ABSTRACT

SUFFERING AND EARLY QUAKER IDENTITY: ELLIS HOOKES AND THE “GREAT BOOK OF SUFFERINGS”

By Kristel Marie Hawkins

Early Quakers formed group awareness and identification through patient suffering. The developing Quaker bureaucracy encouraged them to witness to their faith according to sanctioned practices and to have reports recorded into the “Great Book of Sufferings.” Using Lancashire as an example, this thesis examines the structure, contents, and overall purpose of the suffering accounts. The Society of Friends initially used its members’ sufferings as a public advocacy tool to end religious persecution. By the late 1680s, the focus shifted as persecution lessened. Friends subsequently sent in their reports as part of a ritual that built internal solidarity through joyful suffering and created a quasi-martyrological tradition. Beginning around 1660, Ellis Hookes, clerk to the Quakers, copied countless accounts into two volumes of the “Great Book of Sufferings.” He began a practice, which lasted over a century and filled another forty-two volumes, of linking Quakers together through their suffering accounts.
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I. Introduction

The suffering of the early English Quakers has been well documented. Founding members wrote accounts in tracts dating as early as the 1640s. Modern historians and scholars have also written extensively on Quaker suffering for nearly a century. Perhaps the most salient reason why early Quaker suffering has captured the interest of historians is the vast wealth of written records the first Friends kept about the matter.

Arguably, the most comprehensive source for Quaker suffering accounts is also the source that has not been examined to its full potential. The forty-four volume work, the “Great Book of Sufferings,” contains, in theory, every sanctioned account of abuse any Quaker, regardless of age, sex, or place of residence, suffered from the mid 1650s until well into the eighteenth century while witnessing to the “truth.” The entirety of “Great Book of Sufferings” was the end result of nearly a century’s worth of work compiling suffering accounts, and laboriously recording every one into a directory of sorts for every county in England and Wales, and even New England. The man first charged with compiling, organizing, and recording the suffering accounts was Ellis Hookes, clerk to the London Quakers. Hookes presumably began his task in earnest sometime around the Restoration in 1660. Through his efforts, which amount to the first two volumes of the “Great Book of Sufferings,” 1 Hookes ultimately started a tradition of self-understanding and group identification based on suffering the whole sect endured as a result of religious persecution. This tradition, propagated and internalized through the Meeting for Sufferings, was later carried on in the compilation of the remaining forty-two volumes after 1676. 2 The longevity of the entire compilation process attests to the centrality that recording suffering accounts had for Quakers. Even after the Toleration Act was passed in 1689 and the persecution of Friends lessened, members still ritually sent in their suffering accounts as a way to keep alive the tradition Hookes started.

Had it not been for the centralization of the sect from the early 1660s until the mid 1670s, however, Hookes would not have been able to create his portion of the “Great Book of Sufferings.” In order for the accounts to reach Hookes, they had to travel through the different levels of meetings before arriving in London. Moving up the meeting structure, the accounts became known to a great number of people: local accounts were handed to delegates who would take them to regional meetings, where they were again passed to those who went on to the national gathering of the Meeting for Sufferings in London. This process of collection both informed members of the problems their co-religionists faced and gathered the documentation that made Hookes’s work possible.

Why was such a process needed? What was the overall purpose for collecting suffering accounts, and why did Friends do so in such detail? What purpose did the “Great Book of Sufferings” have for the Quakers? What influence, if any, did it have on the larger society? These are the questions that guide this thesis.

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1 This study is based mainly on the first two volumes of the “Great Book of Sufferings,” a manuscript compiled by meeting clerk Ellis Hookes. Ellis Hookes, comp., “Great Book of Sufferings,” vols. 1-2, Library of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain, London; microfilm copy (London: London Yearly Meeting for the Society of Friends, 1989) [hereafter Hookes, GBS].

The first two volumes of the “Great Book of Sufferings” helped form Quaker notions of identity, equality, and solidarity. It linked all Friends throughout England, Wales, and beyond through witnessing to their faith by suffering. In order to show secular authorities they were not a dangerous people after the Restoration, the early Quakers documented how members’ personal faith testimonies led to sufferings which they patiently experienced. This effort required a highly organized collection process. The centralization and bureaucratization of the sect intrinsically linked the poorest Northern Quaker to a wealthy London merchant. That both endured and survived the same types of abuses created a sense of equality and solidarity for all Friends. Furthermore, compiling the suffering accounts in one work was a form of public advocacy the Quaker bureaucracy initially created to stabilize and defend the faith to the government.

To stabilize the sect and shape its message, the Quaker bureaucracy chose not to record every account of abuse. Actions such as running naked through the streets or destroying church property were not officially sanctioned; they were not recorded into the “Great Book of Sufferings.” By documenting only certain types of sufferings, such as monetary losses for not paying tithes, the bureaucracy endorsed acceptable models of behavior for all Quakers to follow. Somewhat exclusionary parameters, therefore, were set in place; Quaker behavior could not be within the realm of social mores. By 1660, the bureaucracy advocated Quakers to display acceptable behaviors—emulating Christ’s actions and declarations—which many Friends had already been doing since the 1640s. Instead of allowing every Quaker who experienced suffering for any given behavior, there emerged a fiction of egalitarianism. The bureaucracy ensured that only certain acts they approved of would be recognized as worthy for the cause of suffering. This ideology and method was pertinent especially in the first three decades of its existence when the sect’s persecution and suffering were the worst.

During the 1670s and the 1680s, after the most intense persecution had abated somewhat, suffering accounts continued to come in. After the sect’s efforts to reassure the government had borne fruit, the “Great Book of Sufferings” began to have more of an internal function of forming identity rather than being used as a public advocacy tool against persecution. While the Quakers continued to be punished for various aspects of their witnessing to the truth, the government no longer worked to drive them out of existence. The public function of the book declined but Quakers still benefitted from its existence. They identified with one another through a psychodynamic process by witnessing to their faith, by patiently enduring the punishments bestowed upon them, and then by subsequently sending in their suffering accounts. The initial effort made by the bureaucracy during the 1660s of codifying acceptable behavior had been internalized. The reported abuse revolved around a relatively small number of behaviors, signifying that Friends had collectively taken to heart the sect’s ideas of what it meant to suffer as a Quaker. Members knew they had to display proper outward actions in cases of abuse for their sufferings to be recorded in the “Great Book of Sufferings.” This process created emotional bonds between Friends and greatly influenced the group, since they all suffered for similar reasons within the bureaucracy’s behavioral parameter. At the same time, Quakers also came to a self-understanding. Participation in this process allowed them to identify who was within the collective group, and how to act in any given circumstance. Even as they each acted in marked defiance of the authorities, they did not do so to make themselves exclusive
or unusual; rather they stated their membership in and equality with the larger community of Quakers.³

Quakers, through writing their persecution accounts, compared their sufferings to those of the early Christians. Doing so enabled them to situate themselves within, as well as to build on, a long standing martyrological tradition in England. The suffering accounts were more than just records of abuses endured; they were quasi-martyrological accounts. Quakers, like all martyrs, believed they suffered purely for religious reasons for witnessing to their faith. Unlike martyrs, most Quakers did not encounter death by legal means as punishment for their religious convictions. The New England authorities did execute four members of the sect between 1659 and 1661, but most Friends did not face that ultimate punishment. The notion of Quaker identification, therefore, was related back to the earliest biblical Christian tradition of suffering for one’s faith. By continually sending in their suffering accounts, the Quakers used the “Great Book of Sufferings” and the Meeting for Sufferings as a way to validate and bolster each member’s claims of suffering. It became a sort of ritual for every Quaker who witnessed to his or her faith to send in a suffering account to be included among all others who had witnessed and endured abuse before them.

By having their sufferings written down for posterity, the Quakers were acting within a larger, highly developed martyrological context of venerating and celebrating the Christian martyrs in England and throughout Christian history. A “martyrdom is a physical act of social disobedience and subversion” in which the martyr “willingly renounc[es] all that can be physically taken away [money, property, family, life]” thereby ascending “beyond the reach and power of the persecutor.”⁴ In a sense, through their willful deaths, martyrs display an ability “to invert and destroy the worldly foundations upon which a society is built.”⁵ Martyrs placed their spirituality and devotion to God above everything else in the world. Martyrologies, which are compilations of individual martyr accounts, take their stories and contextualize them within a framework that will “legitimate, support, and transmit the ideology of the persecuted faction.”⁶ In other words, martyrologies take the persecution and suffering of individuals and place them within an ideological and propagandist frame in order to persuade the audience of the rightness of the cause for which the suffering occurred.

Before the Reformation and Henry VIII’s split with the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century, early Christian and a few late-Middle Age martyrs were venerated in the Church as saints, and their stories of suffering at the hands of their persecutors were written down and eventually published as inspirational literature. After the Reformation split Western Europe, martyrdom became politicized, as Protestants and Catholics each looked to their own set of martyrs killed in defense of that version of the faith. As the effects of the Reformation developed during the latter part of the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century, confessional boundaries began to solidify, thereby making the issue of martyrs and martyrdom more central to everyday life. The Quakers, with four fellow members executed, participated in the creation of a martyrological tradition. Like other new groups, they used suffering for their faith to defend the practice of religion for conscience sake. Quakers went further, recording lesser suffering

³ For a more detailed analysis on identity, its meanings, and complications, see especially “Identity,” in Frederick Cooper’s Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 73.


⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 158.
accounts, much like hagiographers and martyrologists did for martyrs. Hookes’s work contributed to this martyrological tradition, as he not only compiled two volumes of the “Great Book of Sufferings,” but he also published a general Protestant martyrology entitled *The Spirit of the Martyrs*. Together, the two pieces combined indirectly to serve a dual purpose: they helped legitimate Quakerism as a religious sect by establishing its identity and claiming roots as far back as early Christendom, and they made general appeals to all Protestants to end religious persecution.

Historians have examined Quaker sufferings and origins during the time of religious, social, and economic turmoil in England beginning in the 1640s. William C. Braithwaite’s classic two-volume history of the English Quakers, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (first published in 1912, second edition 1961) and *The Second Period of Quakerism* (first published 1919, second edition 1961) is still highly regarded amongst historians today for its wealth of information. Braithwaite relied heavily on primary accounts, letters, tracts, pamphlets, and meeting minutes to create a comprehensive history of the sect up through the early eighteenth century. Braithwaite’s study is an excellent source for scholars interested in the sect’s internal formation as well as responses to it by outsiders. His work paid particular attention to the life, works, and activities of George Fox, whom he saw as the sect’s founder. It also gives relevant information about the sect’s bureaucratization and centralization. Braithwaite argued that the Yearly Meeting in London was responsible for urging that all suffering accounts be exactly and briefly reported. The purpose of the Meeting for Sufferings was to have Friends “record and publish their sufferings, and by reiterated letter and interview pour the stream of facts into the unwilling ears of their persecutors.” With its wide use of primary sources covering myriad topics pertaining to the formation and centralization of the early English Quakers, Braithwaite’s study clearly deserves the scholarly recognition given to it.

Braithwaite’s study laid the groundwork upon which other historians, such as Christopher Hill, built their own analysis of the Quakers. Hill’s Marxist argument in *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (1972) examined how England’s dynamic social and economic situation prompted upheavals in all facets of life. He saw the early Quakers as an almost spontaneous movement, unlike Braithwaite who argued George Fox deserved most of the credit for the sect’s formation and identification. In Hill’s view, one person did not shape the identity of the sect, but rather such men as James Nayler and Edward Burrough (in addition to George Fox) played significant roles in the early years of Quakerism before their untimely deaths. The Inner Light, God’s presence within Friends that moved them to act and speak according to its directions, was also significant to Quaker prophecy in the early movement. In addition, the sect routinely challenged the status quo: not removing hats, not attending traditional worship services and instead attending their own meetings, not properly addressing their social superiors, and not paying tithes.

Barry Reay’s influential book *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (1985) gives pertinent background information about why the sect did suffer so much. Instead of focusing on how the Quakers themselves forged group identification and self-understanding, Reay examined popular hostility towards the sect from outsiders, thereby focusing on how others understood the Quakers. In particular, his method focused on the general populace’s ignorance of the sect and

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the religious indoctrination they received from their own church services. He argued that those two factors gave birth to negative attitudes and lies about the Quakers, which were later spread in pamphlets and chapbooks. The word “Quaker,” therefore, was hated and feared, rather than the individual members.

John Miller’s article, “A Suffering People’: English Quakers and Their Neighbours c. 1650-1700” (2005) further examined popular hostility towards Quakers. Miller specifically focused on how “far bonds of neighbourliness and community were destroyed by the corrosive impact of religious and political discord.” He examined how the Quakers’ acts such as meeting together, interrupting sermons, and refusing to pay tithes created and exacerbated friction within communities which had practicing members of different religions. Although Miller extensively used entries from the “Great Book of Sufferings,” he did so only to highlight how widespread popular violence was against the Quakers.

In order to understand how Quakers perceived themselves, Rosemary Moore’s book, The Light in Their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain 1646-1666 (2000), helps. It extensively explains the theological basis from which Quakerism emerged. Moore emphasized how the Quakers used the Bible as a tool to trace a history of their movement as far back at the primitive Christians. She argued that “Quakers interpreted the whole sweep of the Old and New Testament story, from Genesis by way of the prophets through to Christ and the Book of Revelation, in such a way as to show that the story rightly ended with the mid-seventeenth-century gift of the Spirit to the Quakers, the same spirit that had inspired the prophets and apostles.” Moore’s argument, therefore, does examine the Biblical roots the Quakers believed they shared with the earliest Christians as well as relating their current sufferings to Old Testament figures. Unfortunately, Moore only noted the martyrological influence in passing in her text and in a footnote. She did not fully explain how the Quakers saw their quasi-martyrological sufferings as paramount in the formation of their identity.

