchase where there was any doubt around repayment, and against saving for its own sake: *Christian Practice*, 1925, 104, 103.

supporting trade unions and unionisation, but advised, in line with the Peace Testimony, that Christians should not stand for oppression or violence.³¹

It was 1906 that turned out to be the last year in which London Yearly Meeting set out guidance around church government. This means that from around 1925 (but in practice potentially earlier, since there was no new edition in 1911) the books contain no mention of delinquencies, disownment, or any guidance around oversight. The Society of Friends had fully abandoned even a semblance of its rules, in favour of individualism and the experience of the inward light. While there were advices counselling Quakers to seek the advice of others and to watch over one another,³² there could be no consequence for those who failed to do so, or failed in business. In practice formal discipline had not been enforced for decades, but it remained an official possibility until 1925.

The Employers' Conference in 1928 seems to have been slightly less overtly politically charged and urgent from the outset, which is hardly surprising given the distance from World War I (and possibly also the recent failure of the general strike).³³ While economically times were still hard, the impetus for social change had diminished. The conference acknowledged the political and economic atmosphere of hard times and consequently was subdued in tone. For example, Edward Cadbury gave the welcome address and observed that 'The biggest problems facing us are not only not solved, but we are at present not within sight of their solution, in fact we are only just beginning to realise what the problems really are.' He went on to voice that he saw 'no way in which [the worker] can be given effective control in large scale industry; I stress the words

³¹ Advices, 1925, 113.

³² Advices, 1925, 101, 107.

³³ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928.

effective control.’³⁴ That the conference still included a session on ‘Co-operation in Control’ suggests that despite this, Quaker businesspeople were still engaging with and seeking methods of sharing control with their employees.

Arnold Rowntree offered a ‘Review of Industrial Changes during the Last Ten Years’.³⁵ He was clear that ‘this week-end we have met to discuss what we can do as a body of Quaker employers working within the present industrial system to help one another to perform more worthily our business duties’.³⁶ Clearly these employers felt it necessary to focus their efforts on particular issues, with Rowntree acknowledging this, stating ‘We shall agree that this Conference, like its predecessor, must of necessity limit its scope.’ This highlights a distinction between employers and the more radical agreed position of Yearly Meeting and the War and the Social Order Committee and its successor the Industrial and Social Order Council, which envisaged far broader social change.

However, it transpires that for Rowntree at least the motivation for this focus was not merely about what was possible in a weekend or in their positions as Quaker employers. In fact, he was convinced that the issues being discussed at the 1928 conference were ‘far more important than any question of a complete change of the industrial system’.³⁷ As evidence for this statement, he suggested a report and some political pronouncements, mostly by Conservative politicians and mentioned without qualification. Where he referred to the Labour Party, Rowntree was clear that only ‘the more thoughtful and influential’ words of ‘Labour leaders’ merited attention here.³⁸

³⁴ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 1.

³⁵ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 2.

³⁶ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 2.

³⁷ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 4.

³⁸ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 4–5.

However, his statement did not chime with the official sentiment in the Society of Friends at the time: a month after the Employers' Conference in 1918, Friends at London Yearly Meeting had approved the issuing of the Eight Foundations.

Given this discord against the Society of Friends more broadly, Rowntree emphasised what he perceived to be the wider impact of the last conference on an American report after the end of World War I, and even suggested that the labour-related sections of the Treaty of Versailles were influenced by it.³⁹ However, he did not give specific details to justify these claims. On a more local level, the conference did trigger Seebohm Rowntree to organise twenty-six local gatherings including administrators and workers which were nationally influential, so there was no earlier impetus for another conference such as that of 1918.⁴⁰ Seebohm had also introduced profit sharing at Rowntree's upon becoming chair in 1923.⁴¹ The meetings were largely not composed of Quakers, though there is evidence of some Quaker representation including Barrow's Stores and Morland and Impey (possibly still Quaker) from Birmingham and the former Quaker firm Baker Perkins being represented; the Chance Brothers, Albright and Wilson's one-time Anglican neighbours, also attended.⁴²

³⁹ "The Church and Industrial Reconstruction" is the American report: *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 4.

⁴⁰ Maclean, Shaw, Harvey, and Booth have recently done valuable analysis of Rowntree's interwar Management Research Groups, and argued that this work within the management sphere in the interwar period was influential in the national context: 'Management Learning in Historical Perspective', 1–20.

⁴¹ Harrison, 'Seebohm Rowntree'; Maclean et al. argue that 'The British interwar management movement arose from a Quaker business initiative launched during World War I to suggest a viable way forward for British industry at a time of intense labor unrest': Maclean, Shaw, Harvey, and Booth, 'Management Learning in Historical Perspective'.

⁴² Rowntree Annual Report 1928, groups 2 and group 3a, accessed 29 May 2023, <https://rowntree.exeter.ac.uk/items/show/203>.

The 1928 conference had a broad remit, and George Cadbury junior led a session on 'Training for Business Management'.⁴³ The existence of this session of the conference in itself is evidence of the change in approach to management which had come to pass among Quakers in business; external management had come to be perceived as a norm. This arguably jeopardised the Quaker nature of some firms. It is also striking that no mention was made of instilling a Quaker ethic in management.⁴⁴ That was in stark contrast to the nineteenth-century days when external management was unheard of and Quaker businessmen were directly accountable to one another.

This was the period during which, as Rowlinson and Hassard have demonstrated, the Cadburys began to create a corporate culture around their Quakerism, which almost certainly would have helped them commercially.⁴⁵ My evidence here supports the idea that, while Quakers were endeavouring to find a distinctive path, by this point their reputation otherwise was little different from that of other firms. Certainly, Albright and Wilson were seemingly little different from their non-Quaker neighbour (though they too had been non-Quaker since the war). Company histories were beginning to be written, and perhaps it is unsurprising that as munitions manufacturers Albright and Wilson did not seek to make more of their Quaker heritage. Further, doing so would arguably have been more effective for businesses selling everyday consumer products, like Cadbury's, whose promotion of its Quaker heritage may have been largely behind notions of Quaker business success.

⁴³ The scope at the 1928 Conference covered the following subjects: 'The Workers' Share of the Product', 'Co-operation in Control', 'Training for Business Management', 'Security of the Worker', and 'Problems of Smaller Businesses', and included an address by Angus Watson on 'The Spirit of Renunciation in Industry'.

⁴⁴ Cadbury refers solely to 'wise leadership and personal character': *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 90.

⁴⁵ Rowlinson and Hassard, 'The Invention of Corporate Culture'.

In his section on the last ten years at the 1928 conference, Arnold Rowntree also covered 'Status and Consultation', meaning worker rights and cooperation. Here he identified Works Councils as a recommendation of a report of the Liberal Party.⁴⁶ This suggests that Arnold was still led by the politics of the party he represented in parliament from 1910 to 1918. He did acknowledge that 'Simply the setting up of Councils will not solve the problem unless you are able to obtain an intelligent and sympathetic leadership on both sides.'⁴⁷ Arnold here also somewhat hesitantly endorsed the League of Nations, a position which puts him at odds with Quakers more broadly and demonstrates his greater affinity with members of the Quaker business elite establishment, such as George Newman and John William Wilson, rather than with his religious body.

What is more, in discussing the coal strike which had taken place in 1926, Arnold Rowntree did not begin by acknowledging the reason for the strike or expressing any empathy with the cause of the workers, but talked only of the end result and 'bringing before the whole community... the cost, the folly, and the terrible cruelty of such a method of settling industrial disputes'.⁴⁸ This seems shocking in the context of his membership of a Religious Society moving increasingly towards Labour in its sympathies. Despite this lack of empathy, Arnold and his Monthly Meeting (York) in 1928 seemed to be possessed of an idealism around the role of the Society of Friends 'to formulate... the... principles and standards which should govern industrial and social relationships... and fearlessly to protest against such phases of the current social order as are contrary to those principles'.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 5.

⁴⁷ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 5.

⁴⁸ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 8.

⁴⁹ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 11.

Further, immediately before his statement from York Monthly Meeting, in a short section concerning the Foundations of a True Social Order, Arnold observed the following:

The genius of the Society up to now has been marked I think, far more by devoted acts of personal service than by the formulation of statements of policy which need careful and continuous study and a wide knowledge of social and industrial life.⁵⁰

This demonstrates very clearly the contradictions in his views and suggested approach to social change, exhorting the formulation of explicit policy at one moment and observing that Friends are better off refraining from such actions at others. Arnold did acknowledge this tension to an extent, but it makes it difficult to draw general conclusions about the Quakerism and Industry conference's approach. Perhaps Arnold believed that policy and statements such as the True Foundations were of some value with considerable caveats. He was clear that practical application of the True Foundations had its difficulties, which was fairly broadly acknowledged among Friends.⁵¹ Whatever his position on policy, Arnold Rowntree did not recommend shared control of business without caveats, and he saw a potential clash between such shared control and 'the net advantage of the business to the community as a whole', where this a clash was not necessarily the case.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 10–11.

⁵¹ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 10; 'Revolution or Reform'.

⁵² *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 13.

5.5 Quakers, Politics, and the 1938 Employers' Conference

While the Society was keen to focus on social change, the employers generally remained less radical and more concerned with business economics for some time. I have found one notable exception to this: Harrison Barrow, of Barrows' Store in Birmingham. Barrow attended the Employers' Conferences in 1918, 1928, and 1938. Indeed, he and his wife Ethel hosted the 1938 conference and chaired its executive committee. However, he seems to have been politically quite different from others present at the conferences such as Arnold Rowntree. He had defected from the Liberal Party to the Independent Labour Party after World War I, having been imprisoned for his pacifist activism during the war.⁵³ He represented Labour on Birmingham City Council over many years between 1920 and 1949 when he retired.⁵⁴ His nephew, George Corbyn Barrow, suggested that even within Labour Harrison was on the political left of the party, noting that he 'supported an alliance with the Communist Party'.⁵⁵ His influence on the conference proceedings in 1938 may have been a factor in the inclusion on that occasion of a session on 'Public Control of Industry', led by Laurence Cadbury.

