



FRIEND HANNAH BARNARD



1797

Friend [Hannah Barnard](#), a [Quaker](#) minister of Hudson Monthly Meeting in New York, felt a concern to travel among Friends and others in the British Isles. Her monthly meeting therefore issued a travelling minute which was duly endorsed by the Quarterly Meeting and by New York [Yearly Meeting](#).

1798

Arriving in the British Isles with her female traveling companion, the minister [Friend Hannah Barnard](#) would spend ten months visiting and preaching, travelling more than 2,000 miles. Many Methodists would attend her public meetings, particularly in Cornwall. A controversy would develop, and Friend Chuck Fager has analyzed the controversy in the following manner:

[A]t the 1799 session of London Yearly Meeting, [Friend Hannah Barnard](#) and a delegation of women Friends urged the yearly meeting hierarchy to permit the occasional use of meetinghouses by ministers of other denominations in exchange for similar use of churches by Friends. When the (male) elders nixed the idea, Barnard defended it with what the clerk considered "uncommon tenacity," to the point where she and her delegation were told to leave the session. Some historians believe it was from this confrontation, over a seemingly minor item of practice, that her later troubles over doctrine sprang. The London Quaker establishment was then taking on an evangelical version of orthodoxy that would hold sway there for over half a century.

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This establishment did not welcome challenges to its dicta, on matters small or large, from anyone, and particularly from women. But having already taken the elders on in a matter of practice, Friend [Hannah Barnard](#) was soon embroiled in controversy on matters of doctrine. The new conflict emerged after Friend [Hannah Barnard](#) moved on to visit Ireland. There she found Friends debating matters of war, peace and the Bible. Specifically, the question put to her was: Did God indeed command the ancient Israelites to make war (of a genocidal sort in several cases) on their enemies, as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures? This way of posing the issue was probably not accidental. Just a year before there had been a peasant uprising against English overlords, which British troops had put down very brutally. Many Irish Friends, as people of substance, were likely on the side of this imperial form of "law and order," and pointing to the scriptural massacres as justification for official violence was not a new form of rationalization. But there were Irish Friends who saw matters differently. They were a group of incipient liberals who rejected such literalist readings of the Bible, especially where the texts contradicted such central Quaker convictions as the peace testimony. These internal dissenters -sometimes referred to as "New Lights"- also became increasingly persuaded that it was un-Quakerly to make such doctrinal correctness a central part of Quaker faith in the first place. They thereby challenged a key assumption of the new establishment, namely the importance of correct evangelical doctrine, especially regarding the Bible. Friend [Hannah Barnard](#) joined with the "New Lights," and traveled among Irish Friends advocating their views in a spirited, articulate fashion, again meeting also with many non-Friends. When she finished her tour, Dublin Yearly Meeting gave her a certificate that said she had ministered "to general satisfaction," and expressed the hope that she might be "favoured to continue" her religious labors. In pursuit of this objective, Friend [Hannah Barnard](#) returned to London and applied to the Meeting of Ministers and Elders for a certificate to continue her travels in Germany. But other reports, of her work and message, from alarmed evangelicals, had also made their way to London, and in May, 1800, the elders rejected her request. She was soon directed "desist from preaching" and to return home as soon as possible. They even offered to pay for her passage, which she indignantly refused. The chief charge against Friend [Hannah Barnard](#) was that she denied the full truth and authority of scripture. Informally she was accused of all manner of heresies. Barnard fought the charges, insisting that her conclusions were in harmony with the original Quaker conviction that the leadings of the spirit within and not outward scripture, however interpreted, was the final measure of truth for Friends. "Nothing is revealed truth to me, as doctrine," she declared, "until it is sealed as such in my mind, through the illumination of ... the word of God, the divine light, and intelligence, to which the Scriptures ... bear plentiful testimony." Friend [Hannah Barnard](#) spoke her

convictions with great vigor. For instance, when asked about a verse in the First Epistle of John ("For there are three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." 1John 5: 7), she recalled that, "I felt not the slightest hesitation in saying I believed it to be a corrupt interpolation, for the very purpose of establishing the absurd and pernicious doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, some ages after the first promulgation of the gospel." (Incidentally, almost all modern biblical scholars agree that the verse is a late interpolation, and most recent translations omit it.) Even one of her critics grudgingly admitted she was "remarkably voluble and eloquent in delivery." But her appeals were rejected, and finally she boarded a ship for New York. The London elders were not finished, however. They sent copies of their indictment ahead of her, and by the time Friend Hannah Barnard arrived home in Hudson, in late 1801, she found that disciplinary proceedings against her were underway there too. Again Friend Hannah Barnard defended herself stoutly, and again her very assertiveness was added to the charges against her. When a weighty male Friend noted regretfully her willingness to challenge opponents of whatever stature, she replied that she was indeed ready "to meet any person, or even the whole world, while I felt conscious innocence." Again, though, Friend Hannah Barnard lost, and by mid-1802 had been disowned for showing a "a Caviling, contentious disposition of mind." She remained unrepentant, writing to a British supporter that "under the present state of the Society I can with humble reverent thankfulness rejoice in the consideration that I was made the Instrument of bringing their Darkness to light." Such banishment, however, did not bring an end to her ministry.