The scholarly studies presently available on Quaker origins and suffering focus largely on how outsiders perceived the Quakers, and not so much on how members perceived and understood themselves or their roles within the larger sect. Very few, if any, of the studies even mentioned the “Great Book of Sufferings.” None of them understand the book’s role in creating both a public and an internal sense of identity and awareness. Suffering accounts to this day have only been quantified to show the frequency of abuses against Quakers. No one has asked, however, how the Quakers’ use of those accounts served a larger purpose aside from recording how many people were fined or had cows or pots taken from them. No study to date has articulated how the “Great Book of Sufferings” acted as an initial public advocacy tool as well as a later tool that collectively and ritually formed identity, self-understanding, and solidarity within the sect over a period of generations.

Nor has the “Great Book of Sufferings” been examined as a source for understanding Quaker suffering within a martyrological context. One reason for this may be that actual martyrdom only occurred across confessional boundaries, when, for example, Catholics executed...
Protestants. Even though none of the Quakers in the “Great Book of Sufferings” were directly sentenced to death for witnessing to their faith, their attitudes towards suffering directly related to the experience of any martyr, regardless of confessional identity. Much like the four Quakers who joyously went to their deaths in Massachusetts while relying on their faith in God, English Quakers also joyously embraced their physical, financial, and emotional sufferings as testament to their adherence to the true faith.

The earliest Christian martyrs had followers who immortalized their idyllic sufferings in writings, beginning with the Bible. The practice of remembering specific martyrs’ names, the reasons they suffered, and their persecutions became commonplace in the martyrological tradition. The “Great Book of Sufferings,” even though not classified as an actual martyrology but rather more of a record book, still nonetheless embodies martyrrological traditions. The goal of the entire work was to relate every single suffering account experienced by every Quaker. The names, the location of the suffering, the general date, and the known persecutors are all listed in the work. In that sense, the martyrrological tradition first begun by the early Christians continued through the “Great Book of Sufferings.” The work as a whole gave no preference to social standing, gender, or geographic location. The “Great Book of Sufferings,” therefore, acted as a way for Quakers to understand their identities as Friends in two ways. Friends understood themselves on a personal level through their individual sufferings, and the sect identified collectively with the early Christians by witnessing to the true faith at the hands of their persecutors. When their suffering accounts were recorded, Quakers through all of England and beyond became intrinsically linked together within the broader martyrrological context.

II. Background and Centralization

Quakerism emerged in the 1640s amidst religious and social strains, but it drew upon older traditions. Myriad historians have argued that its beliefs may have been influenced by other religious movements such as the Lollards, the Ranters, the Family of Love (Familists), the Diggers, and the Seekers. Partially by recombining pre-existing beliefs and behaviors, the Quakers formed their own sect. Both its beliefs and social behavior earned Quakers immediate censure. In order to know why Quakers became targeted, it is necessary to first understand the different religious traditions from which they emerged and adapted in a dynamic society. Quaker beliefs guided and encouraged the suffering members endured as a result of their outward defiant and illegal behaviors and mannerisms. The sheer multitude of suffering accounts received and recorded ultimately played a key role in the sect’s centralization and formation of the London Yearly Meeting as well as the Meeting for Sufferings, where the leaders

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14 In sporadic instances, Ellis Hookes marked in the margins that particular Quakers died in prison after being incarcerated for lengthy periods.

publicly advocated an end to persecution. Furthermore, the Meeting for Sufferings embodied the essential tenets of Quakerism, insomuch as it was not a purely hierarchical bureaucracy. Over time, behaving according to sanctioned practices, and then patiently suffering and then writing the account of it soon became ritualized as a way to form individual identity as well as to express internal solidarity.

The Quakers suffered because of the religious and social traditions which helped shape their early identity. Beginning in 1642, England was ravaged in a civil war that would eventually lead to regicide and the establishment of a commonwealth. In the midst of near constant turmoil, different religious sects emerged, each with its own remedy for the quest to discover the “correct” religion. Oftentimes, less economically developed and sparsely populated areas in the north and west of England failed to attract highly trained ministers. Due to the dissatisfaction with their ministers, or the lack of clergy altogether, some communities became anti-clerical. In addition, the lack of experienced and well-trained ministers gave the laity a greater sense of religious freedom. Groups of people began forming differing views, and soon new sects broke the cohesion of English Protestantism and the societal order. Many of the new sects saw the dissolution of life as they knew it before the civil wars as a clear sign that the end of the world was near. An apocalyptic tradition, therefore, began which fostered new forms of behavior and ideology, some of which the Quakers adopted.

Prophecy, a key part of the apocalyptic tradition, greatly influenced the early Quaker movement. Radical sects such as the Family of Love, the Seekers, and the Ranters had as their doctrine the belief that God’s power and truth could be experienced by all people. Biblical revelations, therefore, were no longer something to be promulgated by ministers or the elect, but to be experienced by all people who opened themselves to God. The notion of the inner dwelling Christ led many people to prophesize and proselytize. Especially in the 1650s, after the effects of the tumultuous Civil War had been made clear, the Quakers took the idea of being God’s chosen people as an opportunity to combine religious, social, and political uncertainties into millennialism to legitimate their radical claims. Doing so was revolutionary, since looking in themselves bordered on new revelation directly from God. George Fox had a vision in May 1652 that “The Day of the Lord is at hand, Christ is come to teach His people Himself and [that he had] to bring them off from the world’s ways and teachers to His own free teaching.” Also in 1652, James Milner, a Lancashire Quaker, proclaimed that “Wednesday the first of December would be the Day of Judgement and that the New Creation would begin the day after.” Other proclamations stated that the Day of Judgment would be a messy affair. Fox declared in 1654 that “A day of slaughter is coming to you who have made war against the Lamb and against the saints…The sword you cannot escape, and it shall be upon you ere long.” John Audland also stated, “The sword of the Lord is in the hands of the saints, and this sword divides, hews and cuts down deceit.” The notion Quakers had that they were all divinely inspired by the inner dwelling of Christ gave an urgency and radicalism to the early movement.

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19 Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 79.
Until the 1670s, Quakers did not have a consistent set of doctrines, but many of their beliefs could be framed by negatives. Quakers rejected predestination and instead advocated salvation for all who turned towards God’s Light or spark within. Looking to the human spirit or divine light, rather than using only scriptures, was more important for understanding God’s call. Unlike the Anglicans or various Puritan sects, Quakers did not believe that the Word of God could only be publicly spoken from a pulpit. Anywhere that true believers were present was an acceptable place to preach. By publicly berating or reproving ministers in churches or public markets, Quakers showed their rejection of the spiritual guidance these men provided, which they believed were false teachings. They even claimed that perfection could be attained in this life, and that people could become free of sin. Since the Quakers believed the source of inspiration was the inner light, they believed all people, even women, could deliver the word of God. Furthermore, Quakers did not believe that worship had to take place in a church building; instead, they met in meeting houses or private homes which did not have special sacred distinction as being specifically for worship. Since Quakers did not attend public worship services, they objected to being forced to maintain churches or their ministers through tithes. Quakers claimed that “through the system of tithes, priests were maintained in idleness by the ‘labours of poor people,’” and instead advocated for a “ministry of simple men and women.” Furthermore, Quakers argued that the current use for tithes, supporting ministers, was in complete contradiction to its initial use, which was supporting the poor. They firmly believed that the rural poor had to pay the majority of tithes, which therefore demonstrated the hypocritical nature of the entire tithing process and social hierarchy. Quakers did not pay tithes, therefore, because they believed it was contrary to Mosaic Law and because they had a deep hostility toward the hierarchical nature of society. In addition to wanting to disestablish the church hierarchy, Quakers also defied the unwritten social hierarchy. They refused to doff their hats to their social superiors. Quakers also added insult to injury by refusing to address their superiors by title; they used the informal third person “thee” and “thou” to address all people.

Quakers were not, however, initially heavily persecuted in the early 1650s because the revolution of the period allowed for unprecedented toleration. The Church of England did not exist at that time, nor did any of its courts or means of punishment. Mandatory attendance policies for worship services were similarly suspended, so there were no other mechanisms to restrain people from adhering to other religious alternatives. Due to the breakdown of society, civil authorities reluctantly tolerated Quakers. At the time, their numbers were relatively small as a sectarian group, although they were rising steadily. In 1660 there were 30,000-40,000 Quakers out of the total English population of five to six million people. The Quakers did not lead any major rebellions which would pose a serious threat to any authority, but they were provocative. They reproved ministers after they delivered their sermons, preached in market places, met publicly to worship, and refused to pay tithes. It should be stressed that Quakers reproving ministers after they gave their sermons was not illegal, as it was only illegal to speak while the worship service was in session, as was stated in a law from Mary Tudor’s reign. It was not until late 1656 that persecutions began, in part because one Quaker went too far in his

23 Ibid., 33-36.
26 Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism, 512.
27 Miller, “A Suffering People,” 77-78.
outward behavior and religious convictions; in short, his actions went beyond acceptable behavior for both the government and the majority of the sect.

Quaker persecutions escalated after 1656, as a result of the “fall” of James Nayler. A leading Quaker, Nayler’s activities in Bristol and their aftermath had been identified as a major turning point in the revolution; it was also one for the sect itself. On 24 October 1656, Nayler entered Bristol in a way that mimicked Jesus’ symbolic entrance into Jerusalem. Being led on horseback with a group of Quaker women strewing palm leaves before him, they all sang, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbath” through the streets. The procession caused a stir within Bristol. When brought before the magistrate for questioning, Nayler claimed the spirit of the Lord moved the women to sing. When asked, “Art thou the only Son of God?” Nayler responded, “I am the Son of God, but I have many brethren.” Nayler’s apparent claim to be the Son of God proved too radical for the magistrates. They concluded Nayler “was guilty of horrid blasphemy, and was a grand imposter and seducer of the people.” He was then tried before Parliament. Instead of being sentenced to death, however, Nayler’s sentence was three-fold: being whipped, having his tongue bored through with a hot iron and his forehead branded with the letter “B,” and being led out of Bristol facing backwards on a barebacked horse. The last was a chivalric gesture, a chance for the general public to see him, shout at him, and throw refuse at him as a form of crude public justice. Nayler’s exit from Bristol was a humiliating reversal of his glorious entrance into that same city.  

The authorities concluded from the Nayler incident that the Quaker movement had to be suppressed. Hill, a leading historian of seventeenth-century England, argued that Nayler’s case created such a scene because he “was a leader of an organized movement, which from its base in the North, had swept with frightening rapidity over the southern counties.” Because of Nayler’s position within the sect and the severity of his punishments, the trial became a case of national interest. According to Leo Damrosch, the reason why Quakers became persecuted after Nayler’s “fall” was that they “altered or rejected essential Puritan beliefs, but they continued to think within the categories that had produced those beliefs in way that were absolutely maddening to their opponents, who possessed the power to do something about it.” By prosecuting and punishing Nayler, the leaders hoped to pass more conservative measures in Parliament that would ultimately reduce the numbers, if not fully rid England of religious radicals. Protectorate magistrates resorted to harsher consequences for Quakers after the Nayler incident.

Quakers also took proactive measures, under the leadership of George Fox, to ensure that they disassociated themselves from Nayler and his compatriots. Nayler’s actions and proclamations in Bristol went beyond any form of acceptable behavior for any member of society, as Fox and other leading Friends wrote about and later publicly declared in publications. Nayler’s ‘imitatio christi’ (imitation of Christ) clearly differed from what leading Quakers defined as acceptable Christological suffering for Friends. The Quaker bureaucracy tried to ensure that no other incidents similar to Nayler’s would occur in the sect by only sanctioning specific behaviors it deemed proper. If Quakers wanted to be included in the...

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28 Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 252-60; Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus*, 146-76.
31 See especially George Fox, *Hidden things brought to light, or, The discord of the grand Quakers among themselves discovered in some letters, papers and passages written to and from George Fox, James Nayler, and John Perrott: wherein may be seen the cause and ground of their differences and falling out and what manner of spirit moved and acted each of them* (London: Printed for Francis Smith, 1678).
Great Book of Sufferings, they could not act like Nayler and his followers, nor believe his assertions. The early Quaker behavioral model, therefore, had its roots in Bristol in 1656. Even though actions were taken to ensure internal stability through proper behavior worthy of suffering, the legal situation for Quakers soon deteriorated rapidly. Popular violence against the sect reached a new high after 1659 because the social and political situation was again in turmoil. Both Quaker men and women were brutalized indiscriminately by mobs that viewed everything about the sect with suspicion. The escalation in persecutions “was a product of the tensions, animosities, and near-vacuum of authority in 1659-60” as the republican government was losing popularity amidst the clamors for the restoration of the monarchy.32 After nearly two decades of experimentation punctuated by crisis, the English people wanted to return to a stable existence. They embraced a return to the traditions of the period before 1640.

Once Charles II was reinstated in 1660, Parliament passed new legal measures collectively known as the Clarendon Code (after the Earl of Clarendon), which specifically targeted non-conformists for their failure to adhere to the newly restored Church of England. The Corporation Act of January 1661 tested, “according to the rites of the Church of England,” all members of municipal corporations as well as officers for their adherence to the Church. Those who did not meet the testers’ specifications were subsequently purged from office. The 1662 Act of Uniformity mandated attendance at Anglican worship services. The Quaker Act, also passed in 1662, specifically targeted people who claimed “that the taking of an oath in any case whatsoever (although before a lawful magistrate) is altogether unlawful and contrary to the word of God,’ should willfully refuse an oath when tendered, or endeavour to persuade another person to refuse, or should, by printing, etc., maintain the unlawfulness of an oath.” The second part of the Quaker Act made it illegal for Quakers to assemble for worship. If they did, fines or imprisonments would be rendered for the first two offenses, and the third offense would receive the penalty of banishment.33 The first Conventicle Act, passed in 1664, stated that all non-conformist meetings with more than five people were subject to heavy fines. The Act’s aim was to provide “further and more speedy remedies against the growing and dangerous practices of seditious sectaries, and other disloyal persons, who under pretence of tender consciences do at their meetings contrive insurrections, at late experience hath shewed.”34 The “late experience” was probably a reference to the 1661 Fifth Monarchist uprising, although it may have intended the entire revolutionary era. Finally, the Five Mile Act, passed in 1665, stated that ejected (Nonconformist) ministers could not live within five miles of their parish since they had supposed tendencies to “distil the poisonous principles of schism and rebellion into the hearts of His Majesty’s subjects, to the great danger of the Church and Kingdom.”35 All of these acts resulted in increased persecution of Quakers. They refused to attend worship services or to pay tithes, and they continued to gather in their own meetings for worship.