In some sense Harrison Barrow represented a possible bridge between the Society of Friends more broadly, and its movement towards more progressive politics, and the employers, who on the whole do not seem to have kept pace with the changes. He was certainly not alone in joining the Labour Party as a Quaker: Ada and Alfred Salter are other notable examples, leaving other parties to join the Independent Labour Party in

⁵³ George Corbyn Barrow, *The Barrow Family: Myth, Legend and Some Fact* (Birmingham: privately published, 1994), 39–41; John Stewart, 'Harrison Barrow: his Stand for Principle and his Civic Role', *The Birmingham Historian*, 23 (2002), 34–39.

⁵⁴ Stewart, 'Harrison Barrow'.

⁵⁵ Barrow, *The Barrow Family*, 41.

1906 and 1909, respectively. Ada was a councillor and the first Labour woman mayor in Britain, and Alfred was an MP.⁵⁶ They were not businesspeople: he was a doctor and she undertook social work.

Someone else who transferred allegiance from the Liberal to the Labour Party around this time was Charles Roden Buxton, who joined the Society of Friends in 1917, the same year as he joined Labour. Before his political career Buxton's profession had been in law.⁵⁷ He was an MP from 1922 to 1923 and from 1929 to 1931. C. V. J. Griffiths notes of Buxton that 'he moved away from the Church of England over what he saw as its identification with the privileged classes and its attitude towards war'.⁵⁸ Perhaps, then, as some Quaker businesspeople were moving in the other direction in terms of faith, out of the Society of Friends, those who were not businesspeople in an industrial sense were coming to the fore and expressing different political allegiances. Certainly, of those elected as Liberal MPs in 1906, none remained in parliament beyond 1914 except Frederick Leverton Harris, the Conservative whose Quaker identity is dubious (until 1918), John William Wilson (until 1922), and John Emmott Barlow (until 1918).⁵⁹

That the incoming Quaker politicians of whom I am aware represented Labour tallies with the shifts within the Society of Friends which had been gaining pace over the

⁵⁶ 'About Ada and Alfred Salter', *Quaker Socialist Society*, accessed 30 July 2022, <https://quakersocialists.org.uk/about/ada-and-alfred-salter/>.

⁵⁷ C. V. J. Griffiths, 'Buxton, Charles Roden (1875–1942)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 29 May 2023, doi: [10.1093/ref:odnb/74568](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/74568).

⁵⁸ Griffiths, 'Buxton, Charles Roden'.

⁵⁹ The blog of the Library of the Society of Friends suggests that Barlow and Arnold Rowntree, alongside T. Edmund Harvey, were not re-elected to parliament in 1918 and that this was the price they paid for their pacifist leanings in supporting the anti-conscription fellowship: accessed 11 June 2023: <https://quakerstrongrooms.org/2016/03/02/the-conscience-of-the-nation-the-work-of-three-quaker-mps-during-world-war-i/>. However, a broader analysis of the party-political climate of the time would be necessary to ascertain the accuracy of this, which is outside of my scope here.

previous fifty years. The Barrows in Birmingham were a notable political exception to the apparent withdrawal of businesspeople from politics, particularly as members of the Society of Friends generally came to shift politically 'left'.⁶⁰ Harrison's nephew George Corbyn Barrow would also serve for Labour on Birmingham City Council later in the twentieth century, and would become Lord Mayor of Birmingham.⁶¹ Kennedy notes that among young Friends in particular the disaffection with the Liberal Party and the shift towards Labour were widespread.⁶²

Besides Laurence Cadbury's session on 'Public Control of Industry' at the 1938 Employers' Conference, there were also sessions on 'What Workers Want in Industry', including 'Increased Share of Product', 'Increased Share of Control', and 'Increased Opportunities for Promotion'. This indicates a developing focus on how to accommodate and increase shared control with workers compared to the previous two conferences, so a tentative move more in line with the Society's direction.

5.6 The 1948 Employers' Conference

As well as taking place fairly soon after the end of World War II, the 1948 conference followed soon after the Industrial and Social Order Council, which replaced the War and the Social Order Committee, drafted a reiteration of many of the points of the 1918 True Foundations.⁶³ This reiteration is noteworthy for taking some of the principles of the 1918 statement further, for being more explicit, and for a clear direction

⁶⁰ I put 'left' in inverted commas to recognise that it is difficult to easily and accurately portray politics in few words, but use this as a broad suggestion.

⁶¹ Stewart, 'Harrison Barrow', 39.

⁶² Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 415.

⁶³ 'Draft of the Revised Eight Points', *Reimagining a True Social Order*, accessed 29 May 2023, <https://quakersocialorder.org.uk/glossary/eight-points/>.

that personal ethics applied to business.⁶⁴ The eight points are not surprising in the political context in Britain at the time, for example with the introduction of the National Health Service (NHS) having been first proposed in 1942. A statement of 'social testimony' not dissimilar to these eight points, and also formulated by the Industrial and Social Order Council, was formally adopted by London Yearly Meeting in 1945. It exhorted that the 'resources of the world' be held in 'common ownership'.⁶⁵

Unlike the previous conferences, the 1948 conference had a very specific focus, on 'Central Planning and Control'. It featured an opening address on the headline subject from Sir Oliver Franks, a Liberal-supporting civil servant.⁶⁶ This demonstrates an enduring desire among Quaker businesspeople to work with the establishment, which somewhat jarred with the social stance of the Society of Friends more broadly. The foreword to the conference puts a positive angle on its greater diversity, observing 'how much wider was the impact on industry than at the 1918 conference when mainly family businesses were represented'.⁶⁷ The 1948 conference brought together a broad range of Quakers with an interest in the theme and represented the growing diversity of vocations among Friends. Philip Dent Priestman, who wrote the foreword, considered this to be a strength. It was certainly one way in which the Quaker business world had shifted in the first half of the twentieth century, moving from consisting solely of business owners of large firms to include those on the periphery, managers, and others.

⁶⁴ It stated that 'The Standards applied to business... should be no different from those of our personal code of behaviour': 'Draft of the Revised Eight Points', *Reimagining a True Social Order*.

⁶⁵ 'Statement of Social Testimony', *Reimagining a True Social Order*, accessed 29 May 2023, <https://quakersocialorder.org.uk/glossary/social-testimony/>.

⁶⁶ Richard G. Smethurst, 'Oliver Shewell Franks (16 February 1905–15 October 1992)', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 139, no. 1 (1995), 82–87.

⁶⁷ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1948, 6. I noted this greater diversity of occupation and background in Section 5.3. By this time there are Quakers seemingly working in larger not obviously Quaker firms, and the Industrial and Social Order Council is represented too, as well as the National Dock Labour Board.

However, the conference did also include an address by Reginald A Smith, a journalist and writer who was the editor of *The British Weekly*, a Christian publication, on 'Industrial Implications of Christian Equality'. He began by acknowledging the context, following on from World War II, and that 'it is exceedingly hard to feel any confidence in our ability to take effective part in the shaping of our world'.⁶⁸ While this might be considered a defeatist approach to Quakers' ability to enact social change on the broader societal stage, I assert that it is more realistic and perhaps more humble than the approach of many of his Quaker business forebears, particularly in light of the diminished role of Quakers in parliament at this time.

Smith did not, however, discount the responsibility on Quakers to seek to attempt to alter the social order, despite his realistic approach to its likelihood of success.⁶⁹ He still, like those before him, saw this endeavour as 'special' to Quaker employers. He went further than the employers before him, explicitly acknowledging the need for sacrifice of class interests on the part of Quaker employers.⁷⁰ This is the first explicit use of the word class I have seen in writing such as this.

Smith suggested that a Quaker approach should be utopian, but never Marxian, and considered that the biggest problem with the Labour government was its lack of socialist utopianism and broader vision. However, he was also critical of Liberals and Conservatives as insufficiently willing to bring about change.⁷¹ He endorsed the Eight Foundations, but said they were a minimum 'and that Quaker *employers* are the right

⁶⁸ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1948, 18.

⁶⁹ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1948, 19.

⁷⁰ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1948, 19. He does not go further than Grubb in 1912, who was also not an employer (see Section 3.3.4).

⁷¹ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1948, 19–20.

people to lead because with Quaker sensitivities they can combine experience sufficient to save them from the socialist shibboleths to which we other Friends have too easily fallen victims.⁷² Here Smith was clearly implying that without business experience Quakers are idealists, a striking claim.

Smith was highly idealistic about the joint-stock company, saying that it 'is most fortunately adapted for use in the organizing of large-scale industry by those who are devoted to the ideal of co-operation by equal partners' and that 'Many Quaker employers have already made progress in using it to that end', though providing no examples.⁷³ This certainly overlooked the possibility of external takeovers in public companies, and the potential benefits of partnership to smaller-scale Quaker businesses.

Smith was clearly less radical than the Society more broadly on social control, advocating for social control of industry only 'whenever there is anything approaching a monopoly of them', whereas the Eight Points of the Industrial and Social Order Council of the 1940s clearly state that 'The ownership and the use of land and capital should be under public control for the welfare of all mankind and human needs should be the purpose of the production and distribution of goods.'⁷⁴ However, Smith then appeared to change his tune slightly, arguing for no right of control of capital, 'so long as interest is paid'; the idea that individuals would relinquish control of their capital seems unthinkable in society today.⁷⁵ Overall, Smith's contribution was fairly radical and not too far from the approach of the Society of Friends more broadly.

⁷² *Quakerism and Industry*, 1948, 20.

⁷³ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1948, 22.

⁷⁴ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1948, 23; 'Draft of the Revised Eight Points', *Reimagining a True Social Order*.

⁷⁵ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1948, 24.

The conference concluded by explaining that the organiser of the previous three conferences, Harold Watts, was standing down, and that there had been no firm decision on when to hold the next conference.⁷⁶ In the context of the presence of the Rowntrees and Cadburys diminishing by 1948 and Watts's stepping down, the conversation around Quaker business ethics appears to have come to a halt in the middle of the twentieth century. It is hard to know with certainty, beyond the chance of Watts's individual capacity expiring, why the conferences ended. Reginald Smith's sense that Quakers were increasingly powerless to enact change through the political system might have played a role, as might the decreasing presence of Quakers in industry, demonstrated by the diversity of occupations among those at the conferences. The lack of conclusive action from the conferences was no doubt also a factor.