1799

At this point, in London, the Quaker establishment was acquiring the sort of evangelical tilt that would obtain there for over half a century. At London Yearly Meeting, the traveling minister Friend Hannah Barnard from the United States and a delegation of women Friends urged the yearly meeting hierarchy to agree to an exchange: occasional use of Quaker meetinghouses by ministers of other denominations in exchange for similar access to their churches by ministering Friends. When the all-male group of elders attempted to turn aside this plan, Friend Barnard defended it with such "uncommon tenacity" that she and her delegation were shown the door. Barnard then visited Ireland, finding the Friends there debating matters of war, peace, and the authority of the BIBLE. Specifically, the question the Irish wanted to put to her was: Did God actually command the ancient Israelites to make war on their enemies in the genocidal manner recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures? In the previous year a peasant uprising against English overlords had been suppressed with much bloodshed by the British army. Irish Friends who were people of substance probably favored this imposition of "law and order" despite its imperial flavor, and likely had been pointing at the scriptural massacres as justification for official violence, but other Irish Friends who were not so fortunate were not so bloodthirsty. These incipient liberals wanted to repudiate those literalist readings of the BIBLE where the texts were in conflict with central

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Quaker convictions such as the Peace Testimony.

[THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY](#)

These “New Lights” were persuading themselves that it had been a mistake to make doctrinal correctness central to [Quaker](#) faith. They thereby challenged the authority of the new establishment, which was based upon propounding top-down the meaning of [BIBLE](#) passages. Barnard joined with the New Lights and traveled among Irish Friends and non-Friends advocating their views. When she was ready to return to the USA,



[RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS](#)

Dublin Yearly Meeting certified that she had ministered “to general satisfaction” and petitioned that she might be “favoured to continue” her religious labors. Barnard returned to London and applied to the Meeting of Ministers and Elders for a certificate to continue into Germany. Other, hostile reports of her work and message, from the evangelicals, had also been forwarded to London.

1800

→ May: The London elders of the Religious Society of Friends rejected the request of Friend [Hannah Barnard](#) that she be allowed to continue her preaching on a tour of Germany. Instead she was directed to “desist from preaching” and return to her home. The elders offered to pay her passage, in order to be rid of her the sooner. Barnard fought the chief charge against her, which was that she was denying the full truth and authority of scripture, making the case that her activities were in harmony with the original [Quaker](#) conviction that it was the leading of a spirit within, not outward books however interpreted, which would be the measure of truth for Friends. “Nothing is revealed truth to me, as doctrine,” she declared, “until it is sealed as such in my mind, through the illumination of ... the word of God, the divine light, and intelligence, to which the Scriptures ... bear plentiful testimony.” When asked about the verse in the 1st Epistle of John which we now usually omit from our Bibles, “For there are three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one,” she denounced it as “a corrupt interpolation, for the very purpose of establishing the absurd and pernicious doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, some ages after the first promulgation of the gospel,” a diagnosis with which modern biblical scholars concur. Her appeals ignored, she boarded ship for New-York. The London elders, however, sent word of their indictment ahead of her, to her home meeting in Hudson NY.

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

1801

→ Late in the year: The London elders of the Religious Society of Friends had sent copies of their indictment of the traveling minister Friend [Hannah Barnard](#) ahead of her, and upon her arrival at her home in Hudson, she found disciplinary proceedings against her already underway.

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1802

→ Summer: By mid-year, [Hannah Barnard](#) was disowned by her monthly meeting of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) for possessing a “a Caviling, contentious disposition of mind,” so from this point in time forward it will not be appropriate for us to refer to her as “Friend Hannah.” In Ireland as well, most of these so-called “New Lights” had resigned from the Society or been disowned by their monthly meetings. Remaining faithful to the Peace Testimony, Barnard would organize a Peace Society, and attendance at the meetings of this society would soon become greater than attendance at the Hudson Friends Meeting. The situation in Hudson was famous among the Quakers of her time and there would be a spate of pamphlets and books produced, arguing the merits pro and con.