In response to the formal reestablishment of the monarchy and the Church of England, George Fox tried publicly to persuade Charles II and the general population that the Quakers were peaceful people and therefore should not be persecuted.36 Bearing in mind that the Nayler

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32 Miller, “A Suffering People,” 84.
33 Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism, 23.
34 Ibid., 7.
35 Ibid.
36 There are debates about whether or not George Fox was the sole individual behind the beginning of the Quaker movement. William Braithwaite claims Fox alone deserves credit for the sect’s creation while other such as Christopher Hill and Richard T. Vann argue that Fox’s sole leadership of the sect was not guaranteed until the mid
incident happened only four years earlier, Fox also argued that all Quakers did not act as Nayler had in Bristol. Fox argued they Friends were not seditious since they met publicly with the doors open to worship Christ, not to imitate or claim to be Him. Fox issued his famous Peace Testimony in 1660, “which stressed Quakers would never take up ‘carnal’ weapons against the state or anyone else—their ‘weapons’ were exclusively spiritual.”37 Fox further noted in his Peace Testimony that “he [Christ] hath commanded us that we shall not swear at all (Matt. v. 34), hath also commanded us that we shall not kill (Matt. v. 21), so that we can neither kill men, nor swear for nor against them...neither shall we ever do it, because it is contrary to the spirit of Christ.”38 Fox, using the belief system of the primitive biblical Christians as his model, emphasized the Quakers were doing nothing but what Christ commanded them to do, regardless of whether or not their behaviors and actions were illegal. Furthermore, the Testimony can be seen as a propagandistic piece: it claimed that the authorities were persecuting steadfast Quakers for their religious convictions, even while they posed no serious threat to society.

Edward Burrough, another prominent Quaker, also publicly advocated that religious persecution towards the Quakers end. He published several long pamphlets from the mid-1650s into the early 1660s. In a 1656 piece entitled The crying sinnes reproved whereof the rulers and people of England are highly guilty, Burrough argued that Quakers did not blaspheme, since they were speaking God’s truth. The pamphlet is constructed in a “question and answer” format, in which Burrough systematically answers a series of questions posed to him. For example, when asked to address the allegation that Quakers participate in “the abominable blasphemes vented and spread as of late through the apostacie of and the abuse of liberty,” Burrough simply replied that “you call that blasphemy, which is truth, such is the grievous ignorance of some of you.”39

Another of Burrough’s pamphlets, A Brief Relation of the Persecutions and Cruelties that have been acted upon the People called Quakers described the merciless tormenting that Quakers suffered while attending a meeting the last day of the sixth month in 1662. Burrough describes in vivid language how “since that day diverse are departed this life, that were beat, and wounded, and abused in that meeting.” One man in particular Burrough claimed “had received such cruel bruises and blows,” that it was made apparent that “he was killed and murdered, and that his wounds and bruises received at the Meeting were the absolute occasion of his death.”40

Francis Howgill, another early leading figure, also took part in the publication of pamphlets to plead to end persecution against the Quakers. In 1666, four years after the Quaker Act was passed, Howgill published A Copy of a Paper sent to John Otway, Justice of the Peace, concerning Swearing. Howgill argued that swearing oaths went contrary to God’s law, since when God first formed man there was no need for any kind of oath. Directly following was a time which consisted of “Righteousness and true Holiness, Equity, long suffering, Patience, Goodness, Mercy and Truth, wherein man was in a capacity to believe in God, and men to believe one another.” Howgill continued that “there were no Oaths, neither needed any, for Truth lived and man in it, and that spoke; and a certainer Testimony there could not be, nor a

1660s because other notable figures such as James Nayler and Edward Burrough were alive or only in prison until that time. After the mid 1660s, Fox was the only notable leading figure alive.

37 Miller, “A Suffering People,” 88.
40 Edward Burrough, A Brief Relation of the Persecutions and Cruelties that have been acted upon the People called Quakers (London, 1662), 1.
greater: and this was before Sin and Unbelief entered.”\textsuperscript{41}
Using that line of reasoning, Howgill clearly related the idea of Quakerism and its beliefs as a return to the true primitive church. Like Foxe and Burrough, Howgill used the sufferings of the Quakers as public advocacy tools to plead to end persecution as well as demonstrate to the government and the larger society that the sect’s members were not threatening.

Quakerism ultimately drew many people in, including after 1660. The sect offered its members the chance to witness to their faith on a daily basis. Persecution might discourage members and limit convincing, but the plethora of pamphlets generated around the sect also publicized it. Even with all the persecution the sect endured, it has been calculated that their population continuously rose during the crucial early centralization period from roughly 1655 to 1665.\textsuperscript{42} The argument has been made that “the degree of suffering and persecution experienced by the sect also distinguished it from the religion of other dissenters and this may have been another reason for its attractiveness.”\textsuperscript{43}

As a way for leaders to bring their issues to the forefront, they needed a more centralized and organized bureaucracy, even within the first decade of the sect’s existence. What would eventually emerge out of the centralization process would be an atypical bureaucracy, with careful attention being paid to ensure that power was not in only one person’s hand. In the end, two distinct and powerful bodies would emerge: The London Yearly Meeting and the Meeting for Sufferings.

The London Yearly Meeting officially convened in 1668, but its formation took more than a decade to perfect. The first meeting was held in the Devonshire House, an old home in Bishopsgate that was later torn down and rebuilt in 1678 to be the Quaker headquarters. In 1656, the first inklings of centralization occurred in the north of England where delegates had been attending local meetings. George Fox sent deputies to these meetings to ensure that people were living according to the Quaker lifestyle. In London, meetings were established by Edward Burrough. These gatherings set the precedent for voting on issues and only passing them when a consensus was achieved, again keeping with the notion of being more egalitarian. By 1659, it seemed necessary for some type of nationwide meeting to be held, so in 1660 Quaker delegates from the North and the South met. In 1666, monthly and quarterly meetings were established in earnest all across England. By 1668, therefore, a local, regional, and national system of meetings was in place. All the local meetings corresponded with London.\textsuperscript{44} The purpose for the London Yearly Meeting was to call “in representatives to bring in reports of sufferings, control collections, and settle the proportions in which the counties should receive Quaker books. Its higher value lay in training and consolidating the membership.”\textsuperscript{45}

Sometime after the London Yearly Meeting emerged, the need for another centralized body, one specifically dedicated to the eradication of religious persecution, became apparent. In 1676, the Meeting for Sufferings officially convened, but like the London Yearly Meeting, it had a long formation process. Beginning around 1653, George Fox had issued epistles which recommended “that a friend be appointed in each meeting to keep a detailed record of all ‘suffering,’ which are to be registered at an ensuing regional general meeting.” Fox wanted to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[43] Ibid., 155.
\item[45] Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism, 278.
\end{footnotes}
make the public more aware of all Quakers’ sufferings, since “oppression often prevails because of a dulled or an unawakened conscience.” He took charge of the sect from the mid-1660s, after other leading Quaker men were imprisoned or had died. He saw his duty to arouse public opinion and “to expose the oppression and set the judgment of righteousness upon the heart of the persecutor and the heart of the nation” by having Quakers “record and publish their sufferings.”

Even though Fox may have been the driving force behind the Meeting for Suffering’s organizational efforts, it was not solely his project. Instead, Fox relied on several delegates’ participation, which in turn created the sect’s bureaucracy.

By 1660, therefore, records of suffering accounts were sent from the county meetings to London. Long before the sect had a formal meeting for sufferings, countless Friends had been patiently enduring abuse at the hands of religious persecutors. Having begun collection of sufferings in about 1660, by 1676 Hookes was nearing the completion of his project of penning two volumes of the “Great Book of Sufferings.” The Meeting for Sufferings seems to have been created in response to the overwhelming number of suffering accounts continuously being sent in after Hookes had began copying down the accounts he had already collected from previous years. The Meeting helped foster individual self-understanding as well as collective group identification. By the mid-1670s, suffering accounts were no longer collected exclusively for public advocacy against religious persecution; by that time their collection had become ritualized as a way to create internal solidarity. The tradition of earnestly collecting, organizing, and recording suffering accounts from every Quaker begun by Hookes years now had an elected bureaucratic body to ensure the process be kept alive for generations to come.

The formation of the Quaker bureaucracy, in and of itself, was unusual for the 1660s. No other religious sect had an elected governing body that functioned as it did. The unique bureaucratic structure demonstrated the Friends’ broader sense of egalitarianism as well as the solidarity they had created linking them across all of England, Wales, and even New England. Creating the base of the hierarchy, all Quakers elected delegates at their local weekly meetings to represent their specific communal needs at the Monthly Meeting. At the Monthly Meetings, new delegates would be chosen to represent all local delegates at the Quarterly Meetings. The final tier in the bureaucratic structure was composed of one last group of delegates, taken from the Quarterly Meetings. This last group of Quakers would represent all Friends at the Meeting for Sufferings in London. Arnold Lloyd contended that in the fifteen years before 1689, the Meeting for Sufferings was the sole reason why the Quaker movement succeeded. With the single goal of eliminating religious persecution and suffering, it was not seen as a governing body trying to dominate the church. Instead, the pyramidal structure that it capped worked to ensure the benefit of every member.

The initial mechanism for collecting and recording the sufferings was not highly organized in the early 1650s, but gradually a more systematic approach emerged around the Restoration. During the first years of the 1650s, when the number of Quakers was small, Fox ordered that “one or two Friends be at all assizes and ascertain every possible fact relative to accused Quakers with specific instructions that a report be sent to Devonshire House for record.” Within a few years, as more people joined the sect, and as the revolution slowly

46 Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism, 282.
47 As quoted in Lloyd, Quaker Social history 1669-1738, 2, 11.
48 Lloyd, Quaker Social History, 1669-1738, 104.
unraveled, persecution increased. The growth of membership and persecution in turn dramatically multiplied the number of suffering accounts. This prompted even more diligent attention to record keeping, with the ongoing concern continually to collect the suffering accounts.

The Quaker bureaucracy made an initial effort to publish the earliest suffering accounts as public advocacy tools to end religious persecution. In 1659, Edward Burrough published *A Declaration of the Present Sufferings*, which accounts of over 140 Quakers who were imprisoned at that time. The book gave such detailed information including the sufferer’’s name, the sentencing judge, the infraction, the location of residency, and the length of the prison sentence. In addition, there was a general brief account of “above 1900” unnamed Quakers who “had suffered within these six years last past.” A *Declaration*’’s contents were organized by punishable act and locality. Such offenses included: “Speaking the truth in several places;” “Not paying Tithes;” “For Meeting together in the fear of God on the first days;” “Not Swearing and Wearing their Hats;” “Vnder pretence of being Vangrants;” “Visiting Friends in Prison;” “Not repairing of Steeplehouses and not paying Clerkes Wages;” and “Imprisoned and Persecuted till death.” Forty-four pages in length (with twenty-two pages of those given over to a list of sufferings), the tract indicated that at this early date sophisticated record keeping practices were already in place, as at least twenty different shires had Friends’ suffering accounts represented. The book detailed a wide variety of acts for which the Quakers suffered, but no act resembled anything remotely like the behavior exhibited by Nayler in 1656. Even as early as 1659, the evidence supporting the behavioral model is clear, since there are entries from Bristol Quakers in Burrough’’s publication. James Nayler, however, is not mentioned anywhere, signifying that Friends had already internalized his behavior was contrary to proper Quaker behavior.

The final portion of Burrough’’s publication is entitled “An Account of some Grounds and Reasons of the Innocent Sufferings of the people of God called QUAKERS, and why they testifie against the vain customs and practices of the World.” In this section, Burrough argued that Quakers did not break any laws. He asked rhetorical questions to his audience: “What lawes are these that they have broken? Whose Persons, or Possessions have they wronged? What force or violence have they used to any man?” In response, Burrough articulated, “Have they not patiently born the greatest sufferings that any people of this Nation ever lay under, since Queene Maries days, without murmuring, and discontents? And when have they fought to revenge themselves, or troubled you or others, to be repaired for those many injuries and false imprisonments which they have endured?” Any Quaker reading this work would have no doubt been inspired to witness to the truth and joyously embrace his or her sufferings. The publication of Burrough’’s book demonstrated that the desire to collect suffering accounts already existed by 1659, which predated the development of even the ascending and interlocking meeting structure.

Once the sect did begin to centralize between 1659 and 1660, recordings of properly witnessing to one’’s faith and enduring the consequences became even more integral to the evolving Quaker bureaucracy. Not only did the sect maintain the earliest recorded suffering

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51 Ibid., 19. There are two entries recorded for Bristol Quakers. Temperance Hignal and George Harrison were listed under “Imprisoned, and Persecuted till death.”
52 Ibid., 23-24. Capitalization and italics as in original.
accounts dating from the mid-1650s, but current reports kept flooding the national meeting, later known as the London Yearly Meeting. Quaker bureaucrats, in the midst of centralizing the sect, needed to better organize the accounts they already had, as well as ensure they received all accounts from every Quaker.