5.7 The Post-World War I Economic and Business Context and Albright and Wilson⁷⁷

During the 1920s economic difficulties prevailed. Firms such as Albright and Wilson struggled to adjust to a post-war business world of reduced contracts, and with the slow repayment of war time loans they had made to the government.⁷⁸ Quaker employers met to consider the social and economic tumult. Here I demonstrate how devastating war could be for one at least formerly Quaker business and how the realities of business functioning had diverged from Quaker ethics generally. By 1928 even George Cadbury Jnr, in his address at the opening of the Quaker Employers' Conference session on management, did not see fit to assert the need for a potential manager to understand

⁷⁶ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1948.

⁷⁷ This section is a considerably extended and revised version of Sleafwood, 'Albright & Wilson'.

⁷⁸ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920.

the theology and ethics of Quakerism.⁷⁹ Arnold Rowntree himself noted the detrimental impact of globalisation on British industry at the 1928 conference.⁸⁰ This would have impacted industrial Quaker firms as much as any others, of course.

When World War I ended in November 1918, Albright and Wilson had lost the vast majority of its international suppliers and customers. Its agreement with Bryant and May, which was both a supplier and a customer, remained relatively intact and was therefore salvaged, but other than this the business had to rebuild from the ground upwards, approaching other firms about possible contracts. For example, it looked into the production of baking powder, tungsten, and carbon tetrachloride.⁸¹ At least two of these would be in production by June 1919,⁸² but the volumes and profits nowhere near equalled those enjoyed during the war. The war had seen all supply at Albright and Wilson diverted to its cause, other business and connections lost, and new plants opening at home and abroad.

After the war ended, its negative financial impact on the business began to be felt. Having built up huge stocks of phosphorus at around 500 tons, in November 1918 production was immediately reduced by about a third. In addition to its own high stocks of phosphorus, the firm had to buy back up to 1000 tons of phosphorus it had already supplied to the government and remove it from the shells, partly in order to eliminate competition.⁸³ The price Albright and Wilson bought the phosphorus back at (determined by the government) was between a third and a quarter of the price it had originally sold

⁷⁹ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 39–46.

⁸⁰ *Quakerism and Industry*, 1928, 7.

⁸¹ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, 566, 594, 595.

⁸² WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting 17 June 1919, Minute 699.

⁸³ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 25 February 1919, Minute 636.

it to the Ministry for, at 9½ pence per lb. The large stocks of phosphorus meant that prices needed to be reduced after the war, which reduced profits.⁸⁴ In early March 1919, due to a lack of business it was necessary to cease phosphorus production at Oldbury entirely, for at least a year. This proved devastating for the business and its employees. Hundreds of jobs were lost and many others suspended in 1919.⁸⁵ The war also triggered a recession which was closely followed by a depression by 1921. Profits dropped to £47,000 by 1919, and in 1921 Albright and Wilson made a loss of £22,000, before making a net profit of £12,000 the following year.⁸⁶

In this context it is unsurprising that in 1920 John Eliot Howard Lloyd wrote a document acknowledging the need to raise money 'by realization or borrowing', which included calculations around the possibility of selling shares.⁸⁷ In terms of the firm's investments, it seems that after John William's directorship at the Great Western Railway began in 1908 the business increasingly speculated on other railway schemes, taking out £15,000 worth of shares in railways including £5,000 in the Great Western Railway between February 1909 and July 1913.⁸⁸ This is not particularly surprising, but does demonstrate John William's likely influence in the financial decisions around investments that the firm took. It is hard not to wonder how William Arthur, who oversaw the 1911 discipline which was critical of speculation, would have felt about these decisions.

⁸⁴ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 25 February 1919, Minutes 636 and 637.

⁸⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 5, Document 582, Report by C. D. Sykes, Management Committee File, 1918.

⁸⁶ WC, MS 1724, Box 48, Annual reports 1892-1931.

⁸⁷ WC, MS 1724, Box 64, Investors' Account Book and associated documents.

⁸⁸ WC, MS 1724, Box 64, Investors' Account Book.

However, there is evidence that William Arthur allowed at least one railway investment to be made in his name, suggesting he did not feel too ill at ease.⁸⁹ In practice, by this time Quakers would have regarded the railways less critically than seventy-five years previously: time had changed much, as is suggested by the War and the Social Order Committee's perspective on investments.⁹⁰ As a radical committee it did not reject investments outright, indicating that with the passing of time the class distinction in approach to speculation had become entrenched and that an ethical distinction had been added. By this time investment had simply become a reality of life for wealthy Quakers, and the committee could not but acknowledge that and seek to direct it.

The leadership of the business had changed fundamentally and permanently due to the war: in March 1919 William Arthur was invited to return to the firm as its chair once more, but in November he wrote back declining this invitation.⁹¹ William Arthur's withdrawal was more complex than the simple transfer of his shares or whether or not he was chair of the business. He remained named on share certificates received by the company, and he was of course still family with most of the other directors.⁹² He did correspond on business matters occasionally, presumably when consulted. He also maintained his position as chair of the company pension fund. In 1920 William Arthur felt able to take back most of his shares, though it would seem he did so principally to sell them, as he offered them to others only a few days later.⁹³ He also continued to attend

⁸⁹ WC, MS 1724, Box 64, List of Reserve Fund Shareholdings.

⁹⁰ See Section 4.2.

⁹¹ WC, MS 1724, Box 61, Board of Directors' Minute Book 1913-1925.

⁹² Numerous certificates can be found in WC, MS 1724, Box 73, Private Letters 1918.

⁹³ WC, MS 1724, Box 73, Private Letters 1920, Letters of 28 January 1920 from John Eliot to A. Godlee, and of 2 February 1920 from William Arthur.

most of the AGMs in the 1920s, suggesting he retained at least some shares.⁹⁴ William Arthur's personal case shows how difficult it could be to cease activities within and associations with a family Quaker business, even where that is the clear desire. Unsurprisingly given his minimal role and pacifism, there is no evidence that Henry Lloyd was invited to return, or that he did so.

Having acquired increased power with his new title of general works manager earlier in 1918, Charles David Sykes made more key recommendations for the direction of the business. He was also invited onto the Management Committee in January 1919.⁹⁵ Once the end of the war was in sight, one of these recommendations was the dismissal of all women from the works (which were seen as separate to the office and management, where some women remained employed).⁹⁶ Half of the women in the works were working in the 'bomb shop', and therefore justifying their dismissal after the war was simple.

Sykes' view was that while the women's work had been valuable, it was not appropriate for women to be working in a chemical processing factory.⁹⁷ That the directors approved his report is striking. While the business was arguably no longer Quaker by this time according to my model, there was at least one Quaker on the Board and Management Committee: Kenneth Henry Wilson. Perhaps this proves the point that a lone Quaker is not sufficient to ensure that Quaker values such as equality (or indeed peace) are evident in business, or perhaps this issue was simply not an important one to

⁹⁴ WC, MS 1724, Box 48, Annual Reports, 1892-1931.

⁹⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920.

⁹⁶ WC, MS 1724, Box 5, Management Committee File for 1918, Document 576, Report re: Women Labour, 9 November 1918.

⁹⁷ Report re: Women Labour.

Kenneth Henry. It is impossible to be sure, although the latter would not be unsurprising where in industry this behaviour was the norm, and there is little evidence of a drive for gender equality among Quakers more broadly at this time, despite this having been enshrined in the Eight Foundations of a True Social Order.⁹⁸

Regardless, the upshot was that while all staff were put on short time fairly soon after the end of the war, it was the women who were the first to lose their jobs, with all of them being given notice that their work would end in early December 1918. By January 1919 the business employed around half its war time total of staff, the later figure being a total staff of 717, composed of 623 men and 30 women in the factory, and 64 staff in the office and management.⁹⁹ When the phosphorus plant had to close in March 1919, those men who had been employed there were given a considerable pay cut to the garden labourers' rate, partly to incentivise them to look for work elsewhere. The firm was generally reluctant to make men entirely redundant where there were other possibilities.

Government control of Albright and Wilson did not fully end until well into 1919, around six months after the end of the war, and the business was extricating itself from financial interactions with the government for still longer. During this time Richard Threlfall's power continued to increase, with him becoming the head of a third family involved in Albright and Wilson (albeit a non-Quaker one) as his sons joined the firm.¹⁰⁰ Come October 1919 the firm was continuing to consider other possibilities in terms of manufacturing, such were the effects of the war and the need for more work to replace

⁹⁸ Eight Foundations in *Christian Discipline*, 1925, 127–128.

⁹⁹ WC, MS 1724, Box 5, Management Committee File for 1919, Document 612, No. of employees, 8 January 1919.

¹⁰⁰ Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*, 165, 241.

what had been lost.¹⁰¹ In terms of control and profit sharing in industry, while the Society of Friends was beginning to appeal for this, Albright and Wilson concluded that it would discontinue its (poorly taken-up) offer of shares to employees in July 1920, replacing it with an employees' benefit fund.¹⁰² It did have a Works Committee, and held a joint meeting in May 1919 including over 200 employees, but it appears that this was in response to external pressure and industrial action, rather than being a conscience-driven attempt to involve employees directly in power sharing in any sense.¹⁰³ Arthur Godlee, the firm's solicitor, was the major shareholder in the ERCo by 1919, demonstrating his seeming ease with the company's work, despite being a Quaker.¹⁰⁴

In 1922 Albright and Wilson entered into a new agreement to supply phosphorus to the Admiralty, War Office, and Air Ministry and 'to execute all orders for the smoke charging of Projectiles, Bombs, Grenades, or other phosphorus containers for warlike purposes' from time to time given written notice.¹⁰⁵ The business maintained munitions work in some form for the government until at least 1926. This included an agreement on the part of the government not to acquire phosphorus elsewhere so long as Albright and Wilson supplied munitions promptly and satisfactorily, which would have been quite the commercial coup for the firm.¹⁰⁶ These later negotiations around munitions were largely overseen by Sykes and the Quaker Kenneth Henry Wilson. The latter oversaw

¹⁰¹ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 17 June 1919, Minute 702.

¹⁰² WC, MS 1724, Box 61, Board of Directors' Minute Book 1913-1925, Minute 281.

¹⁰³ WC, MS 1724, Box 62, Weekly Minute Book 1916-1920, Meeting of 12 May 1919, Minute 678; Report in Management Committee file for 1919, 679.

¹⁰⁴ WC, MS 1724, Box 73, Private Letter Book, 1919, Letter from Allsop, 2 December 1919.

¹⁰⁵ WC, MS 1724, Box 55, 1922 Agreement in green folder of war documents.