QUAKER DISOWNMENT
THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY

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1819

→ After [Friend Elias Hicks](#) had preached at the Hudson meetinghouse in this year, he was informed that [Hannah Barnard](#) had been in attendance, and had said that his message had greatly moved her — in part because his expressions were so similar to those for which she herself had been [disowned](#). Friend Chuck Fager has analyzed the matter as follows:

In the Society or out, Friend [Hannah Barnard](#) remained faithful to the Quaker Peace Testimony, later organizing a Peace Society whose meetings soon became larger than those at Hudson Friends Meeting. Asked once if the breach between her and the meeting were irreparable, Barnard replied, with a fine dig at Quaker process, that it was not, because when the meeting understood that it "had accused me wrongfully, they had only to confess it, and I could freely forgive them." Friend [Hannah Barnard](#)'s case was famous among Quakers of her time, and for decades afterward; a spate of pamphlets and books appeared, arguing the issues one way or the other. The breach she exposed continued to widen: in Ireland, most of the "New Light" Friends either resigned or were disowned. When [Elias Hicks](#) preached at the Hudson Meetinghouse almost twenty years later, in 1819, Friend [Hannah Barnard](#) was reportedly in the audience, and Hicks was told that she said his message had greatly moved her, in part because his ideas were identical to those for which she had been [disowned](#). Hicks's religious witness was in many ways similar to Friend [Hannah Barnard](#)'s, not least in the fact that it was evoking the increasing opposition of the evangelical establishment, opposition that was to have fateful results for the Religious Society of Friends. But that's another story. Hicks visited [Friend Hannah Barnard](#) in Hudson in 1824, and a year later she died peacefully at home.

1824

→ Friend [Elias Hicks](#) visited [Hannah Barnard](#) in Hudson, New York.

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1825

→ [Hannah Barnard](#) died.

1838

Friend [Joseph John Gurney](#), the most famous British evangelical [Quaker](#) of his day, detoured from a trip down the Hudson River specifically to preach the gospel in Hudson NY, in the lair of “the heretical [Hannah Barnard](#).”



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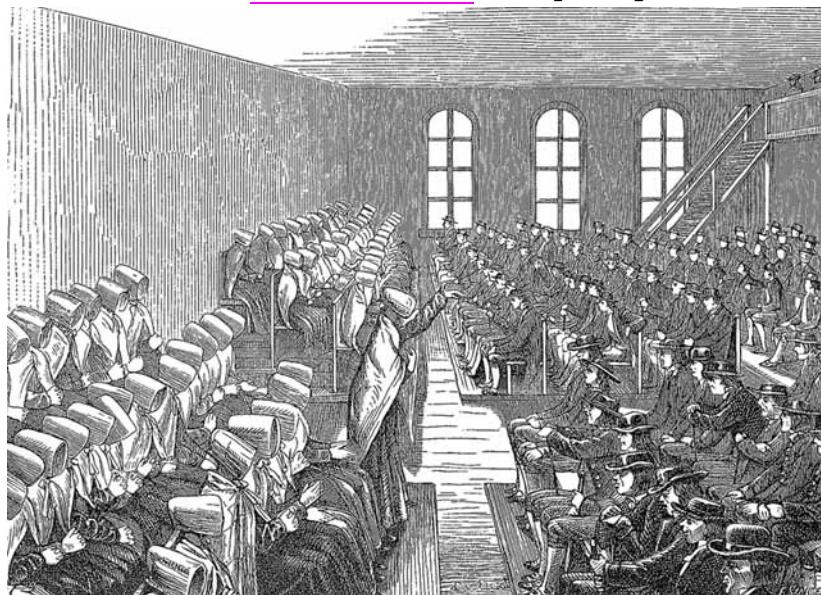
In 1838, more than a decade after her death, [Joseph John Gurney](#), the most famous British evangelical [Quaker](#) of his day, detoured from a trip down the Hudson River specifically to preach his gospel in Hudson, in the lair of “the heretical [Hannah Barnard](#).” I think I understand part of what moved him. There’s something seminal and memorable about Friend [Hannah Barnard](#)’s story. For one thing, the version of Quakerism which she articulated and championed has persisted, and even flourished. For another, the repressive orthodox reactions to it have likewise become a depressingly familiar feature of our history. Similarly, Friend [Hannah Barnard](#) carried on her ministry decades before Lucretia Mott and other Quaker women activists helped invent what we know today as feminism. Yet her assertiveness and eloquence in stating her case, her tenacity in her own behalf, her refusal to bow to male authority, and her indomitability even in isolation and defeat have hardly been bettered by the self-conscious sisters who came later. For some reason, however, Friend [Hannah Barnard](#)’s story has received but scant attention from many of the more prominent Quaker histories. Elbert Russell’s “The History of Quakerism,” and John Punshon’s “Portrait in Grey” mention her only briefly in passing; Larry Ingle’s “Quakers in Conflict” says little more. Even Margaret Bacon’s “Mothers of Feminism” slights her, perhaps because Barnard was more of a “Grandmother” of the movement. The most extensive treatments are in the first volume of Rufus Jones’s “The Later Periods of Quakerism,” and a 1989 study by David Maxey in Quaker History. Perhaps Rufus empathized with her; certainly

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he had taken his share of brickbats from a new generation of orthodox heresy-hunters. Yet despite its obscurity, Friend Hannah Barnard's story is in many ways the prototype, or better the archetype of liberal Quakerism. No wonder I imagine her elbowing her way to the front of the long line of liberal Quaker heroes. Joseph John Gurney wrote to his children that he believed he had done well in his preaching at Hudson, and perhaps he did. But Friend Hannah Barnard did pretty well herself.





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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



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ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

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