As the organization evolved, it developed procedures for systematically collecting suffering accounts. There were local meetings where all members met for worship and discussion. At the local meetings, people would either write down their suffering reports from memory or from personal records they kept, or else have one of the literate delegates do so for them. Those delegates, carrying the suffering accounts from their local meeting, would attend the Monthly Meetings with others from the neighboring areas and discuss issues raised at the local meetings and other business dealings. The suffering accounts would continue to move on to the Quarterly Meeting after passing to the next set of delegates. After discussing larger business dealings and issues, the collections would pass hands one more time to reach their final destination, the London Yearly Meeting. That meeting had delegates from all over England in attendance to discuss and vote on issues that would affect the entire sect.\(^{53}\)

The Yearly Meeting urged Quakers from all over the country to send in brief recollections of their own personal sufferings. The massive quantity of loose sheets of paper from the counties began to accumulate, thereby inviting Ellis Hookes, who had been clerk to the Quakers beginning around 1657, to organize a standard approach to recording the sufferings.\(^{54}\) The exact date when it was decided by Hookes and the London Yearly Meeting to compile and organize all the sufferings accounts is not known, but it probably occurred sometime around the Restoration in 1660. It can only be speculated as to why Hookes decided to compile the entirety of suffering accounts into one complete collection. Perhaps it was because too many loose suffering accounts came in to him and crowded his already small office, thereby necessitating a more organized approach according to his standards. For whatever reason he began the process, Hookes seems to have used Edward Burrough’s 1659 publication as a template from which to record his two volumes of the “Great Book of Sufferings.” Recording the suffering accounts served a dual purpose. The accounts helped form group identification, self-understanding, and solidarity within the sect itself. They were also used as tools for Quakers and other interested Protestants as a way to “endeavour to prevent and stop the persecutors” since some were published for interested parties to read.\(^{55}\) Quakers from the country as well as London agreed to “seek a legal remedy for their suffering” and “to lay detailed accounts before the King and Parliament and to seek redress by ‘such means as consist with the unity of Friends and their own peace and satisfaction’.”\(^{56}\)

The Meeting for Sufferings, once it was formed, took over the work that Hookes and the London Yearly Meeting had performed before 1676. In addition to seeking legal remedy for their sufferings, it also acted as a vehicle to form group identification as well as solidarity. Since the Meeting grew out of the centralization of the London Yearly Meeting, the networks through which suffering accounts traveled were already in place. Quakers all across England, therefore, could and did feel part of the larger movement. In keeping with earlier requests of recording all

\(^{53}\) For a more complete outline of how the centralization of the Quaker bureaucracy developed, see especially Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* 251-89 and Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism*, 101-21.

\(^{54}\) Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 283.

\(^{55}\) Ibid.

\(^{56}\) Lloyd, *Quaker Social History, 1669-1738*, 11-12.
abuses and turning the accounts in to elected delegates, Quakers in the farthest northern regions were linked to other Quakers in the stronghold of London. Furthermore, the delegates reported back to their local constituents the activities of the Meeting for Sufferings, giving Quakers in one location information about challenges facing those in others. A social web held together by common suffering experiences soon linked all English Quakers, and even Quakers in New England, together. When in London, members could see and read about the same or different types of abuses fellow Friends suffered at the hands of the authorities, regardless of their age, sex, or geographic location. The strong connection and identification the Quakers felt with each other was intensified since they all believed they suffered as the early Christians did, perhaps even as martyrs, for following the “truth.” As the years past, a greater sense of self-understanding occurred for all Quakers, since they knew their sense of their personal identity with the sect relied on properly witnessing to the faith through approved acts and patiently enduring the punishments visited upon them.

As has been shown, Quakers suffered persecution almost immediately following their formation in the 1650s. Although much of their behavior and mannerisms were deemed illegal, Quakers did not believe their actions and words were contrary to Christ’s commandments; they asserted they lived according to the original Christian doctrine. The majority of English society viewed them with suspicion, especially because the Quakers initially had no clear doctrine, which some deemed as having too much radical potential. They became objects of persecution and abuse, especially after Nayler’s fall in 1656, the crumbling of the republic in 1659-1660, and through and after the monarchy was reinstated in 1660. Noticing the need to address the near constant attacks, Quakers began in earnest to establish meetings where delegates would report business matters as well as sufferings to each other. The localized efforts soon grew into larger meetings, from which the London Yearly Meeting and the Meeting for Sufferings were firmly established by 1668 and 1676 respectively. Perhaps because of the initial internal success of submitting and recording suffering accounts for over fifteen years, by 1676 the Meeting for Sufferings had developed into a formidable body of Quaker delegates. The bureaucratization of the Quakers, with its atypical non-hierarchical structure, allowed for solidarity to be felt amongst all members throughout England. More people had direct input in the administration of meetings than in any other religious community of the time. All Quakers had a chance to send in their suffering accounts to their delegates to pass on to Ellis Hookes to record in “Great Book of Sufferings.”

III: The “Great Book of Sufferings” and Ellis Hookes

At first glance, the first two volumes of the “Great Book of Sufferings” appear to be nothing more than a ledger with tables, or even a county directory of Quakers. Their contents comprise supposedly every single reported suffering account experienced by every single Quaker from 1654 until roughly 1680 as recorded by Hookes. Upon further examination, however, they are much more that. Indeed there are ledgers and indexes within the work, but when time is taken to read carefully its contents, what appears are snippets of biographical material of literally hundreds of Quakers who suffered for specific reasons. This chapter will examine why Hookes composed the “Great Book of Sufferings” and the structure of the first two volumes, using the county of Lancashire as an example. It will also give a biographical sketch of Hooke’s life and a look at his published martyrology, which ultimately may have been influenced by his work of recording his own group’s sufferings. The information provided in this section will lay the groundwork for how the suffering accounts enabled a sense of equality for all Quakers,
insomuch as they suffered similarly for the same “offenses.” Common suffering amongst Quakers, therefore, enabled a sense of identification and self-understanding to emerge that mirrored early martyrs, since all Quakers believed they suffered purely for religious reasons.

Although Hookes had such an integral role in recording everything Quakers faced, surprisingly little was actually recorded of his own life. Hookes was born in early 1635 in the Woodyard Lodgings within the environs of the Palace of Westminster. His father, Thomas Hookes of Conwy, was a courtier to Charles I and a servant to his son, the future Charles II. Important family connections were also made through his mother, Elizabeth Chudleigh. Her first cousin was Thomas Clifford, first Baron Clifford of Chudleigh, and the Chudleigh family patron was Philip Herbert, the earl of Pembroke. Another relative, John Williams, eventually became the archbishop of York. His family heritage and connections place Hookes within the upper echelon of society. It is curious, therefore, that even though the peculiarities of Hookes’s schooling are unclear, his occupation listed in his will was only a “scrivener,” a professional penman, or a scribe or clerk. 57 It appears that when Hookes converted to Quakerism, he experienced downward social mobility, since the rest of his family’s power and prestige was not affected by either the revolution or the Restoration. 58

Although the circumstances surrounding Hookes’s conversion to Quakerism by 1658 are unclear, many scenarios have been suggested. One theory is that he became more closely affiliated with the Baptist leader William Kiffin, who was ‘certainly’ his cousin through marriage connections (he was from Conwy). Kiffin traveled extensively throughout England and even Ireland preaching and establishing churches, which connection may have opened up Hookes to the new religious ideas and practices. 59 Another suggestion for Hookes’s conversion is that he became more involved with people at court, such as Nicolas Bond (a steward at Whitehill), who were attracted to Quakerism. Regardless of how Hookes was first drawn to Quakerism, he was certainly thoroughly ‘convinced’ by 1658. 60 In that year, he wrote a letter to his mother as only a Quaker would, explaining how “because he did not pay the Knight and his lady the Hat-honour, and customary Compliments, was by them, and their Servants, beaten and abused.” 61 Furthermore, in 1659 Hookes along with sixty-nine other Quakers was persecuted by being pulled forcefully from one of their Meetings. Subsequently, they “were beaten, bruised, and had their Clothes torn by Soldiers and others, dragged by the Hair of the Head, and some of them knocked down.” 62


60 Quaker records indicate that Hookes was clerk to the Society for twenty-four years, and he held that position until he died in 1681. That would make his actual conversion date sometime between 1657 and 1658. See especially Leachman, “Hookes, Ellis (bap. 1635, d. 1681),”

61 Leachman, “Hookes, Ellis (bap. 1635, d. 1681),”

Clearly these early instances in Hookes’s life as a Quaker had great effect on him later. His devotion to the sect and its beliefs and attitudes towards sufferings perhaps were the reasons he chose to dedicate himself to the arduous work of compiling not only the “Great Book of Sufferings,” but also his martyrology *The Spirit of the Martyrs* and even a primer he co-authored with George Fox. It is interesting to note that within the primer, entitled *Instructions for right spelling and plain directions for reading and writing true English* (1673), attention was paid to educating children on words directly relating to Quaker persecution. For example, under the letter “B” are words such as “banishment,” “bemoan,” “bewail,” and “blasphemous.” In addition, to teach proper formation of letters and words, the primer taught the catechism and biblical verses.63 The “Child’s Lesson” instructed Quaker children from a very early age that “Christ is the Truth. Christ is the Light. Christ is my Way.”64 The primer emphasized placed modeling Christ’s behavior, a necessity and an inspiration for all Quakers, as they endured persecution while witnessing to their faith.

The energy invested in Hookes’s other published works as well as organizing the entire suffering account collection was herculean, and eventually they took their toll on Hookes. After overseeing the collection of suffering accounts for twenty-four years, Hookes was left “a man of brave spirit, but weak constitution, [and] over-weighted with work.”65 It seems he never married, perhaps because he was so fervently attached to his work with the Quakers. Instead, he lived with the widow Anne Travers for twenty years in her home in Southwark before dying of consumption on 12 November 1681. His wealth at death was a modest £130, of which he gave some to Travers, other Friends, and some relatives.66 Hookes’s lasting legacy, however, is the written records he so laboriously and meticulously kept. The “Great Book of Sufferings” acted as a public testament to his personal, as well as the collective, sufferings of all Quakers.

The two volumes of the “Great Book of Sufferings” that Hookes compiled total 1,264 pages of hand-written suffering accounts that were passed on to him through the collection process encompassing all the different Quaker meetings. The first volume contains 605 pages of material, which covers twenty-two shires, arranged alphabetically, as well as the Isle of Man. The second volume contains 659 pages, including sixteen shires, all of Wales (totaling ten different shires), Ireland, and New England. An average shire entry is about twenty pages in length. There are, however, exceptions. In areas where there was a large Quaker population or where there was heavy persecution, the entries are substantially longer. For example, the entry for Cumberland has 152 pages; London and Middlesex (listed together by Hookes) total 119 pages; Somersetshire has 146 pages. Other shires, however, have very brief entries. Cardiganshire in Wales has only three suffering accounts listed, and Brecknockshire has only one account; together these two shires only take up half of one page. Regardless of how many suffering accounts a particular shire had, the fact remains that the sheer number of accounts Hookes received must have been overwhelming. Sometime around 1660 and lasting into the 1670s, Hookes, in a massive undertaking, took action to compile and organize the accounts into his magnum opus.

63 George Fox and Ellis Hooks, *Instructions for right spelling, and plain directions for reading and writing true English with several delightful things, very useful and necessary both for young and old to read and learn* (London, 1673), 5.
64 Ibid., 14.
66 Leachman, “Hookes, Ellis (bap. 1635, d. 1681).”
To begin the organization process, Hookes would have had to sort through every single suffering account he had for every single shire and place them in their corresponding piles. From there, he would have organized every shire’s accounts chronologically. Next, he would have taken a specific year and all the different “offenses” Quakers suffered for and organized them accordingly. He would repeat this process for every single year and every single offense for every single shire. Clearly, this process was extremely laborious. The effort Hookes put in to his project, however, was not wasted, since he was carrying out an important function for the Quakers. He was immortalizing the epitomes of people’s convictions to witnessing to their faith, and placing each individual person within the greater whole. The fact that the two volumes are so well organized and neatly written also attests to just how important its members’ sufferings were to the sect. No other contemporary religious sect has any type of record like the “Great Book of Sufferings,” even though the Quakers’ fate was shared by other dissenters like Baptists and Presbyterians. For the Quakers, witnessing to one’s faith through suffering was an integral part of their faith life, and the “Great Book of Sufferings” is the bureaucracy’s acknowledgement of that fact. By continuously requesting suffering reports to use as public advocacy tools to end persecution from the mid-1650s until well past 1680, the bureaucracy fostered a sense of identity and solidarity amongst all its members.

In the self-titled “Abridgement,” or summary, to the “Great Book of Sufferings,” Hookes stressed that general Quaker identity as well as personal self-understanding formed through suffering and witnessing to the faith. He wrote that “In these 2 volumes are some of ye sufferings (being many more & great) of ye People of God (now vulgarly & scornfully called Quakers, first calld ye Children of Light) which were sent from severall meetings & persons hither to London.” Hookes’s agenda for the “Great Book of Sufferings,” therefore, was to collect as many suffering accounts “especially by those that have travelled first in ye work of the ministry, some whereof are collected in short as could be remembered or found in their letters in another Book… At least many of ye sufferings then, haue not been taken account of in writing by ye meetings and therefore cannot be expected to be here.” The earliest sufferings were not reported, at least according to Hookes, because people could not remember specifics. During the leadership of Oliver and Richard Cromwell from 1653-1659, upwards of 2,000 suffering accounts were addressed to Parliament, presumably after being collected from various meetings. Hookes suggested to his audience to read “A Declaration to ye Parliament deliuered ye 6th of ye 2nd month 1659, to ye speaker.” At that time, Hookes stated that a total of seventy-nine people were sent to prison, and thirty-two of those people died as a result of their captivity. After the Restoration, Hookes stated that more suffering accounts, in which a total of 3,179 people endured “Imprisonments, stockings, whippings, loss of goods, & other abuses,” were given before Charles II. Hookes continued that there were still 179 people jailed, and during the entire reign, he knew of 256 people who were imprisoned. Those accounts could be found in “A Declaration of Some Sufferings, etc.” Presumably, Hookes was referring to Edward Burrough’s 1659 book Declaration of the Present Sufferings.