¹⁰⁶ 1922 Agreement in green folder of war documents.

most of the dealings with the government to continue the supply of munitions after the end of the war.

The 1922 AGM where W B Threlfall joined the Board oversaw a loss at Albright and Wilson for 1921 of £22,730. However, fortunately the balance brought forward amounted to £121,524, meaning the loss could be borne comfortably. Dividends at 10% were much lower than the war time peak of 30% (on financial years 1915 and 1916), understandably in the context of the loss. Having said that, the pre-war and war time returns before profit restriction by the government were incredibly high. To have given these high dividends in the pre-war period when the firm was chaired by William Arthur, a firm Quaker, seems an interesting decision in the context of a discipline which from 1911 especially was very critical of amassing wealth.

To put these activities in the context of the broader local Quaker business community, Kenneth Henry was married to Mary Isabel Cadbury, George Cadbury's daughter. In 1919 his sister Rachel Evelyn married Paul Strangman Cadbury, son of Barrow and grandson of Richard, which would have further cemented the ties between the two families.¹⁰⁷ It is worth highlighting again here that George Edward Wilson (father of Rachel Evelyn and Kenneth Henry) had married Henrietta Rachel Pease, daughter of Henry Pease, a Quaker railway director and MP, and Mary Lloyd, daughter of Samuel Lloyd the ironmaster we met above, to demonstrate the ties between key Quaker business families nationally stretching back over a century. The marriage of John Christopher Wilson, Kenneth Henry's younger brother, to Helen Joyce Fry, daughter of a Quaker coal owner in 1921 is the final example of intermarriage I have found. What is

¹⁰⁷ C. E. G. Pease, *Descendants of William Wilson*, accessed 11 June 2023, <http://www.pennyghael.org.uk/WilsonWilliam.pdf>, 290.

more, Packer has described Kenneth Henry's uncle and the chair of the firm John William as a 'close collaborator' of George Cadbury on the basis of their local, Quaker, business and political links.¹⁰⁸ This is further demonstrated by Dowd's evidence that George Cadbury sought to ensure John William's re-election in 1903.¹⁰⁹

George Cadbury was very politically active in terms of involvement in both local and national politics, including financial backing, mostly of the Liberal Party. He met with Ramsay MacDonald, the leader of the Labour Representation Committee, around 1902.¹¹⁰ Kevin Dowd convincingly demonstrates the level of political interference involved on Cadbury's part, including advising the Labour parties not to stand a candidate against John William Wilson in North Worcestershire in the 1906 general election.¹¹¹

So the Cadbury family would have been very aware of the activities of Albright and Wilson with regard to weapons manufacture. In 1918 a committee of Birmingham Monthly Meeting appointed to consider the local approach to those who had enlisted decided 'to say frankly we regret their decision and state more strongly than ever our belief in the unlawfulness of war'.¹¹² It is therefore clear that very divergent approaches to the Peace Testimony were tolerated in Quaker circles among those with local power and influence in the business world. It is also clear that, even if overseen in part by a Quaker, the activities of Albright and Wilson at this time cannot be considered to be Quaker in that they actively contravene any understanding of peace.

¹⁰⁸ Packer, *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree*, 57.

¹⁰⁹ See Section 3.1.4, and Dowd, 'The Social and Political Activity of the Cadbury Family', 65.

¹¹⁰ 'The Social and Political Activity of the Cadbury Family', 61.

¹¹¹ 'The Social and Political Activity of the Cadbury Family', 65.

¹¹² Letter of M. C. Barlow to Mary Millior Barlow, 1918, John Henry Barlow Papers, London, in possession of M. M. Barlow Braithwaite, quoted in Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 400.

Yet Kenneth Henry, who had been personally responsible for some of the business's investments in war stocks¹¹³ as well as munitions, continued to be heavily involved and held in a position of respect in his local and Monthly Meeting right through to at least 1931. In 1920, for example, he was appointed to be an elder of the Monthly Meeting, at the request of Bournville Meeting, to which he had moved in 1920 from Bull Street, where he had attended alongside William Arthur.¹¹⁴ All the while Bournville Meeting maintained an interest in supportive peace-related activities. This demonstrates that by the early to mid-twentieth century ethics had become sufficiently individualised in the Society of Friends that even those acting counter to the testimonies were not challenged and could be promoted to positions of authority.

As power was diluting still further at Albright and Wilson and increasingly entering the hands of non-Quakers, and as Rowntree and Cadbury were doing well out of incorporation, this was no inevitable.¹¹⁵ A 1927 partnership deed hints that there might have been another way for some Quaker firms to proceed by including clear ethical conditions upon partners, such as the following grounds for expulsion:

if he shall become addicted to gambling or speculation, whether on the Stock Exchange or otherwise, or if by his mode of living, whether by intemperance or immorality or otherwise, by conduct detrimental to the interests of the partnership,

¹¹³ WC, MS 1724, Box 64, List of Reserve Fund Shareholdings.

¹¹⁴ WC, Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting, SF/2/1/1/1/1/29, 13 July 1920, Minute 561, 202.

¹¹⁵ Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company', 123. Seemingly Rowntree's and Cadbury's are the only Quaker firms that Kavanagh and Brigham can find to cite as examples of the success of incorporation for Quaker firms at this time.

he shall, in the opinion of the other partners or partner, bring discredit, whether directly or indirectly, upon the partnership business.¹¹⁶

Of course, remaining a partnership would have been a difficult decision for many larger Quaker firms, and might not have been commercially straightforward, or in some cases viable. However, this deed highlights the degree to which that form of business could help in the maintenance of a defined and clear Quaker ethic, as the rules of the books of discipline had facilitated in the earlier period of Quaker history. This might in turn have reaped rewards in terms of trust and reputation, which were incredibly hard to maintain in a joint-stock family firm without clear guiding principles.

5.8 Conclusion

Between 1918 and 1948 there remained a disparity between the politics and theology of the Society of Friends on the one hand, and Quaker employers on the other. While the Society became convinced of the need for equality and shared resources and generally moved towards the Labour Party, it was difficult to reconcile this with the values and lived experience of the remaining liberal older Quaker business families. The political influence of Quaker businessmen in parliament waned, with the few remaining MPs from 1906 and 1910 being defeated over their commitment to the Peace Testimony in 1918.¹¹⁷ John William Wilson, who did not align himself with the Peace Testimony and who had become a nominal Quaker, was the only Liberal who remained in parliament, until 1922.

¹¹⁶ J. Andrew Strahan and Norman H. Oldham, *The Law of Partnership: With an Appendix of Statutes and Partnership Deeds* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1927), 272. This deed is reminiscent of the nineteenth-century deeds I quoted in Section 2.6.1.

¹¹⁷ 'The Conscience of the Nation: The Work of Three Quaker MPs during World War I', *Quaker Strongrooms*, accessed 29 May 2023, <https://quakerstrongrooms.org/2016/03/02/the-conscience-of-the-nation-the-work-of-three-quaker-mps-during-world-war-i/>.

The Quakers I am aware of who entered parliament during this time were either not businesspeople at all (Alfred Salter, Labour, 1922–1923, 1924–1925), not businesspeople in the traditional industrial sense (Charles Roden Buxton, Liberal briefly, then Labour, a barrister, 1910, 1922–1923, 1929–1931), or not necessarily Quaker at all (John Denman Barlow, Conservative, 1945–1950, 1951–1966). Philip Noel-Baker (Labour, 1929–1931 and 1936–1970) was also not involved in the business which was by then known as Baker Perkins. This demonstrates the declining political influence of Quakers in business on the national stage, and would have been a factor in the declining influence of Quaker employers in shaping policy around industry, which had been possible, particularly for Seebohm and Arnold Rowntree, in the earlier days.

Quaker employers made efforts to reconnect with one another through the ten-yearly conferences of 1918, 1928, 1938, and 1948, and attendance figures grew from conference to conference. Seebohm Rowntree also organised local gatherings between 1918 and 1928. While the two world wars triggered strong words at the 1918 and 1948 conferences in particular, the approach of the employers seems to have been simultaneously idealistic and in line with the Society of Friends in terms of rhetoric, and also to accept that putting these ideals into practice was not viable in the context of the social order of the time.

While they did move towards the emerging theology of Quakers nationally, the employers consistently remained less socially progressive than the values put out by London Yearly Meeting across the years. By 1948 there was a sense among the employers, and their milieu, of their reduced political influence, and of there being less space for their innovation and welfare measures in a society which was increasingly centralised. Finally, interest in the business arena was considerably more diverse in 1948 than in 1918, with

a range of different perspectives and organisations represented at the 1948 conference – Quakers from non-business organisations took an interest, and Quakers in business worked in non-traditionally Quaker firms, not necessarily as employers. The 1948 attendance also therefore hints at a move away from business among Quakers, possibly driven in part by the perceived difference in views between Quakers in business and Quakers more broadly.

Although using my model for defining a Quaker business Albright and Wilson ceased being a Quaker business in 1915, the evidence from its post-war activities in the 1920s removed any semblance of a Quaker identity it might have clung to, as it opted to maintain its munitions manufacture long into peace time. Actively choosing to engage in militarist activity in peace time was incompatible with Quaker values. No doubt this was commercially driven, but it highlights the choices facing ethically driven firms which had been pushed into war work (or other similarly compromising activities), and the difficulty of ceasing such work once it had been begun and fully commercially committed to. This case study also served to highlight the commercial realities facing any firm which had its entire production diverted to the cause of the war in its aftermath.

In terms of other Quaker businesses, at least three major Quaker firms were affected by mergers in the five years following the end of World War I, in line with a broader trend for amalgamation.¹¹⁸ This reduced the number of visible Quaker firms nationally by some margin, though it was not specific to Quaker businesses.

By 1948, the Quaker business outlook had again changed from 1918. While there were still Quakers in business and Quakers were keen to engage in discussion around

¹¹⁸ The firms I have identified are Frys, Cadburys, and Baker and Sons; Leslie Hannah, 'Mergers in British Manufacturing Industry, 1880-1918', *Oxford Economic Papers*, New Series, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1974), 1–20, 6.

their business endeavours, changing values and political influence coupled with mergers meant that they were less visible and arguably less influential than previously. By this point in time even those symbolic stalwarts of the Quaker business world, the Rowntrees and the Cadburys, seem somewhat to have given up on the conversation around Quakers, business, ethics, and engagement with the world: no Rowntrees attended the 1948 conference, and fewer Cadburys than before were present.¹¹⁹

Business-minded Quakers who did attend remained less socially progressive than their society and less likely to hold political office. They also seemed uncertain about how to marry their desired values with practicable action in business, and in many cases appeared to be unconvinced that it was possible to live out the values of their Society in business, or undesiring of this end.

¹¹⁹ *Quakers and Industry*, 1948.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Findings

6.1.2 Nineteenth Century

My research into the Quaker business context in the nineteenth century sits against a background in which Fincham has demonstrated that Quaker practices afforded specific business advantages to Quakers in the early period of their history, up to 1755.¹

I demonstrate in Chapter 2 that by the end of the nineteenth century at least some of the practices Fincham identifies as enabling Quaker business success were breaking down. This included the discipline of the Society of Friends around business practice, for example. The disowning of businesspeople whose businesses failed and who were unrepentant was no longer being implemented.² Some key elements of the network (such as the local network in large urban settings) were becoming weaker through growth in the Society of Friends and more external social contact. However, others remained strong, especially those reflecting family ties between old Quaker business families (the elite) and their circle.

Where networks did spread out and weaken, Quakers were to some degree victims of their own success as a Society: the relaxation of their discipline more broadly from 1859 onwards caused their numbers to increase with new members joining.³ As their religious body grew, more Preparative (Local) Meetings were established in urban areas and they were geographically dispersed, meaning that easy opportunities to discuss

¹ Fincham, 'The Origins of Quaker Commercial Success'.

² See Section 2.6.4.

³ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, 111.

business would have been less frequent. Further, it would have been harder for new Quakers to enter the elite business network of old, often culturally Quaker, families, especially without pre-existing wealth or influence.

Another related change in regulation affecting Quaker lives in the mid-nineteenth century was the ending of the requirement of endogamy, or marrying only other Quakers, by the Society of Friends. The evidence I find here and in Chapter 3 is that, among the networks of large national Quaker businesses, this does not appear to have diminished the tendency to intermarry between Quaker business families. This is the one clear factor which still served to strengthen the Quaker business elite and secure their social ties, which remained largely in place in practice at the end of the century. However, again, it would not have helped less wealthy and influential new Quakers, since they would have been unknown to the elite which had clearly developed, thus it would have undermined some of the secular utility which Fincham suggests potentially drew people into the Society for its business-related benefits.

The nineteenth century also saw the entry of Quakers into public political life for the first time. I demonstrate this in the Birmingham and national context, with many Quaker businessmen taking office locally and nationally. The effect of Quaker businessmen taking political office locally during this period seems to have been that it led Quakers away from their businesses by consuming their time elsewhere. It is possible that the same happened with some of those who took office nationally, and national office served to reinforce the influence of the Quaker business elite. Entry into political life also drew Quakers into greater contact with other non-Quakers who would not have been bound by a similar discipline around business. I also demonstrate that in the early

nineteenth century campaigning (for example, around slavery) also had this effect, which sometimes resulted in more 'worldly' approaches to business, investment and lifestyle.

A key finding of this chapter is that Quakers entered into very early joint-stock business experiments, even before the introduction of the mid-century Companies Acts. While pioneering, especially in some cases such as the Stockton and Darlington Railway, which was the first ever railway company in Britain, this business structure endangered the trust in the Quaker business reputation which the discipline had helped to secure. I show clearly how this first project set a precedent and that many Quakers became embroiled in what was regarded as foolhardy gambling on the joint stock market following this. Quakers also arguably encouraged broader joint stock company creation with the Stockton and Darlington Railway example.

By charting the changing discipline concerning trade alongside this, I show how the Society began to attempt to become stricter in its regulation, but gradually on paper and in practice relinquished by the end of the nineteenth century (though later than other relaxations in the discipline). The effective end of the implementation of the discipline in this context, in the form of rebuking or disowning and proper oversight, was reinforced by theological liberalisation and individualisation. This lack of visible and defined standards arguably contributed to the end of the trust advantage Quakers had previously held: society could no longer easily ascertain on what basis Quaker businesses merited its trust. Although the discipline began to be replaced, from around 1895, with a conversation around business ethics and practice, this gave Quakers in business little concrete guidance.

The changes in company law in the mid-nineteenth century, which opened up the joint-stock form and limited liability to any business, further detrimentally impacted

Quaker businesses and their reputation. They did so by undermining trust and integrity and encouraging financial over-extension,⁴ and by meaning that if they converted long after competitors, large Quaker firms would have been commercially disadvantaged in terms of access to capital. Through consideration of personal correspondence, I demonstrate that the importance of trust was explicit. Nicholas Burton, Donncha Kavanagh, and Martin Brigham have done valuable work expanding upon and confirming my suggestion around legal changes.⁵ However, they do not acknowledge my earlier argument, which directly linked these changes in company law to change in the Quaker business world.⁶

This legal shift was a key factor in Quaker business decline in the nineteenth century in terms of maintaining moral integrity in reality and perception. By insisting that even for private incorporated firms there were at least seven members,⁷ it also meant that control could be diluted if these new members were given ordinary shares. This dilution was evident at Albright and Wilson around the turn of the century when Richard Threlfall, a non-Quaker, joined the firm.

6.1.3 The Early Twentieth Century, 1900–1914

In Chapter 3 I begin by highlighting the changing social and political context in England at this time, focusing particularly on union activity in the West Midlands and its possible impact on Albright and Wilson. Supported by evidence from Eric Taylor's thesis

⁴ Slepwood, 'The Birmingham Quaker Business Community', 236–237.

⁵ Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company', and Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law'.

⁶ Slepwood, 'The Birmingham Quaker Business Company'.

⁷ Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company'.

in one case, I suggest that the two West Midlands Quaker employers I highlight were not noticeably 'model' or ethical employers in the pre-war period as far as employee relations and pay are concerned.⁸

Not detached from the rise of union activity and socialism, there was what Kennedy has called a 'renaissance' in the Society of Friends continuing at this time, including the 1895 Manchester Conference, Quakers' consideration of socialism, and the revival of the Peace Testimony.⁹ This was a very active time of reflection on social issues among Quakers, not least on business. I draw together sources such as Quaker periodicals and the minutes of the Friends Social Union to highlight the role of Quaker businessmen in these debates. I suggest that the growing trend towards liberalisation which was a part of this undermined the practice of the discipline: oversight was no longer an active responsibility between Quakers, as each was left to their own inward light. The move away from doctrine and the discipline meant Quakers in business had less cohesion around belief and practice.

As might be imagined from their national prominence, the Rowntrees and Cadburys in particular were influential in national Quakerism, as a largely more progressive voice among those involved in business, though still as part of an elite. However, as the 1906 cocoa slavery debacle demonstrated, even these businessmen were not beyond reproach in their business practices.¹⁰ It is no coincidence in this context of seeking to return to Quaker dissenting roots and reconsider its ethical stance that consideration of its approach to business came simultaneously to the revival of the Peace

⁸ Taylor, 'The Working Class Movement in the Black Country', 342–343.

⁹ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*.

¹⁰ Lowell J. Satre, *Chocolate on Trial: Slavery, Politics and the Ethics of Business* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005).

Testimony. I would suggest that workers' industrial action also served to precipitate the business conversation: faced with the potential of employees taking action, there was an imperative to reconsider approaches to business.

By 1912 the scope for Quaker employers to exercise their benevolence and philanthropic side was reducing, with the rise of statutory measures such as pensions and national insurance. As I explain these were not comprehensive, but even so the space for Quaker distinctiveness in employment practice was reducing and would continue to do so as more measures were brought in.

It was around this time, from about 1911, that the Society of Friends was seriously considering business and ethics, appointing a committee to consider the issue. At Yearly Meeting 1912 time was given to discussing business, after a speech by Seebohm Rowntree, a director of the chocolate firm. This was an important year for Quakers and business, since 1912 also saw the release of two books on the subject, *Experiments in Industrial Organization* by Edward Cadbury and *Christianity and Business* by Edward Grubb. Cadbury wrote as a director of the Bournville chocolate firm, Edward Grubb as Editor of *The British Friend*, not personally involved in business. Rowntree was critical of the damage that competition had done within the contemporary system and accepted that the industrial system was flawed. The discussion aired a variety of views and responses, including some from socialists. A socialist-leaning minute requested at the Yearly Meeting does not appear to have been agreed. Neither Rowntree nor Grubb is a socialist radical; rather, both are progressive liberals respected within the Society of Friends.

Grubb's thorough assessment of the industrial system as he saw it considered competition and combination between firms, and between businesses and consumers. He

was critical of free trade, which distinguishes him from most Quaker businessmen of the previous sixty years. Grubb saw it as the responsibility of Christians to pursue cooperation and state action to mitigate the 'evils' of competition. Radically, he advocated all land and capital becoming publicly owned, and Seebohm Rowntree actually also supported this. It was the area in which less clearly 'socialist' Quakers advocated for something most resembling a socialist response. Unlike Rowntree, after suggesting profit sharing or co-partnership, Grubb actually suggested that if these did not work and they still 'live by what is really oppression', Quaker employers should sacrifice their livelihood and find something else to do.¹¹ Bear in mind here that Grubb was not even among the most radical socialists, so this was a clear demonstration of strong feelings among other Quakers around employers and the ethical dubiousness of their businesses in the context of the capitalist system of the time.

Strikingly, Grubb advocated for something that there is more evidence of nineteenth-century Quaker employers doing: stepping back entirely when one has enough wealth and pursuing social or religious service. I am thinking here of those involved in local politics in Birmingham who took this path, for example. Here the changes in company law which took effect in Quaker firms in the 1890s did them no favours: the introduction of the company made it much easier to maintain a financial stake in a firm from a distance (rather than to recognise one has sufficient means), and probably therefore much harder to let go completely, acknowledging the testimony of simplicity.

Using an analysis of Edward Cadbury's *Experiments in Industrial Organization* blended with detail highlighted by Michael Rowlinson's work, I demonstrate that while

¹¹ Grubb, *Christianity and Business*, 104.

there were many positive aspects of employment at Cadbury's, it was not without strife. Reading Cadbury's account alone, however, one would be surprised to learn this. Such is the nature of employers determining their own narratives.