Burrough perhaps initiated the bureaucratic precedent to keep detailed written accounts, incidents, and information regarding all members undergoing abuse for witnessing to their faith in the late 1650s. Throughout the 1660s and up through the 1670s, that precedent was expanded upon by Hookes when he compiled his two volumes of the “Great Book of Sufferings.” Initially, collecting suffering accounts acted as public tools to stabilize and defend the faith. Before 1676

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67 Hookes did not give the specific title, author, or any other publication information regarding the Book in question.
68 Ellis Hookes, GBS, “Abridgement,” 1
when the Meeting for Sufferings was established, the highly organized collection process and meticulous record keeping became an internal way to form solidarity, since all members who exhibited behavior within the bureaucracy’s guidelines had their’ sufferings included in the “Great Book of Sufferings.” By having each and every Quaker send up his or her specific account, a common sense of egalitarian identity through suffering, even if somewhat fictional due to behavioral limitations, emerged. The entire collection process endorsed only certain ways of witnessing to the faith, which ultimately shaped the outward (perceived) and inner (realized) identity of the sect. The Meeting for Sufferings continually helped foster this conduct model and process for generations after its formation in 1676 by keeping the tradition of collecting suffering accounts alive.

IV. A Closer Examination of the “Great Book of Sufferings”: Lancashire

The best way to get a concrete idea of how early Quakers formed self-understanding and collective identity through the “Great Book of Sufferings” is to examine the material from a specific county. For many reasons, Lancashire is a good county to examine. Geographically, Lancashire was far north from the Quaker stronghold in London, so the sheer number of sufferings recorded attests to the bureaucracy’s capacity for collecting distant persecution accounts. Lancashire Friends reported myriad types of “offences,” so examining Lancashire gives a general picture of the different types of suffering the Quakers endured based on displayed behaviors. In addition to suffering accounts, the Lancashire records also include reports of George Fox’s and Margaret Fell’s 1660 and 1663 trials. At first glance, the records may appear to be nothing more than a motley mixture of everything that happened to Lancashire Quakers, but upon further examination, the “Great Book of Sufferings” appears to be a highly organized and rather detailed record book.

A close look at the county record for Lancashire suggests how the first two volumes of the “Great Book of Sufferings” were generally organized. During the county compilation process from 1654 until 1670, Hookes received enough suffering accounts to pen twenty-three neat pages, with each page divided into two columns. Throughout the entire record, six different acts were targeted for punishment: speaking the Truth; meeting together; not swearing; not paying tithes; passing people on the highway; and not paying to repair the local church. Of the six types, the most frequent offenses were speaking the Truth, meeting together, and non-payment of tithes. There are no instances recorded for breaking any social mores. The fact that only six types of acts were recorded gives credence to the internalization of the behavioral model set in place by the bureaucracy after Nayler’s fall. The way in which Hookes organized all the accounts generally appears to be chronological as well as by specific punishment suffered. If there were any events of importance, like a documented trial, Hookes also added them in as they fit in chronological order.

For each year, or group of years, Hookes would repeat the entire process of naming the offense and then listing the sufferers’ names and accounts below it. For example, in order to find out how many Lancashire Quakers suffered for non-payment of tithes for the years 1654 through 1670, the reader would have to scan the entire county record since Quakers suffered for that infraction nearly every year. The main form of organization is chronological and not thematic. There does not seem to be a particular operative principle for how Hookes organized the different acts for which Quakers were punished. The offenses were not listed in the same order under each county or year. In some counties, accounts given for meeting together are

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69 For this section, the information was taken from Hookes, GBS vol. 1:555-78.
listed first, while in other shires, they are listed after other offenses. It appears that Hookes simply took the information he had for a particular year, or group of years, divided it by offense type, and then recorded it.

The number of different types of suffering recorded varied as well, depending on which year was under examination. For example, Hookes began the county’s record by giving the years in which specific suffering accounts were initially reported: 1654, 1655, and 1656. He then went through every type of abuse suffered by Lancashire Quakers for those years and wrote down the names and information in the account as given to him. In those particular years, all six of the different types of sufferings were recorded. The organization within the first set of years is puzzling, however. Hookes recorded reports of Quakers suffering for speaking the Truth in two places, with each group of people separated by three pages. In the intervening pages he listed three other offenses (for meeting together, not swearing, and not paying tithes).

There appears to be a gap of sorts for the years between 1656 and the Restoration in 1660 for any specific suffering accounts recorded by Lancashire Quakers. Perhaps he chose not to re-record the accounts after they had already been published in Burrough’s 1659 publication. Instead of making specific headings for individual years, it appears that he blended the accounts into the first group of years (1654-1656). He was careful to put the later account at the end of the list and to mention the year in which it happened. Hookes listed accounts for Quakers meeting together in chronological order, but had reports from 1657 and 1660 listed under the same heading. For some reason, there were no reports listed in the intervening years.

As the years went by, there was less variation in the suffering accounts reported, perhaps because the bureaucracy’s behavioral model had been so fully internalized by Lancashire Friends. After 1660, the only accounts given were suffering for meeting together; for refusing to swear; for not going to the local church service; and for not paying tithes. The most common accounts given were for meeting together and refusing to swear. Within the larger English legal context, those two particular infractions became the focal point of prosecution. Under older statutes, especially Eliz., c. I, Quaker meetings were viewed as unlawful assemblies and meetings which met “in a violent and tumultuous manner.” Likewise, the Quaker Act, enacted in 1662, punished any person maintaining “that the taking of an oath in any case whatsoever (although before a lawful magistrate) is altogether unlawful and contrary to the word of God.” It can be argued that the influx of Quaker suffering accounts reported for holding meetings and for not swearing was concretely linked to the Crown’s politics after the Restoration. A claim can also be made that other infractions such as not paying to repair the church were not focal points since they were not supported in the law in the same way, or maybe by their nature they arose less frequently.

In addition to the influx of certain suffering reports after the Restoration, the length and actual description of the sufferings also changed. Between 1654 and 1656 in particular, the accounts had little detail, and large groups of people were often bundled together, especially if they all suffered as a result of meeting together. There were, however, exceptions for the earliest recorded years, predominantly regarding the non-payment of tithes. Perhaps the afflicted Quakers kept more specific records of goods lost over the years, which may explain why those particular entries include more details. In all, the six different types of sufferings Lancashire Quakers endured those three years only filled four pages. In comparison, 1659 and 1660 encompassed two pages, 1661 and 1662 each filled two pages, 1663 alone filled eight pages, and

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70 Hookes, GBS 1:555-57.
71 Ibid., 558-59.
72 Lloyd, Quaker Social History, 1669-1738, 88.
1664 through 1670 filled another five pages. Especially after 1660, more suffering accounts were recorded in general, and the information within them also increased in detail. Specific days, places, and total amount of goods seized or the amount fined were all noted under the ascribed persecution endured.

As the sect centralized as a whole and became more established after 1660, more people joined. As more people joined, the English government began to see the Society as a serious political and religious threat, so legal recourse was taken against them. The increase in the number of Quaker adherents taken alongside the legal measures enacted may explain why more suffering accounts were reported in greater detail after 1660. Furthermore, the collection process became more codified and efficient as the sect centralized. The accounts could be more effectively passed on up through the series of meetings, where their information would be disseminated to more and more people. It may also be argued that the sheer number and detail of the later accounts demonstrate that the notion of Quaker identity by witnessing for one’s faith was fully forged by 1660, so that when the Meeting for Sufferings was established in 1676, the collection process was already highly effective.

The bureaucracy also took initiative to collect any prison records that would be pertinent for all Quakers. There are transcripts, most likely sent to Hookes, from the 1663 imprisonment and resulting death of Oliver Atherton.\(^{73}\) This entry departed from the normal structure of naming the offense, the sufferer, the persecutor, and the punishment. Hookes arranged it as if it were in a martyrology. Atherton proclaimed his innocence while damning his persecutor and predicting her impending demise. As a prisoner to the Countess of Derby, Atherton supposedly stated shortly before he died that “his blood would be the heaviest blood that ever she carryed.” Hookes recorded that “seven weeks as he was buryed she dyed and was carryed through Ormskirk(?) & buryed ye day eight weeks as he was carryed through ye same town & buryed on ye same day.” What clinches the martyrological context, however, is the fact that Atherton clearly believed he was a martyr, by framing his own death within the language that other soon-to-be martyrs used. He sent word to the Countess shortly before he died that “if nothing would satisfy her but his blood it was ere long she might have it.” After stating his name, Atherton continued in a letter he wrote for posterity’s sake that, “for Conscience sake towards God & Christ…he could not give her Tythes, he knowinge that Christ was Come.”\(^{74}\) Atherton’s example illustrates how integral suffering was to Quaker identity though witnessing to the faith.

In addition to collecting prison records, Hookes also copied trial manuscripts which placed the reader in the court room with the current sufferer. One trial of particular interest is “A Relation of the takeing and Imprisoning George Fox Anno 1660,” which encompasses two full pages.\(^{75}\) It narrates how Fox was imprisoned in Lancashire. Hookes even penned into the book copies of the Charles II’s orders and Judges’ warrants for Fox’s arrest.\(^{76}\) In addition to relating the sufferings of the recognizable leader George Fox, Hookes also copied other actions taken against “several Quakers” in the Bishop’s Commissioner Court as well. Hookes recorded a 1663 incident between unnamed bishops and Quakers in a question and answer series:

“Bishopps Com: When was you at Church”

\(^{73}\) Hookes, GBS 1:568-69.
\(^{74}\) Ibid., 568.
\(^{75}\) Ibid., 559-60.
\(^{76}\) Ibid., 570-77.
“Quaker Where is my accusers Paul called for his accusers when he was brought before the Judgment seat of ye heathen and Jewes”

“Bishop The Church warden is your Accuser”

“Quaker. What neighbours art thou mine accuser dost thou not know that the Church is in God and had not Prisciela and Aquilla a Church in their house; Neighbour, Art thou a Christian & dost not know these things”77

The exchange continues, as the bishop inquired into the Quaker’s marriage, baptism of his or her children, and the payment of tithes. The Quaker kept asking for the accuser to make his presence known in the court, but that never happened. Instead, the Quaker showed off his or her knowledge of the laws by stating, “it is Contrary to Law to examine me vpon interrogatoreys, or that any should accuse themselves or beare witness agst themselves, dost not thou know yt it is 100£ penalty vpon any that pretense of letters, of Pattents(? vnder the great seale or otherwise see the statute in 1642 for takeing away the high Comission Court wch clause was never yet abolished.”78 Clearly, the Quaker speaking on behalf of the rest had benefited from the educating work of the Meeting for Sufferings. Knowledge of the laws had given the “severall Quakers” the ability to bear steadfastly the abuse at the hands of their persecutors.

Directly following the trial of “severall Quakers” is the 1663 examination of Margaret Fell before Judge Twiston at the Assizes at Lancaster Castle. Fell, a widow since 1658 who would later go on to marry George Fox in 1669, was already a wealthy woman from her first marriage to Thomas Fell, a judge and politician. Maximizing her social position and her sympathetic first husband, Fell offered money and protection to the Quakers beginning around 1653. By the time of her arrest, therefore, she was already a prominent Quaker figure. Her charges were “refuseing to take the oath of obedience” as well as holding meetings in her house, Swarthmoor Hall. Fell reported that the King stated he would not hinder her or her religion: “You may keepe it in your owne house.” Fell asked the judge, “What law haue I broken for worshipping God in my owne house?” He replied, “The Common law.” Quickly showing her prowess and knowledge of English law, Fell immediately responded, “I thought you had proceeded by a statute.” Hookes noted that a sheriff had to whisper into the judge’s ear “the statute of the 35th of Elizabeth.”79 Mentioning that detail, Hookes portrayed Judge Twiston, and all judges by extension, as incompetent and not worthy of their positions in society. Furthermore, by showing the ineptitude of the judge’s knowledge of the laws, Hookes undermined the logic behind persecution. He also further legitimated the sect by noting that Fell’s actions within her own home had Charles II’s blessing. The judge and Fell go back and forth over this issue for the next seven pages of the Lancashire records.80

The “Great Book of Sufferings” was profoundly egalitarian in its inclusion of documents relating to Quakers with such a wide range of social standing. Alongside trial records for such noted figures of the Quaker movement whose trials were widely known among Quakers and non-Quakers, Hookes also recorded the trial of several unnamed members as well as the little known Oliver Atherton’s prison account into the “Great Book of Sufferings.” Perhaps these trials and

77 Ibid., 569.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., 570.
80 Ibid., 570-77.
prison incidents were widely known in Lancashire, but it is not probable they were well known outside of the immediate area. It can be argued, therefore, that the inclusion of lesser known Quaker trial and prison accounts into the “Great Book of Sufferings” did in fact lead to a sense of equality and community across all of England, Wales, and even the greater Atlantic World.