I also consider in this chapter the rise of non-family managers in Quaker firms, showing that external managers were often introduced later in such firms than elsewhere, and that their introduction at Albright and Wilson coincided with the business's change in legal status, further reinforcing the importance of the legal changes in altering approaches to management and governance.

Quaker businessmen were particularly well represented as Liberal MPs during this period, with eight elected in 1906 (plus a nominal Quaker as a Conservative MP) and at least a further two in 1910. John William Wilson, one of the directors of Albright and Wilson, was the MP for North Worcestershire from 1895 to 1922. I use his case as one example of a businessman in parliament. Several themes around the trajectory of Quakers in business and their relationship with the Society of Friends emerge here. I would suggest that this representation in politics on a national level, while maintaining business interests, confirms my argument that the changes in company law had a considerable impact on the Quaker business environment, in enabling Quaker businessmen to split their time and attention. It is difficult to assess within the scope of this thesis to what degree this had a concrete impact on the firms involved.

Such a strong presence in parliament would have meant that Quakers had the chance to influence and vote on statutory regulation, which could have led to Grubb and Seebohm Rowntree's desired tempering of the competitive system, and in this sense could have strengthened Quaker businesses' ethical attributes by seeking to universalise them (though this would potentially have further weakened the businesses themselves

in terms of making them less distinctive in no longer going beyond the law if it were brought up to 'Quaker' standards). By Quaker businesses' ethical attributes I mean relatively high pay, shorter hours, and good health and safety practice, among other possibilities.¹² John William Wilson, however, appears to have largely opposed increased regulation around business, being committed to free trade. Arnold Rowntree certainly used his voice actively, but not particularly on business issues that I have found.¹³

Another sense in which Quaker business interests were furthered by the strong Quaker business presence in parliament was in terms of maintaining their networks. Arnold Rowntree often mentions meeting other Quaker MPs for lunch or other occasions, including John William Wilson.¹⁴ Undoubtedly, they had the opportunity to discuss business then. Further, parliamentary influence went beyond those in parliament: George Cadbury sought to eliminate competition for John William Wilson in the early twentieth century through his own political dealings.¹⁵ This parliamentary group seems to have been a Quaker business network revival of sorts, if restricted to the business elite which had the time and the resources to make it to parliament. George Newman, a Quaker who was not an MP or a businessman, seems to have been influential over Joseph Albert Pease in his parliamentary career, further illustrating Quaker influence.¹⁶

Right through into the early twentieth century, then, Quaker businesspeople were maintaining their influence on the national stage. They were also maintaining their

¹² This is not to say that these attributes were universal in Quaker firms or definitively agreed upon, as my discussion here shows they were not, but by this point in time they were under discussion as Yearly Meeting 1912 shows.

¹³ Packer, *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree*.

¹⁴ Packer, *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree*, 17.

¹⁵ Dowd, 'The Social and Political Activity of the Cadbury Family', 61–65.

¹⁶ 'Friends in Current Literature', circa 1911, accessed 12 June 2023, <https://journals.sas.ac.uk/fhs/article/download/2946/2899/4774>

familial connections: two of John William Wilson's brothers, one of whom (George Edward) was also a director of the firm, married into the (now nominal) Quaker Pease railway dynasty at the turn of the century. One of John William's sisters married into the local Tangye Quaker business family in 1901. And Kenneth Henry Wilson, George Edward's son, who remained a Quaker and would go on to chair the business, married Mary Isabel Cadbury, George Cadbury's daughter, in 1911.

Despite this secular power and its self-reinforcement, the politics and values of Quakers in business were largely increasingly diverging from those of the Society of Friends by 1914: the public pronouncements of Quakers in business sounded promising and in line with the general movement of Quakers more broadly, but were sometimes contradictory and unclear, and failed to go as far as the suggestions made by Grubb, commenting as an outsider. This was even the case for the more 'progressive', 'liberal' businesspeople such as the Rowntrees and Cadburys, who were still actively involved in institutional leadership around social issues in the Society of Friends. Other businesses such as Albright and Wilson had splits in them in terms of the commitment of various directors to Quakerism and its values, which would become starker in the very near future with the advent of World War I.

6.1.4 The Period of World War I, 1914-1918

The debate around social change and the organisation of society was intensified by World War I, not least within the Society of Friends.¹⁷ In Chapter 4 I use excerpts from *The Friend* to demonstrate the discussion which took place around this among Quakers,

¹⁷ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, 360.

and to give examples of the business response and immediate commercial difficulties created by the outbreak of war.

I show how the Quaker businessmen MPs in parliament responded differently to the outbreak of war, from indignation, to indifference, to not commenting at all, and even to seeming relatively pro-war. In the case of John William Wilson and Arnold Rowntree, although they held different views about the war, they were united in their support of the Friends Ambulance Unit. This demonstrates that although they were by no means a homogeneous or united group during the war, they still found some common ground.

Next, I examine in detail the differences and interactions between key members of Albright and Wilson around the war and war work. Here I demonstrate that this ultimately triggered the end of any semblance of Albright and Wilson being a Quaker business. Mirroring the split of views in the Society of Friends more generally where some enlisted to fight, it was not only Albright and Wilson which encountered differences in the response of its directors to the outbreak of war, in light of the Peace Testimony.

This has considerable ramifications for the impact of ethical dilemmas related to the Quaker testimonies on Quaker businesses. Ethical dilemmas have the potential to alter a Quaker firm in two ways: Quaker members of management and governance might either resign from the business (as in the case of William Arthur Albright and John William's brother Henry Lloyd Wilson) or from the Society of Friends (as in the case of Allan Richard Baker). Where neither of these takes place, there potentially remains an ethical dilemma: to act in a manner which risks contravening the Quaker testimonies, or to protect a firm's commercial interests, where the two conflict. My examples of William Arthur Albright and John William Wilson demonstrate that two of Corley's categories of business ethics could exist in one firm: to simplify, William Arthur Albright was a Quaker

who 'stayed plain' and John William Wilson one who 'became worldly'.¹⁸ What Corley does not seem to consider is the possibility of both in one firm and the tensions that might cause.

I show that one Quaker body of the time, the War and the Social Order Committee, took a clear stance with regard to business ethics, suggesting that there was 'still a great problem' with treating 'their work people better than the average of the country', when there was an ethical dilemma around the whole industrial system.¹⁹ Through a close analysis of the records of Albright and Wilson, supported by evidence from other Quaker businesses, I highlight the extent to which World War I disrupted the Quaker business world, demonstrating that the combination of the ethical dilemma it raised and the commercial disruption could be devastating for Quakers and their businesses. The extent of the commercial disruption at Albright and Wilson was extreme, and this business therefore serves as a case study of the impact of World War I on businesses used for war purposes more generally.

Despite the increasing questioning within the Society of Friends around the ethical validity of much Quaker involvement in business, and the growing distancing in views around social issues, I demonstrate that Quaker businessmen were still heavily influential in Quaker groups during World War I. This shows that even as the Society doubted their ethics on one level, businessmen's wealth and political and worldly influence still held much sway within the Society of Friends.

¹⁸ Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success'.

¹⁹ Minutes of the Conference of the War and the Social Order Committee, 3 February 1917, point 7, 65.

6.1.5 1918–1948

In Chapter 5 I analyse and contrast the approaches to business of Quaker businesspeople and the Society of Friends more generally in light of World War I and the changes of the subsequent decades. Using records of the Quakerism and Industry conferences in 1918, 1928, 1938, and 1948, and records from London Yearly Meeting publications, I demonstrate that while Quaker employers often seemed like they were keen to embrace social and industrial change, their approach was less progressive than that of the Society of Friends more broadly in this regard. Over this period, the representation of the Cadbury and Rowntree families gradually diminished, with no Rowntrees at all attending the conference by 1948. This is symbolic of their waning influence within the business narrative of the Society of Friends, and that of the former Quaker business elite in Quakerism more generally by this time, though they had considerable commercial success on the whole. Aside from the Employers' Conferences I have found no evidence of mutual Quaker business support beyond the 1920s. Similarly,²⁰ I have found no evidence of intermarriage between business families after 1921.

By 1948 parliament had disappeared as a talking shop for Quaker businessmen: they were no longer represented there beyond 1922, when the last liberal (and nominal) Quaker businessman standing, John William Wilson of Albright and Wilson, lost the Stourbridge constituency election to the Unionist candidate. The political and professional shifts in Quakerism are indicated in that those Quakers who would be elected were not in business and represented the Labour Party. That those Quakers who

²⁰ See Section 5.7.

did stand for parliament were not businessmen suggests that there is some truth in the proposition that Quakers were by this time very much moving into other professions.

Albright and Wilson under the leadership of the nominal Quaker John William Wilson and the non-Quaker Richard Threlfall, though with the Quaker Kenneth Henry Wilson supporting them, moved further from its Quaker past by making the commercially driven decision to maintain the manufacture of munitions until at least 1926. This case study therefore drives at the heart of considerations around what constitutes a Quaker business, and led to the development of my Quaker business definition model. Other Quaker businesses had been subject to mergers in the early part of this period, which contributed to a reduction in the number of visible large Quaker companies.

By 1948 the Quaker Employers' Conferences had run out of steam: the secretary from 1928, 1938, and 1948 stood down and the question around the holding of another conference was left open. In an address at the 1948 conference, Reginald A. Smith concedes clearly the position of Quakers by that date in terms of their political power and industrial influence by suggesting that Quaker employers might put forward ideas, but the power lay with the government to make decisions. This was due to the combination of the increasing centralisation and regulation of industry, and to the lack of Quaker parliamentary representation. While in his idealistic address Smith asserted that '*Quaker employers are the right people to lead*', it seems that on a large and organised scale there was no longer capacity or appetite for this. The conversation around business ethics which began with the relaxation of the discipline around 1895 had run out of steam with no certain conclusion or resolution.

6.2 Discussion and Original Contribution

This thesis draws together the range of factors which combined to fundamentally alter the Quaker business milieu between 1800 and 1948, setting this in the context of earlier Quaker business history, particularly as outlined by Andrew Fincham. The chronological structure of my thesis enables me to show clearly the development of changes affecting the Quaker business environment over time. My consideration of the political and theological context within and outside of Quakerism alongside case studies shows clearly their importance to Quaker businesses, particularly in the early twentieth century.

The first key factor which I identify as contributing to change in the Quaker business community is the growth in Quaker engagement with new forms of enterprise in the early nineteenth century, damaging the Quaker reputation and putting increasing distance between some businesspeople and the discipline of the Religious Society of Friends. This has not been identified as a factor previously. Related to this is the decreasing application of the discipline by around mid-century. Its weakening in the late nineteenth century also meant that the discipline was increasingly ignored; there would likely have been a growing divide between Quakers concerning this, and over how to respond. This weakening was in part driven by the theological revival and liberalisation of the Society, which began to believe in leaving ethics up to the individual conscience and in not overseeing one another's business activities in the same way. This is the first time that theological liberalisation has been identified as a factor in undermining Quaker business regulation and therefore identity, although somewhat paradoxically it also reinvigorated a sense of the importance of ethics in business.

The opening of the joint-stock form and limited liability to any business in the mid-nineteenth century further undermined the possibilities for Quakers to trade on trust, and meant that they might well have been at a commercial disadvantage to companies if they needed capital and did not convert in form to a company. Businesses which converted in the late nineteenth century often brought in (usually non-Quaker) external management, which further undermined the centrality of Quaker values, as Richard Threlfall and Charles David Sykes at Albright and Wilson demonstrate.

The outbreak of World War I threw the country and many Quaker firms into chaos, with division around the response to war on top of this in the case of many Quaker businesses. Using my definitional model, this had the potential to end a firm's Quaker status in various ways: through the resignation of Quakers from the business, or from the Religious Society, or from the fundamental transformation of its purpose away from Quaker values (informed by the testimonies), as in the case of Albright and Wilson.

Growing distance between Quakers in business and the Society of Friends more broadly around ethics and their practicability, and the waning political influence of prominent Quakers in business, furthered a decline in worldly influence. By the 1920s there were fewer individuals who were able to drive the conversation around business to somewhere definitive in the context of liberal Quakerism, which in turn meant that prominent, large Quaker firms besides Rowntree's and Cadbury's had largely disappeared from the public arena.

Through providing detailed case studies of three families from one regional Quaker business community, of national networks, and of one particular Quaker business alongside the change in the Quaker discipline, my thesis uses an original methodology to assess change and perceived decline in Quaker business activity between 1800 and 1948.

The level of detail I employ, particularly with regard to Albright and Wilson and the activities and personalities of those on its Board and Management Committee, is unprecedented in the study of the Quaker business field. Other work on businesses and Quakerism such as that by Kimberley and Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham has either not had the scope to be so detailed, has not considered the firm's Quaker identity in light of its managers and directors, or has missed opportunities to provide full evidence and analysis for arguments.²¹ Such a detailed analysis of a firm's specifically Quaker nature and connections has rarely been done. Most general business history case studies do not go into this level of detail, but focus more on the business and its personalities as a whole, and are often written by an insider to the business.²²

My study of Albright and Wilson led me to difficult questions around whether or not a business is in fact Quaker, and if not when it ceases to be Quaker. This in turn led to my development of an original model to assist other researchers in considering the matter.²³ This flow chart model asks a series of questions with yes or no answers to fairly easily determine whether a business is likely to have been Quaker. It attributes importance to the presence of Quakers in senior management, to the purpose of a business broadly aligning with Quaker principles (or testimonies), and to the treatment of employees.

This model could change the landscape of Quaker business history and how it is approached, and could certainly guide other researchers. For example, Huntley and

²¹ Kimberley, 'Employee Relations and the Quaker Employers Conference'; Kimberley, 'Towards a Set of Quaker Business Values'; Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law'; Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company'.

²² E.g. Threlfall, *100 Years of Phosphorus Making*; Reckitt, *The History of Reckitt and Sons Limited*; Kirby, 'The Failure of a Quaker Business Dynasty'.

²³ See Figure 1 in Section 1.5.

Palmers almost certainly ceased being Quaker long before the twentieth century with the death of the last Quaker family member, despite this not being considered by Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham.²⁴ The model is also potentially applicable to other faiths with some small adjustments.

Another element of my distinctive contribution to the field of Quaker business history lies in my study of Albright and Wilson. I use this firm, its directors, and their local and national connections to build up a picture of the multitude of factors which ultimately led to reducing the number of medium to large Quaker businesses that were visible by the early to mid-twentieth century. Mine is the first work to analyse Albright and Wilson in its capacity as a Quaker business.

Through highlighting intermarriage between the Albrights and Wilsons and other local and national Quaker business families (or former Quaker business families by the later period) from the mid-nineteenth century, this thesis demonstrates that the Quaker business community still maintained its strengths and connections right up to the advent of World War I and even beyond, long after 1859, which saw the end of the endogamy rule which meant that those in the Society of Friends should marry only other Quakers. My discussion shows that Albright and Wilson's links to Quakerism were strong throughout this period, bolstering its Quaker identity.

The level of intermarriage demonstrates the strength of Quaker and formerly Quaker business connections, even in the early twentieth century: the 1921 marriage of John Christopher Wilson, Kenneth Henry's younger brother, to Helen Joyce Fry, daughter of a Quaker coal owner, being a prime example. I would suggest that by this time, when

²⁴ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law'.

many family members had ceased being Quakers in practice and when their businesses were losing their Quaker identities, the Quaker business elites in Britain had become wealthy cultural cliques, separate from the Society of Friends itself. However, as I also demonstrate, this alone was not enough to secure a business's Quaker identity, even more so in the aftermath of World War I and the social and economic changes it brought about.

The presence of Quaker values being lived out (or at least not contravened) in a firm's activities is in my definitional model since the testimonies are arguably a defining feature of Quakerism, and perhaps highlights why some firms are more readily remembered as 'Quaker' than others. Those, such as Albright and Wilson, which acted contrary to the testimonies from 1915 through to at least the 1920s are less popularly remembered, and indeed I argue that, in the spirit of the nineteenth-century discipline and the need for accountability, they ceased being Quaker simply by virtue of their activities. Without some holding to account the nature of a Quaker business and its associated ethic become meaningless, and this was to a degree a symptom of the individualism associated with Quaker theological liberalisation.

My study of Albright and Wilson also demonstrates the impact which changes in company law in the nineteenth century could set in motion in an individual Quaker firm. This idea was taken up by Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham after I raised it in my earlier work.²⁵ As Matthews, Boyns, and Edwards have noted, Albright and Wilson's adoption of the limited liability company form in 1892, and the introduction of an external manager in the same year, greatly emphasises the direct link between the two.²⁶ However,

²⁵ Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham, 'Religion, Organization and Company Law'; Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company'.

²⁶ Matthews, Boyns, and Edwards, 'Chandlerian Image or Mirror Image?', 43.

Matthews, Boyns, and Edwards do not consider the consequences of this for the business as Quaker, as that is not their purpose.

Kavanagh and Brigham also note the broader shift to a non-Quaker 'managerial elite' and suggest that Quakers were happy to take this step.²⁷ However, this is argued solely on the basis of a statement by George Cadbury Jnr at the 1928 Employers' Conference, and they do not provide any concrete examples of Quaker businesses which took on external managers. Certainly, businesses including Cadbury's and Rowntree's also made this move, though it is perhaps unsurprising that, as I demonstrate here, they took this step later and differently to Albright and Wilson. Cadbury's first non-family manager in 1912 was actually a Quaker,²⁸ so Cadbury's worked around the potential of giving power to a non-Quaker outsider in this way, and Rowntree's did not recruit an external manager until 1922, thereby slowing down the process of bringing in external influence by thirty years compared to Albright and Wilson. It is hardly surprising that those businesses which are often held up as exemplars took this step later: they had greater Quaker control and it makes sense that they would want to preserve their names and their Quaker approach.

Albright and Wilson is an effective case study, particularly for the period 1890–1930, and within that the World War I period, as it was a business in transition at this time. Further, it sat in the middle of once-Quaker firms which ceased being Quaker long before, and those which held on to Quakerism and its values for longer still. It is a firm which did not cease being Quaker particularly early or late in the spectrum of Quaker business demise from around 1850 to 1948, ceasing to be Quaker in 1915.

²⁷ Kavanagh and Brigham, 'The Quakers and the Joint Stock Company', 22.

²⁸ Rowlinson, 'The Early Application of Scientific Management', 387.

Threlfall, the non-Quaker technical director who joined the firm at the turn of the twentieth century, George Gatheral, the non-Quaker works manager, and Charles David Sykes (also a non-Quaker), Gatheral's junior and then successor from 1912, accrued increasing power at Albright and Wilson between 1900 and 1914, and this trend continued into World War I, particularly with regard to Sykes. Matthews, Boyns, and Edwards show how Gatheral was key in the accounting procedures and production of statements for the directors to make decisions from.²⁹ They also identify Sykes as key specifically in the development of Albright and Wilson's costing system, which is their focus.³⁰ My work supports and adds to this: by studying letters which touch on the personal, as well as reports which go far beyond costing, I evidence the increasing power of Sykes more broadly, and of Threlfall, as the implications of the outbreak of war were felt within the firm. By drawing out their specific perspectives, I highlight the impact these non-Quakers had for the Quaker nature of the firm.

Within Albright and Wilson, the chair from 1903 William Arthur Albright, and Henry Lloyd Wilson, his cousin and also a director, were very clearly active within the Society of Friends on a national level between 1910 and 1916, on the Meeting for Sufferings and as Clerk of London Yearly Meeting. The exit of these members from the business over the matter of conscience in 1915 when the business began making munitions brought the incremental changes to a head and led to the business ceasing to be Quaker by my definition.

The shift in control between William Arthur Albright, a symbol of the new Quaker theological liberalisation, and his cousin John William Wilson, a publicly and politically

²⁹ E.g. Matthews, Boyns, and Edwards, 'Chandlerian Image or Mirror Image?', 39.

³⁰ Matthews, Boyns, and Edwards, 'Chandlerian Image or Mirror Image?', 40.

active, more 'worldly' member of the Religious Society of Friends, symbolises a growing tension in the Society, usually between non-business Friends and those in business, which increased in the first half of the twentieth century. My approach in drawing out their personalities highlights the personal nature of faith and its impact on business. By highlighting the presence of these very different people within one firm this case study adds further nuance to Corley's categorisation of firms between those who 'stayed plain' and became 'worldly': while it is possible to make generalisations, this thesis demonstrates that the history of Quaker business change is certainly complex.