Quakers knew they suffered in similar matters as Friends did elsewhere because of the way Hookes recorded specific suffering accounts. By individualizing accounts under general titles, members everywhere could see who, where, and when fellow Quakers suffered. As stated earlier, one of the first recorded suffering accounts was for “speaking the Truth” in churches and other public places. Hookes recorded such accounts for the years 1654 through 1656 under the title of: “For Speaking the Truth in Steeplehouses, Marketts, and other places; and for asking the priests Questions, in the feare of the Lord, some have been cruelly whipt & some sherkt, some fined & imprisoned till death.” What follows below this reading resembles a ledger in an account book. On the left hand side of the page, Hookes wrote down all the name of the accused Quakers, and bracketed off groups of people who received the same monetary fine amount as well as jail sentence (“Mary Clayton, Anne Clayton, Mary Lyongill, Jane Ashburner, John Driver, James Symonson”). In the middle of the page, he recorded the sentence rendered upon the bracketed groups of people, and named the judge if he were known: “Fyned 20£ a yeere by Judge Newdigate(?) and kept in prison 12 Monthes.” On the far right side of the page, Hookes reiterated the penalty, and noted if anyone died. In 1654, John Lawson “was moved of the Lord” to interrupt the church service, and was subsequently “committed prisoner (by George Towlsone called a Justice) to the County Goals.” Lawson remained in prison “a yeare and upwards” before he was released. In all, Hookes copied seventeen cases of Quakers publicly speaking the Truth in Lancashire.81

Another offense for which many Quakers suffered was holding either private or public meetings for worship. Hookes recorded entries of Lancashire Quakers punished together “for Meeting together & for going to Meetings on the first day.” From 1654 to 1656, eight people were listed, and were bracketed together if charged at the same time. Again the penalty, either money or prison time, was noted to the right of each of their names.82

Hookes also recorded Lancashire “Sufferers for Meeting together to Worship God & refuseing to sweare.” People who suffered for meeting together were apprehended in private homes as well as public marketplaces. More often than not, Quakers detained for meeting publicly were taken to prison for more than one offense, such as not acknowledging social superiors or not swearing oaths of allegiance to the Crown. Again, the Quakers’ outward defiance of laws often clashed with unwritten rules of social conduct. The English authorities, therefore, labeled Quaker behavior as radical and even “seditious.”83 Quakers, however, did not see their outward behavior as contrary to either social order or laws. Instead, they saw their acts as being ways to witness their true faith as Christians, not as political incendiaries.

To show that Quakers were peaceful, Hookes may have embellished some of the suffering reports slightly to demonstrate how non-aggressive Friends were at the time of their arrests. In the section dedicated to “Sufferers as they were passing on the highway &t,” Hookes gave brief narrative accounts with specific names of the sufferers if available. James Smithson, in 1655, passed “John Parker (who had not long before been high sherrif of Lanc.) & not giving him hat honour,” Parker “struck him [Smithson] till he broke his staff in peeces, & then struck

81 Ibid., 556-57.
82 Ibid., 556.
83 Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, 247.
him with his hands.” Other accounts in this category include traveling to meetings or work and passing people on the streets. The punishments are all similar in nature to the previous entries, as the Quakers had money or goods taken from them, or they suffered physical abuse such as having rocks thrown at them. Again, Hookes recorded the accounts to show how patiently the Quakers endured their sufferings.

A general suffering account for Lancashire Quakers meeting together, referring to an incident which happened in 1659, entailed a group of Friends meeting together when a “Priest Fegg came into the roome with 6 or 8 men attending him.” Fegg reportedly said, “would it not make men tremble to heare such blasphemy.” Fegg’s men then took the speaker of the Friends into custody away from the table, and he “asked ym [them] what was the blasphemy but they did not declare it but proceeded with their rage and hauled friends out of the house into the street.” When Friends tried to re-enter the house, they were again thrown outside. Some Friends declared that “the Magistrates hath not dealt this wth us as thy followers have donne. And the priest said, the Magistrates are faultie in that they doe not sheath their swords in the bowels of such blasphemers as you are.” All Friends were rounded up and left on the corner of the street. Another account stated that

Vppon the 20th day of ye 11th Month 1660 Friends being mett together for worshipp God in Spirit & Truth in Lancaster were haled out of their Meeting by souldgers wth drawn swords pistolls cokt. Musketts and lighted matches & Comitted to Castle prison, all the Men but the Women were huried back, but the next first day the Women being mett, and one man they took them and brought ym to prison & others they took from their owne houses and had ym to prison.

In all, forty-one Quakers were listed as having suffered in this incident. Of the forty-one, seven were women.

Hookes also recorded suffering accounts of people meeting in Twiston, Knowsly, and Marsden, and kept a running tally of the total fines imposed upon the Quakers for having meetings. One specific example is James Whipp (who was fined 40£) “for haveing a Meeting in his house & also for being a preacher” on the “26th 4th Month 1670.” The Quakers who attended this meeting on “ye 3rd day of ye 5th month” were also fined. William Welgate(?) lost a gelding and was fined 5s. At a later meeting on “ye 27th 7th Mo.:” Welgate and fellow Friend Frances Stockhouse were fined 10s a piece. William Browne was fined 5s for being at the same meeting as Welgate and Stockhouse; Hookes recorded that Browne’s wife paid the fine, specifically mentioning that she was not a Quaker.

Hookes recorded similar accounts of Quaker men and women being persecuted for meeting and not swearing. In 1661, nearly 100 Quakers were persecuted in seven accounts of meeting together and refusing to swear. All portrayed the Friends as peaceful, God-fearing beings. In 1663, two cases of refusal to swear were reported. One Brian Hogston “could not swere being summoned to be of a Jury was fined 6s 8p by Wm. West being Mayor that yeere and Tho. Edmundson baliffe took from his shop a pare of bootes worth about 13s and returned.

84 Hookes, GBS 1:557.
85 Ibid., 561.
86 Ibid., 562.
87 Ibid., 578.
88 Ibid., 563.
nothing agaie." Also in 1663, ten Quakers including George Fox and Margaret Fell, suffered abuses for not swearing. George Fox “for refusing to sweare was sent prisoner to Lancaster Castle, where the Goaler putt him in a smoaky rainy place, where it rained vpon his bed & they were fain to make a ditch in ye very roome so receive ye water from flowing over it & the rest of the prisoners lay in such stinking smoaky places not fit for men.” Margaret Fell, for refusing to take the oath of allegiance and refusing to swear, was “committed to Lancaster Castle where she remains a prisoner to this day being the 23 6 Month 1665,” two years after the incident took place. Hookes also mentioned of the poor castle prison conditions, directly below Margaret Fell’s entry: “And in the yeare aforesaid [1665] there died 3 of the prisoners in the Castle who finished their testimony for the Truthes sake by laying down their lives for ye same their names were Oliver Atherton, John Suterwhite, and Wm. Sands. & Wm. Geave(?) was carryed out sick.”

Lancashire Quakers also suffered heavily for the non-payment of tithes, where the first recorded incidents occurred between 1654 and 1656. George Barrow, for example, was “fyned 3 tymes & had three Cowes taken from him” worth a total of 8£, 0s 0d. Other accounts, perhaps because of how much time had elapsed before they were collected, are less specific. John Hargreaves “had goods taken” totaling 7s 6d. At the bottom of the overall suffering account column is the total monetary loss of all the sufferers for those particular years. Richard Hargreaves reported being “fined 2 tymes 40s a tyme in all” for meeting publicly. In the initial Lancashire suffering accounts “for not paying Tythes,” Hookes kept a running tally of all goods and money lost. The entire right side of the page is filled, in no particular order, with amounts lost or names of people affected. On the far right are two columns, one which represents the amount of tithes owed, and the other the amount actually taken from the Quakers’ possession. The sheer number of incidents arising from Lancashire for not paying tithes demonstrates how widespread the behavior was.

Nine pages later, Hookes again returned to suffering accounts of Quakers not paying tithes or paying to repair churches beginning in 1659. Unlike the entries from 1654 to 1656, the reports in this section are more narrative in style and no running total of amounts “demanded” or how much was actually taken are provided. Instead, the accounts give the items taken, who took them if known, and what the items were worth. For example, Richard Leatherbarrow, who was mentioned four years earlier in 1655 for not paying to repair the church, had 3£ “demanded for Tythes [and] had taken from him six Cowes worth 20£.” In addition, “Widdow Parkinson had a horse taken from her for being at a Meeting in Preston by Rich. Bestork and to Boulten wch was worth 1£ 0s.” Perhaps the reason why Hookes included such detailed information was not only because it was provided to him by the individual sufferer, but possibly because he wanted to relate the entire suffering account within the larger martyrological tradition. The more information provided about who the persecutor was and when the account occurred, the easier it would be to remember and identify with the sufferer. Written details of the suffering account enabled members to read about other members’ experiences when witnessing to their faith.

89 Ibid., 568.
91 Hookes, GBS 1:568.
92 Ibid., 556.
93 Ibid., 568.
94 Ibid., 565.
Hookes continued diligently to record the accounts for non-payment of tithes as the years passed. In 1663, fourteen Quakers had goods taken from them for that offense. Stephen Sagar “was fined by Ralph Ashton impropriater for Tythes Corne vallued at 11s 3d by Giles Lyamond & Wm. Berry had woole taken from him worth 35s the 1st of ye 10th Mo: 1663.”95 In 1666, three people suffered for not paying tithes, and in 1667, two people. Two additional people in 1668 also reported persecution for non-payment of tithes, while in 1669 four people did so.96 All the later accounts, unlike the first accounts, were narrative in style. Each person was mentioned separately (unless charged at the same time with another) and had his or her own account. Running tallies of total goods lost were only seen in the initial recordings from 1654 through 1656.

In addition to not paying tithes to support the ministers, Quakers also suffered for “not paying to ye Repaire of the Steeplehouse.” This offense has a two-fold meaning for Quakers: first, they did not want to support ministers or to maintain churches; secondly, they did not want to support a coercive state legal administration when their sect advocated freedom of conscience. Hookes recorded twelve cases of not paying to maintain churches in Lancashire. A certain monetary amount was demanded from all residents to repair the church, and if it could not be paid, anything of value was taken to compensate for it. For example, Roger Leatherbarrow did not pay the 7d demanded of him, so instead he “had a brass pott taken from him worth 4s.”97 As noted earlier in the refusal to pay tithes, Quakers often had excess amounts taken than what was actually demanded of them. In the case of Leatherbarrow, seven pence were demanded, yet he had four shillings taken from him. Since twenty pence equal one shilling, Leatherbarrow had an item confiscated from him worth more than seven times the amount he owed.

Other similar, but less frequent, types of offenses Quakers suffered for were “for not goeing to the Steeplehouse Worship” and for “not takeing bread and wine” at the church service. Attending the infrequent communion days (and participating in them) was a way to show one’s membership in the Church of England and was required by law. The wording of the punishable act, therefore, is significant since Friends deny the meaning of this aspect of orthodox worship and refuse to call it communion. The first entries for Quakers absenting themselves from church services and for not receiving communion began in 1663. One report stated that “Michaell Wilson had a hatt taken from him (before day) worth 2s 8d for 2d towards bread & Wine by [Justice] Daniell Fleemings order.” A similar account reads that “John Dixson by the same mans order [Justice Fleeming] had goods taken from him worth 3s 6d for not goeing to the steeplehouse.”98 In 1663 alone, thirty-four suffering cases were reported.99

The importance of forging a sense of common identity and suffering of all Quakers cannot be overstated. By advocating internally that its members behave according to sanctioned guidelines, the Quaker bureaucracy not only dictated what was acceptable behavior worthy of being included in the Great Book of Sufferings, but it also ensured that through suffering and witnessing to their faith, all Friends felt a part of the larger sect. Being able not only to report, but also to have their accounts recorded, allowed every single Quaker the tangible opportunity to witness to his or her faith with the secure knowledge that the London Yearly Meeting and the Meeting for Sufferings were acting on behalf of their sufferings to seek redress. Furthermore,

95 Ibid., 568.
96 Ibid., 577.
97 Ibid., 559.
98 Ibid., 566.
99 Ibid., 566-67.
the “Great Book of Sufferings” acted as a general plea to all Protestants to end religious persecution because it was written down, and its contents and precedents were later used by other leading Quakers to advocate in court to end persecution. On 16 January 1679 for example, three Quakers asked the King for “a present stay or cessation of process until we can have a more effectual redress in a parliamentary way” regarding other Quakers being persecuted for older statutes against recusants. The King, they reported, later replied, “‘tis very unreasonable we should thus suffer by laws that were never intended against us and that he is against persecution or persecuting any for conscience sand that he should consider of our case and afford what relief he can.” The end result was that thirteen Cambridge Quakers who had been convicted and had forfeited two-thirds of their estates were released and that “all further process against those Friends should be stayed.”

In effect, it was the collective as well as individual inclusion the Quakers felt that ultimately formed the basis of their identity. Collecting suffering accounts was initially used, during the late-1650s, as a public advocacy tool as a plea to end religious persecution. After Hookes had began compiling his portion of the “Great Book of Sufferings” sometime around 1660, the bureaucracy realized the beneficial internal effect it was having on members. Regardless of age, sex, or geographic location, every Quaker felt part of a larger sect by submitting his or her own suffering account and having it written down in the communal compilation of suffering accounts. After the formation of the Meeting for Sufferings in 1676, the collection process became a ritualized way to build solidarity among Quakers for countless generations since the bureaucracy’s Christological behavioral model had been internalized by Friends. The Meeting encouraged Quakers to witness to their faith, which in turn bolstered the actions and claims of their fellow Friends across England and the Atlantic World who suffered similar punishments for the same offenses. All Quakers believed they were unjustly persecuted for religious reasons, since they claimed to follow the faith of the biblical Christians. Witnessing to the truth was an end in itself. In that sense, by relating their sufferings to those who followed the unadulterated ways of Christ, Quakers were situating themselves within the larger English martyrlogical tradition.

IV. The Martyrological Context

By the seventeenth century, England already had a rich and lengthy tradition of celebrating the ways through which Christians became martyrs. As confessional boundaries hardened after the Reformation, the issue of martyrdom became more central to people’s lives, since the circumstances through which people became martyrs were politicized. Through the collection process, suffering accounts were handed up to and eventually recorded by Ellis Hookes into the “Great Book of Sufferings.” By recorded fellow members’ suffering accounts to bolster the believers’ claims as well as build internal solidarity, Hookes acted as hagiographers and martyrrologists did for martyrs. Perhaps Hookes’s contributing work to the “Great Book of Sufferings” inspired him to compile his own martyrlogy, The Spirit of the Martyrs. Both the “Great Book of Sufferings” and The Spirit of the Martyrs sought to end religious persecution. At the same time, they served to immortalize the sufferings of true believers who witnessed to their faith. The collection, recording, and remembering of martyrs’ sufferings was integral to the larger tradition. The Quakers ritualized this behavior along martyrlogical lines as a way to bolster their own claims of needless religious persecution as well as building solidarity among all members.

100 Lloyd, Quaker Social History, 1669-1738, 99.
Brad S. Gregory’s *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (1999) was a seminal piece of historical writing that has sparked a new historiography of martyrs, martyrdom, and martyrrologies. Gregory focused on Protestant, Anabaptist, and Catholic martyrs in France, the Low Countries, and England. Instead of arguing that politics and other social factors were behind the renaissance of early modern martyrs, Gregory used religion as the focal point of his argument. In order to answer the question of what a “true” martyr was, Gregory began in the late medieval period where the similarities and continuities of the early Christians would be carried on by different confessions in the sixteenth century. The near omnipresence of saints as intercessors was crucial for medieval Christians. Gregory argued “martyrs and values linked to martyrdom were deeply embedded in Christianity in the decades prior to the Reformation” because so many people prayed to martyr-saints.\(^{101}\) The notion of patiently suffering—in essence emulating Christ’s own passion and suffering—permeated nearly every Christian’s mind. Moreover, books like the *Ars moriendi* (“art of dying”) and the Bible laid a foundation for Protestant, Anabaptist, and Catholic claims to martyrdom. The actual experience of martyrdom, therefore, varied little across all three groups. In addition, Gregory claimed martyrs stripped away their self-images: “the martyr’s agency depended upon relinquishing control, their strength upon a naked admission of their utter impotence and total dependence on God.”\(^{102}\) Martyrs were not insane fanatics, but rather their behavior and beliefs were simply a continuation of late medieval notions of piety. Protestants, Anabaptists, and Catholics relied heavily on scriptural references, since they all believed them to be the true word of God that was essential for their salvation. The three different confessions’ martyrs represented “the [biblical Christian] historical community of the unjustly killed” and that the communal tradition “was alive, reborn, and thriving with the modern witness of fellow believers” as early as the fifteenth century.\(^{103}\)

Gregory’s argument concerning martyrdom in England focused on the rebirth of Catholic martyrdom near the end of Henry VIII’s reign when he broke with papal authority. As in his argument for the Protestants and Anabaptists, Gregory does not focus on the political nature of the resurgence of Catholic martyrs. Instead, Gregory focuses on the Catholic interpretation of Christian history and church doctrine, especially regarding papal authority. Taking this stance, Gregory noted that by the end of the sixteenth century, there was more clarity and celebration of Catholic martyrs because of the hardening of confessional boundaries. Distinct battle lines drawn between Catholics and Protestants all across Europe necessitated counter action since millions of Catholic souls were at risk of being lost to Protestantism. Polemicists memorialized Catholic martyrs to win back wayward souls to Catholicism. Catholics, due mainly to writings of Thomas More, emphasized orthodoxy, doctrine, and keeping a unified universal church under papal authority. By stressing people who actively chose to die for believing in the key tenets of Catholicism, More’s argument solidified the Catholic view of martyrdom.

Anne Dillon, a historian who particularly addressed the subject of Catholic martyrdom in England, also focused heavily on how Thomas More greatly influenced the martyrrological debate. Dillon, in her work *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535-1603* (2002), particularly analyzed the pseudomartyr debate, which was sparked by Thomas More’s interpretation of the “true” Christian past, as argued in his 1527 work the

\(^{102}\) Ibid., 132.
\(^{103}\) Ibid., 124.
Confutation. More highlighted the universality and orthodoxy of the Catholic Church under papal authority, and that people who died for other confessional beliefs were “false” martyrs because they died for the churches of the Antichrist, and not Christ himself. Furthermore, More argued the reformers devalued the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, so false martyrs died for the unorthodox beliefs of heretics. In More’s opinion, Catholics were the genuine descendants of the first Christians. Only Catholics, therefore, could be considered “true” martyrs. Catholic thinkers believed that Protestants bore no link to the first Christians, since they rejected the major tenets on which Christianity was founded. Dillon argued that theologians and martyrologists stressed the cause for which martyrs died, and not the nature of their deaths, when distinguishing between “true” and “false” martyrs. Accordingly, separating between the “true” and “false” martyrs was a way through which writers from opposing doctrinal positions could define their stances and mark out their differences across confessional boundaries.

As confessional boundaries hardened during the sixteenth century, Protestant martyrologists also sought to promote the validity of their martyrs. Protestants, like Catholics, claimed their martyrs were “true,” but for very different reasons. Protestant martyrologists, most notably John Foxe and his work Acts and Monuments (commonly known as The Book of Martyrs), presented Protestant martyrs as dying for the unadulterated faith Christ demonstrated, unlike Catholic martyrs who followed the supposedly tainted faith of worldly men, the popes. That Protestants identified themselves with the earliest Christians was crucial for their martyrological identity. Protestants also did not view saints as venerated idols and intercessors to the living. Instead, their definition of a saint was anyone who had lived piously as a model Christian. Any person persecuted and executed for witnessing to his or her faith, therefore, could be considered a saint.

The Quakers, through the Meeting for Suffering, used the larger tradition of martyrs and martyrdom to their advantage in relating their sufferings within that context. The Meeting strove to educate all Quakers on the legal statutes passed against them as well as to persuade all Friends to report the abuse they suffered while witnessing to their faith. By encouraging the sufferers to record the abuses they endured at the hands of their persecutors, the Meeting for Suffering’s delegates collectively acted like martyrologists. All martyrologists actively collected every scrap of evidence and propagandist material pertaining to the suffering of their sect’s martyrs before their executions.

Although no literal Quaker martyrdoms occurred in England, four Quakers were executed in Massachusetts Bay between 1659 and 1661. The four, Mary Dyer, William Robinson, Marmaduke Stevenson, and William Leddra, all witnessed to their faith, and “willingly accepted death as a necessary defense of the truth.” The martyrs used erotic language as they willingly and happily embraced their upcoming martyrdom, which fit into the martyrological tradition.

105 Ibid., 19.
Robinson declared, “the streams of my Father’s Love runs daily through me from the Holy Fountain of Life, to the Seed throughout the whole Creation; I am overcome with Love, for it is my Life, and length of my Days; it’s my glory, and my daily Strength: I am swallowed up with Love, in Love I live, and with it I am overcome.” The other three Quaker martyrs behaved properly as well. They acted joyously, showed no ill-regard for their executioners, and did not falter in their convictions at the time of their deaths.

The Massachusetts martyrdoms of William Robinson and Marmaduke Stevenson and the release of Mary Dyer were immortalized in George Bishop’s New England Judged, published in 1661. A later version entitled New England Judged: The Second Part (published 1667) included the death of William Leddra and Mary Dyer. Bishop, a Bristol Quaker, contended that the deaths of the Quakers should not be viewed merely as executions, but rather as martyrdoms. On one hand, he demonized the executioners of Mary Dyer, calling them “wretched Hypocrites and Murderers,” “bloody butcherers,” and “Monstrous men.” On the other hand, Bishop carefully described the martyrs’ attitudes towards death: “So being come to the Place of Execution, hand in hand, all Three of them [Robinson, Stevenson, and Dyer] as to a wedding, with great cheerfulness of Heart; and having taken leave of each other, with the dear Embraces of one anothers Love in the Love of the Lord.” The description of Leddra’s death is a typical representation of a martyr: “William Ledra, the suffering Lamb, and servant of Jesus Christ, who there thought not his Life dear to Death, for the Testimony of his Truth, cryed out, Lord Jesus receive my spirit.” Bishop asserted that all four of the Quakers had sealed “their Testimony with their Blood, (which was the most that could be done), their Countenances not changing.” Clearly, Bishop used the deaths of Robinson, Williamson, Dyer, and Leddra to bolster the validity of Quakerism.

Quaker propagandist literature had the same goals as that of other Catholic and Protestant martyrologies: “to document the truth, and to castigate those responsible for these grave injustices.” Although the “Great Book of Sufferings” did not specifically focus on the emotional and physical steadfastness of each Quaker’s suffering, the fact remains that it was a recollection and recording of all abuses suffered at the hands of their persecutors. Hookes’s compilation acted like a martyrology in that sense, as its aims were to portray the sufferers as innocent victims of religious persecution, which would in turn bolster the validity of the sect. Furthermore, like martyrologies, the “Great Book of Sufferings” contained factual evidence, which could be compared against other court records. In the preface to the first volume, which Hookes titled the “Abridgement,” he noted that there existed a book (printed 1680) that recorded 243 people who suffered “for ye exercise of their faith & conscience, in matters spirituall” by being “beaten & brused, knocked down at their peaceable meetings, and dy[ing] of their wounds.” Hookes continued (perhaps in 1680 or even early 1681 before his death) that there were still 276 people imprisoned for multiple years; 9,437 people suffered for meeting together, refusing to swear, and were given the sentence of praemunire; 624 people were

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111 Ibid., 93.
113 Bishop, New England Judged, 83.
114 Pestana, “Martyred by the Saints,” 173.
115 Ellis Hookes, “Abridgement.”
116 Praemunire was a serious sentence for any property holder, since it meant that the convicted person’s estate was forfeit to the crown and the person could be imprisoned indefinitely.
excommunicated and jailed for not attending worship service; and 194 people were banished for meeting together. He concluded his section on English Quaker religious suffering by stating that “All these Accts show that these giuen in are but part of the sufferings.”

Witnessing to one’s faith and suffering for it were both crucial in solidifying early Quaker identity. The Quakers drew upon the already long-standing tradition of martyrs and martyrdom within England, and intertwined pre-existing beliefs into their own identity. The “Great Book of Sufferings” makes clear that the sufferers took no retaliation against their persecutors. Instead, all Quakers included in the “Great Book of Sufferings” acted properly by patiently suffering and enduring the consequences of their acts for conscience sake.

Furthermore, all the Quakers were portrayed as spiritual equals, regardless of when, how, where, and for what they suffered. The “Great Book of Sufferings” can be seen as a quasi-martyrological account since all people who underwent suffering and martyrdom voluntarily exerted more outward faith and patience than their fellow believers. In addition, their sufferings were memorialized within the larger Quaker identity, solidifying the tradition that Quakerism was built upon suffering and witnessing for one’s faith. Recording every member’s account only further demonstrated the general egalitarianism of the sect which fostered a sense of identity and solidarity. Ultimately, the goal of all martyrologies, like that of the “Great Book of Sufferings,” was to remember and make omnipresent the trials and tribulations of the sufferers.

It must be stressed, however, that as in many martyrologies, the actual voice of the sufferers was overshadowed by the words of the martyrologist. Even if excerpts from their letters or trials were used, the compiler exercised his prerogative to choose how best to relay information to his intended audience. Hookes’s role as the recorder of the “Great Book of Sufferings” poses a particular obstacle. He received the accounts second-hand after they had already travelled up through various meetings. Hookes seems not to have overly embellished information, since the great majority of the accounts state mainly factual information that could have been checked against court records. He may have chosen to compile all the entries into one collection to emphasize how society had regressed to religious persecution and declension. The “Great Book of Sufferings” may have been used to show how the level of Christian charity of non-Quakers had declined since the formation of the sect, since the larger community had literally endorsed thousands of acts of religious persecution. By visually demonstrating how much suffering was occurring, the “Great Book of Sufferings” was a written appeal to encourage a sort of spiritual renewal. Hookes’s ideal was for everyone to live according to Christ’s commandments, especially those enjoining meekness and tolerance.

Unlike the “Great Book of Sufferings,” which lacked emotional appeal, Hookes’s martyrology indulged in all the pathos of such an account. The Spirit of the Martyrs provided verbatim excerpts from John Foxe’s Protestant martyrology Acts and Monuments, better known as the Book of Martyrs. First published in 1563 and later reprinted in various editions both before and after Foxe’s death in 1587, the Book of Martyrs contains emotionally charged accounts and horrific tales of torture and other suffering. Foxe’s work set the tone and style on which The Spirit of the Martyrs was based. Using the Marian martyrs of his day, Foxe “embedded their stories into a history that promoted a Protestant perspective on what constituted legitimate martyrdom.” To accomplish this, Foxe had to demonstrate how

117 Ellis Hookes, “Abridgement.”
119 Myles, “Restoration Declensions, Divine Consolations,” 43-44.
120 Pestana, “Martyred by the Saints,” 179.
Protestantism was directly descended from the early Christians, and that Protestants demonstrated acceptable Christological behaviors. The structure of the *Book of Martyrs* was chronological, beginning with a brief history of how the Christian faith was planted in England and its surrounding areas (mainly Scotland). According to Foxe, Christianity was subsequently altered in Mary Tudor’s reign to allow “popish” (Catholic) sentiments to subvert the religious faith Christ originally preached. The next sections showed how the followers of Christ’s faith were repeatedly subjected to persecution, beginning with the martyrs closest to the birth of Christ. Martyrs’ stories were graphically depicted in order to show their spiritual devotion, thereby legitimating their deaths in accordance with what they believed was the true religious doctrine of Christ, as opposed to the “degenerated” version that was unsuccessfully being forced upon them.