This, on top of the rising influence of the new non-Quakers in management and governance, sealed Albright and Wilson's fate and led to the divergence of this firm from its Quaker identity and purpose, although undoubtedly the family members within it still thought of it as Quaker, as is demonstrated by Kenneth Henry Wilson attending the Quaker Employers' Conference in 1928, and indeed by his continued attendance at Bournville Quaker Meeting right through until at least 1930.³¹

The level of detail I employ, combined with my chronological approach to the war period at Albright and Wilson, draws out an ethical faith-based business dilemma in an original manner. The potentially devastating impact of World War I on the Quaker business world, supported with reference to other businesses, has not previously been identified, outside of my own published work.³² The effect of World War I on Quaker businesses has not been explored before. Therefore, my evidence around Albright and Wilson and other firms in this regard is original in demonstrating the consequences of the Peace Testimony, in some cases combined with commercial difficulties, for Quaker

³¹ WC, SF/3/3/1/1, SF/3/3/1/2, SF/3/3/1/3, Bournville Preparative Meeting Minute Books 1909-1921, 1921-1928, 1928-1935.

³² Sleafwood, 'Review of *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility*'.

businesses in war time. By highlighting the post-war situation for this business, I clearly show how devastating the change to total production for war can be for a firm. This is relevant to any business, Quaker or not, and has not been shown in detail for other businesses in this way.

World War I touched Quakerism and Quaker businesses in such a way that the damage it did to the Quaker business environment was irreversible; while many factors contributed, this one was key. The aftermath of the war and the social changes which had been gaining momentum within the Society of Friends over the previous twenty years meant that Quaker businesspeople were increasingly distanced from their fellow Quakers, who were generally moving politically from Liberal to Labour, and strongly suggests that engaging with the capitalist industrial system was incompatible with Quakerism. Quaker businessmen no longer held the political power which had previously helped them to further their interests. Their businesses had often merged with others, threatening or eliminating the Quaker identity of the remaining prominent Quaker firms.

By 1948 Quaker businesspeople themselves were conscious of their dwindling societal influence³³ and, while still keen on some level to engage with one another, their scene and supportive setting had altered hugely to be less conducive to mutual aid and support. Discipline and a firm ethic and identity had been replaced by a slowing and inconclusive conversation. Exemplary firms deeply attached to and capitalising on their Quaker identities such as Rowntree's and Cadbury's stood firm, but most others had fallen prey to the combination of factors I outline above. Using a 1927 partnership

³³ See Section 5.6.

document, I highlight one possible path to maintaining an ethic and greater business integrity still in use at that time.

Albright and Wilson had further distanced itself from its Quaker values by opting to continue to manufacture munitions in peace time, and therefore ceased to be Quaker. I would suggest that this is the reason there were no further Quaker Employers' Conferences after 1948: the central figures who had driven the gatherings were growing old and stepping back, and Quaker businesses seemed less central and relevant to the world around them, with the increasing role of government in business and the lack of Quakers in politics. There was less capacity for the Quaker business paternalism of old to hold sway. I end my study at the last conference, as I believe its finality to be symbolic of the dwindling influence and visibility of Quaker businesses.

6.3 Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

6.3.1 Implications

The major implication of my thesis is to revise the assessment of factors in change in the Quaker business environment in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially my highlighting of Quaker speculation and experiences with new company forms in the early to mid-nineteenth century.

Further, I have highlighted the impact of World War I on Quaker businesses, which, besides my own research published in 2019 and clarified and expanded upon here,

is as yet largely uncharted territory.³⁴ This is relevant not just to Quaker business history, but to business history more broadly, as there have been few such detailed studies.

My research has ramifications for the potential impact of other ethical dilemmas in business, and therefore is relevant to business ethicists, those interested in Corporate Social Responsibility, and others in similar fields. As Quakerism is central to the changes occurring at Albright and Wilson, this research is most evidently of interest to those working in Quaker Studies as well as to members of the Society of Friends themselves, for further nuancing their understanding of Quaker reactions to the Peace Testimony in war time, and its impact on the daily lives of those who did not themselves need to make the choice between enlisting or some form of conscientious objection.

The other significant implication of my work is to provide nuance and balance to an area which has until now largely focused on a few well-known firms such as Cadbury's and Rowntree's, largely with the exception of Corley's work.³⁵ By largely focusing on a firm which is not a particular moral exemplar and which holds considerable complexities around personalities and control, I have been able to draw out different factors affecting a Quaker business's success, and to highlight some of the less palatable facts to Quaker sensibilities. This also applies to Cadbury's and Rowntree's where I do refer to them. I do not mean to detract from the socially valuable work these families have done over their history, but think it is important to be honest about their differences, as wealthy businesspeople, from the Society of Friends more broadly. This is particularly the case from the early twentieth century onwards, as the Society was becoming increasingly

³⁴ Chrystal gives one page to Rowntree's; however, this is not detailed and lacks referencing: Paul Chrystal, 'The Rowntrees: Tales from a Chocolate Family', in Stephen W. Angel and Pink Dandelion (eds), *Quakers, Business and Industry* (Longmeadow, MA: FAHE, 2017), 185.

³⁵ Corley, 'How Quakers Coped with Business Success'.

radical socially. Further, Albright and Wilson has been studied very little. Matthews, Boyns, and Edwards have provided a thorough study of accounting procedures, management, and control which has been valuable to me here,³⁶ but nowhere has the firm been assessed as a specifically Quaker business, or more broadly otherwise.

By developing a model for establishing whether or not a business is Quaker at any given time, I would suggest that the history of various firms previously assumed to be Quaker through long periods of their history needs to be revised: if one is seeking to assess change in Quaker firms, a key change is whether or not the firm is in fact Quaker. This will depend somewhat on one's purpose – if one is seeking merely to assess at what point a firm ceased following Quaker principles, as seems to have largely been the goal up until now (for example in the work of Burton, Kavanagh, and Brigham), then the situation may differ. However, while a firm might be described as being of Quaker heritage, without some Quakers present in management and governance (and specifically as chair or managing director) I argue that it does not qualify as a Quaker business. Therefore a major implication of this thesis is hopefully to end assumptions around Quaker business status in research.

6.3.2 Future Research

Through consulting nineteenth-century trades directories in combination with Milligan's *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers in Commerce and Industry*, I was able to identify some smaller Quaker businesses in Birmingham. I would be very interested to see research into smaller Quaker businesses in a different geographical area to examine

³⁶ Matthews, Boyns, and Edwards, 'Chandlerian Image or Mirror Image?'

the degree of similarity nationally in greater detail. It appears from my research that the number of Quaker businesses being established reduced in the later nineteenth century: does this ring true in other areas? York would be an interesting example to investigate this for, because although like Birmingham it had at least one major Quaker employer, it maintained only one Quaker Meeting throughout its history.

More and detailed case studies of other firms of this time, particularly considering them as Quaker firms and how that was reflected in governance and practice, if at all, would merit research to contrast with my study of Albright and Wilson. As I appreciate and indeed highlighted in my methodology section, this would not be a straightforward task in terms of access to records.

Over the course of my research, I have been disappointed to find so few women in Quaker businesses at this time, with Alice Clark and Dorothy Cadbury being notable exceptions whom I have not had time or capacity to investigate more thoroughly for their contributions. This may be partly because women were simply not there – I strongly suspect this to be the case, at least for the most part, since I did not find them. However, it would be particularly interesting to research the two women I do mention from large firms, and to assess Quaker women's roles in smaller firms if possible. Another angle which would merit attention through analysis of personal correspondence would be the influence of Quaker women shareholders and Quaker women as spouses of Quaker businessmen.

Given the variable picture I have found around the implementation of the discipline with regard to business regionally, and the fact that this has not been thoroughly researched after 1830, this would certainly merit further investigation to test my initial findings here.

Since very little academic research has been done into Quaker business history since 1948, a key area for future research is looking at the Quaker business environment after that date. I have not had the scope to consider this here in my thesis, and I would suggest that two particular avenues for the post-1948 context merit consideration.

One avenue is research into small Quaker businesses and how they interact with the social order and capitalist context as it continued to develop in the twentieth century. Within this it would certainly be worth investigating self-employed Quakers, their values, and whether there is any evidence that they grew more (or indeed less) numerous over the second half of the twentieth century.

A second avenue which could be helped by the use of my model for defining a Quaker business is to consider whether firms have become Quaker through the entry of managers and others in governance. Have any new large Quaker firms appeared? Certainly, the Scott-Bader Commonwealth, created in 1951 as a cooperative, merits further academic research. I am not aware of others, but this is certainly something to explore to further facilitate Quaker reflection on capitalism and business values today.

Further questions arise too in the contemporary context. If many Quakers have entered the charity and non-governmental organisation fields, what has been the change in this area? What, if anything, secures an organisation's Quaker nature against infiltration or change in practice? What are current Quaker attitudes towards commerce?

6.4 Chapter Summary

In this conclusion I have summarised the main argument of each of my chapters to draw out my thesis. I have then gone on to discuss my thesis and highlight the original contribution of my work, in particular my work around Quaker business structures and

investments, and the Quaker discipline from the early nineteenth century. My unique model for defining a Quaker business and my in-depth case study of Albright and Wilson during the period of World War I, situating the firm in its broader local and Quaker context add to my original contribution here.

It is not possible to identify one factor in isolation which fundamentally altered the Quaker business environment between 1800 and 1948. Rather, shifts within the Society of Friends and changes in Quaker interactions with new company forms in the nineteenth century set the scene for significant social change inside and outside of Quakerism which increasingly distanced traditional Quaker businesspeople from their Religious Society. By 1913 the disintegration of the discipline around business had been replaced by a far less decisive conversation which weakened trust in Quaker firms.

This was compounded by the advent of World War I, which acted as a time of great rupture for Quaker businesses, who were often faced with choices between their morals or their commerce, and that for some, as in the case of Albright and Wilson, there was no return. The war made the differences between Quakers in business and Friends more broadly stark. What is more, the economic consequences of the war led to several mergers involving Quaker businesses which resulted in still more firms disappearing. Although Quakers continued their conversation around business through to 1948, it had run out of momentum by then, and Quaker business influence in public life had waned. However, World War I and the divisions and commercial ramifications it brought about formed the final and crucial factor in a series which undermined Quaker endeavours in business.

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