Under Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603), Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* was chained to all pulpits, so all Church of England members would have ready access to this account locating their church in the larger martyrological tradition. Some of the earliest Quaker converts would have been familiar with Foxe’s work, but by the time *The Spirit of the Martyrs* was first published in 1683, many Friends would have lacked exposure to it and what it symbolized. Hookes, however, wanted Quakers to remember and bring back that tradition through their suffering accounts. By condensing Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, Hookes advocated to Quakers and the larger community the importance for them of the continuation of the martyrological tradition.

In both the 1683 and 1689 editions of *The Spirit of the Martyrs*, Hookes acknowledged that different accounts of martyrs had been written, but noted that they were “scattered in divers great Vollums, writ by several Authors.” Those books, Hookes argued, were “too Volaminous, and costly for the generality to read or buy.” He wanted to consolidate the available literature “for the such who have but little leisure, and cannot read much...[so they] may easily comprehend the Lords dealing with the Sons of men in all Generations.” Hookes clearly stated, “my chief aim in this work, is, for the good and information of all People (my emphasis), that they may see how the Lord preserved his Church in all times, and what great things he hath done for them.”

Hookes’s ultimate goal, therefore, was to place emphasis on the suffering of all people throughout time so that a large audience, including Quakers, would be made aware of how persecution had prevailed throughout the history of Christendom.

Even though he did not explicitly mention that he was a Quaker, Hookes couched the Quaker tenet of following conscience to live in the style of Christ and enduring the consequences within the text’s introduction. Proclaiming that belief within the context of a larger genre of Protestant martyrologies helped indirectly legitimate the sect, particularly by incorporating a favorite Quaker phrase (“his holy Seed):

> the Reader may see, in this ensuing Tract, Satan’s cruelty, the great Enemy to mans good, who hath in all Ages used all his Power to stop the increase and

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121 The vast majority of both editions of *The Spirit of the Martyrs* is in fact a condensed version of Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. Out of the thirty named martyrs or collective groups who suffered persecution in Hookes’s 1689 edition table of contents (which is not contained in the 1683 edition but the narrative is exactly the same), only nine entries are not taken from the *Book of Martyrs*: those of Roger Coo, Thomas Drowry; Matthew Plaise; Thomas Spredence; Thomas Rose; Richard Barty; the people known as Brownists; and John Penry. The *Brownists* and John Penry, in fact, suffered under Queen Elizabeth I and James I, which would have either been very near Foxe’s death or even after he died. The other seven martyrs were all contemporaries of Hookes, so presumably he acquired information about their accounts from other English sources in order to incorporate them into his own version.

growth of his holy Seed, by persecuting, Murdering and Destroying their Bodies, using his utmost indeavours by Cruelties to stop the least good Inclination that might at any time stir in any; and this hath been the work of the evil One ever since he got footing in mens hearts.  

This approach greatly differed from the majority of Quaker texts, in which the authors stated they were Quakers and the material related strictly to Quakerism. Using that approach, Hookes would have been able to appeal to a larger audience, which included both Quakers and other interested Protestants.

Hookes portrayed the martyrs similar to the way that other martyrologies presented them: all of them actively chose to give up their lives because it would go against their conscience to submit to worldly powers in which they did not believe. It is important to keep in mind the Quaker belief that Friends could not bring themselves to do what they believed in their consciences was not right. Again, many of the suffering accounts recorded by Hookes himself within the “Great Book of Sufferings” highlight this fact, especially in regards to Quakers’ punishment for non-attendance of worship services or for reproving ministers. Hookes often included both overt and subtle reminders of people who stood firm in their resolutions for “conscience sake” in The Spirit of the Martyrs. One purpose of the text, therefore, was to remind readers of the need for religious conviction in times of persecution.

The well-known biblical story about the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons for refusing to eat pork is a good example that has a dual purpose in The Spirit of the Martyrs. All eight people were first whipped before they were mutilated and fried in hot oil for their refusal to eat pork. The eldest son, who was destined to die first in front of the rest of his family, stated that, “we are ready to dye rather then to transgress the Laws of our Fathers,” which is significant because it shows outright defiance to secular authority by the “righteous” people who follow the law of God. Furthermore, Hookes mentioned several times throughout his account of the story how strongly and steadfastly all eight people endured their sufferings: the King “marveled at the [first son’s] courage, for that he nothing regarded the pains;” another son “dyed undefiled and put his trust in the Lord;” and the mother “herself put into the Red-hot Frying pan, where lifting up her Hands and Eyes to Heaven in the midst of her Prayers, she yielded up her chaste Soul unto God.” In addition to underscoring that all remained constant in their faith, Hookes significantly began his account of martyrs before Christ’s birth. His strategy emphasizes the centrality of the people adhering to the truth. Indirectly speaking, this story follows the Quaker tenet that all Friends were the true descendents of the biblical Christians.

Another well-known martyr who followed the truth was Anne Askew, who was brought before the Inquisitor Christopher Dare in 1546. When he asked what her opinion was of the bread used during the Sacrament, she answered “that so oft as she received the Bread in remembrance of Chris’s Death, she received therewith the Fruits of his most glorious Passion.” In other words, Askew denied the real bodily presence of Christ within the bread, known as transubstantiation, which Catholics believe happens when a priest consecrates the bread at the communion Sacrament. Over time many Protestant martyrs denied the validity of transubstantiation, and like Askew were sentenced to burn at the stake. When she heard her

123 Ibid.  
124 See 2 Maccabees 7:1-42 for the entire story.  
125 Hookes, The Spirit of the Martyrs, 4.  
126 Ibid., 55-58.
sentence, she said that, “she had searched all the Scriptures, and could never find that either Christ of his Apostles put any Creature to death; and told them, God would laugh their threatnings to scorn.”

Askew adamantly denied she was a heretic and argued that she “neither deserv’d Death by the Law of God.” Claiming she was following the religion originally ordained by God and willingly accepting her fate were key aspects to all Protestant martyrologies. Askew placed herself above all secular and ecclesiastical authorities. After her torture upon the Rack where she confessed “nothing, but lay still, and did not cry” she patiently awaited her execution. When the day came, she willingly “became so encompassed with the flames of Fire, as a blessed Sacrifice unto God, she resigned up her Life … leaving behind her a singular Example of Christian constancy for all men to follow.”

Askew offers another indirect parallel to Quaker experience, since many female Quakers also suffered for their beliefs and behaviors. By appealing to a general readership composed of both men and women, Hookes attained his goal of exposing the plight of the suffering people to all Protestants. He was able to engage and “enable ordinary men and women to participate vicariously in a great historic epic” by merely reading his martyrology.

Hookes also included martyrs not in The Book of Martyrs, whose lives and suffering occurred after Foxe’s death. One such example is John Penry, whose account was given in Hookes’s section entitled “Some Account of such as suffered in the Reign of Q[ueen] Elizabeth.” Since Penry had lived closer to the time when Hookes wrote The Spirit of the Martyrs, more evidence of his life and sufferings remained. Hookes was able to include two long excerpts from letters Penry wrote before his death that showed the readers “what a Zeal and religious Courage was stirring in these people at this day.”

Penry’s first letter was written to his church congregation, in which he assured them that “I never saw any Truth more clear and undoubted, then this witness wherein we stand.” Seven statements of Penry’s religious beliefs directly follow that declaration, which act as a sort of last testament to his fellow churchmen and women. Penry also immortalized two of his “dear Brethren Master Henry Barrow, and Master John Greenwood, which have last of all yielded their Blood for this Pretious Testimony.” By claiming their martyrdom was a precious testimony for conscience sake, Penry legitimated Barrow’s and Greenwood’s deaths. Penry warned people that “seeing Banishment, with loss of goods is likely to betide you all” and to “prepare your selves for this hard entreaty, and rejoyce that you are made worth for CHRIST’S (original capitalization) Cause to Suffer and bear all these things.”

Hookes probably included this letter because Quakers all suffered in the same ways that Penry’s congregation did having their goods confiscated. Once again, an indirect connection can be made with the Quakers, since Hookes’s audience would be aware of the similar treatment the Quakers received.

Penry’s second letter was addressed to Ellinor, his wife. He opened with a plea: “First then, I beseech you, stand fast in that Truth which you and I profess at this present in much outward discomfort and danger, let nothing draw you to be subject to Antichrist.” He continued that “I know if you and our poor children continue, that they shall see the blessed reward, even in this life.” He advised his family to “keep a good Conscience, and to bear a glorious Testimony

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127 Ibid.
128 Shepardson, “Gender and the Rhetoric of Martyrdom in Jean Crespin’s Histoire de vrays tesmoins,” 163.
129 Hookes, The Spirit of the Martyrs, 250.
130 Ibid., 251.
131 Ibid., 252.
Quakers endured abuse for those same offenses, so even though Hookes did not mention Friends, Quaker and understandably other readers would have been able to make that indirect connection. By specifically mentioning acts many sectarian groups suffered for, Hookes reached out to his fellow Quakers but also potentially to other persecuted people.

Hookes warned that some that initially suffered, such as the Presbyterians and the Independents, eventually got into places of authority and “soon forgot their time of deep suffering; and being exalted into Government, they tread in the same steps those had trodden that were their great Persecutors, and then they turned as Ridged Persecutors, if not worse, then those they had turned out.”

Ibid., 259. This appears to be a reference to the Protectorate government under Cromwell.
V. Conclusion

Early Quaker identification and self-understanding was based largely on the witnessing of faith through its members’ sufferings. Believing that they followed the true and pure faith Christ commanded of them, Quakers situated themselves as direct descendants of the earliest Christians who suffered purely for religious reasons. As the sect grew during its first decade between 1649 and 1659, more people began suffering while witnessing to their faith. Members were being persecuted for attending their own worship meetings; not attending worship services; not supporting the ministers through tithes; not paying to maintain the church; and generally disrupting the legal and unwritten social hierarchy through their speech and mannerisms. The increase in members’ suffering accounts, accelerated by more frequent persecution, prompted leading Quakers to centralize the sect. Their efforts resulted in the formation of the London Yearly Meeting to address issues that arose concerning membership, training, and sufferings. Beginning 1659, leading Quakers such as Edward Burrough used the suffering accounts as one form of public advocacy to end persecution through their publication as well as to internally stabilize the sect through dictating what acceptable Quaker behavior was. As more reported suffering continued flooding the London bureaucracy after the Restoration in 1660, some method was needed to organize all of them, and Ellis Hookes was delegated that task.

The end result of Hookes’s efforts was the compilation of the first two volumes of the “Great Book of Sufferings,” where he diligently organized and laboriously recorded every single suffering account received from every Quaker. By not showing preferential treatment to any member, Hookes upheld the egalitarian notion of the Quakers, while at the same time fostering a sense of internal identification, self-understanding, and solidarity among all members, united through suffering. In addition to being a member of a religious sect, every Quaker member felt part of a larger social group that spanned from England across the Atlantic world. Furthermore, Quakers everywhere could relate their tales of suffering to others, since every account had been recorded. Perhaps inspired by the already existing martyrological tradition in place in England, Ellis Hookes also compiled a martyrology, The Spirit of the Martyrs, which had the same dual purpose that the “Great Book of Sufferings” had: to legitimize the sect through comparing (although in this case implicitly) the sufferings of the Quakers to the biblical Christians who were persecuted for purely religious reasons as well as being a general Protestant plea to end religious persecution.

Joseph Besse’s two-volume work A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers, published in 1753, took the martyrological connection of the suffering accounts one step further than Hookes did by actually proclaiming that any Quaker who endured persecution was a martyr. Besse, who was one of Hookes’s successors as clerk, had ample access to all the Meeting for Suffering’s records. Like Hookes’s organization in the “Great Book of Sufferings,” Besse listed suffering reports topographically, county by county, and country by country. In effect, Besse used the overwhelming factual data contained in the persecution accounts and compiled by Hookes and later other Friends to demonstrate that the Quakers were “winning an extraordinary spiritual victory by the willingness of so many to suffer for their

The way in which Besse portrayed the earliest suffering of Friends clearly shows that he directly used the template Hookes employed, and in doing so, Besse continued the larger tradition of suffering.

Besse portrayed the Quakers’ accounts as John Foxe did his martyr tales in *Acts and Monuments*: Quakers behaved properly by heroically enduring their punishments and cruelties after witnessing to their faith. This representation of the Quakers was akin to the “Primitive Spirit of Protestantism.” Relevant information pertaining to laws and trials of the sufferers was also included, demonstrating how Quakers were winning the Lamb’s War by suffering. In essence, Besse depicted the Quakers as martyrs, even if they only endured loss of goods or imprisonment. Besse’s justification for this was that “to suffer for Christ was also to suffer with Christ,” thereby placing Christ within the sufferer.  

If any Quaker endured religious persecution, then he or she should legitimately be viewed as a martyr.

The whole process of behaving properly while witnessing to one’s faith, enduring punishments, and then sending in the suffering account to be recorded began with Hookes, but it soon became a ritualized practice developed over generations. The Meeting for Sufferings, established in 1676, furthered the tradition Hookes began after the Quaker bureaucrats saw the beneficial effects the writing down of suffering accounts had for all Friends. By witnessing to their faith, patiently enduring the consequences, and sending in their suffering accounts, all Quakers identified themselves with other members on collective terms as well as understanding their particular role within the sect. The entire process of joyously embracing persecution later formed itself into a deep seated tradition, as Besse’s martyrological work demonstrates. Even after the Quaker’s legal standing improved in 1689 because of the Toleration Act, suffering accounts were still sent in to the Meeting for Sufferings. Public advocacy to end persecution, therefore, was no longer necessarily needed. Yet the collection of the accounts still occurred because of the positive function it served for all Friends. The testimony to its beneficial influence on the formation of group identification and self understanding is the forty-four volumes of suffering accounts, written over the course of nearly a century, that can be read by any interested party today.

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137 Ibid., 228.
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