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NORTH CAROLINA QUAKERS IN THE ERA OF
THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine and place in an appropriate context the role of the Society of Friends, more commonly called Quakers, in North Carolina during the era of the American Revolution. An examination of letters, journals, and the minutes of monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings plus those of the Standing Committees yielded much material. An exhaustive search of secondary sources supplemented the initial findings.

The early Friends came to North Carolina for economic as well as spiritual reasons. They settled in the northeastern part of Carolina and then migrated to other sections of the colony. Always a minority, the Quakers were important as farmers and government officials, as well as spiritual leaders. They met with little opposition in the early years of settlement, but as their power grew and the Anglican church claimed its neglected parishes, this friction led to many small disputes and two large rebellions. The promise of an aggressive and rapidly growing Society was thwarted during these early years.

During the second period of Quaker history in North Carolina, that of the Anglo-French Wars, Friends experienced increasing difficulty with the provincial government over a variety of issues. Quakers became even more unpopular, mainly because of their opposition to the use of force. Before and during the American Revolution, Friends most often clashed with authorities in three main areas: (1) military service, (2) payment of monies for military operations, and (3) the swearing of oaths. These disagreements led to massive fines and

penalties which drained the Society of its livelihood. Some Friends were disowned for submitting to official pressure, but the majority remained true to their beliefs. The War of the Regulation proved to be the most severe test of the pre-revolutionary days for the Society.

However, the American Revolution was clearly the greatest calamity in history to hit the North Carolina Quakers. As in the Anglo-French Wars, Friends were generally true to their beliefs; a few members deviated but were quickly disowned by their meetings. Greater suffering took place in the later war years when the fighting actually came to North Carolina. There were three battles fought near Quaker settlements--New Garden, Guilford Courthouse, and Lindley's Mill. During these campaigns, Friends endured rampaging armies that destroyed and pillaged their farms and homes. The Revolution profoundly changed the Society in North Carolina. The War for Independence, linked with slavery, spelled the end of a vigorous Society in the state.

The aftermath of the war and the changes it brought were in many ways as difficult as the Revolution itself. The Society strengthened itself by pruning away its weaker members, and those who remained were more dedicated to the Quaker ideals. Quaker immigration stopped after the war, and Southern Friends in turn migrated westward to escape slavery. The Quakers who stayed in North Carolina turned from a life of public displays to one of quiet spiritual existence and community service.

North Carolina Friends left a definite mark on their state, the South, and the nation, although some historians claim it was subtle

and difficult to trace. While some chastise the Quakers for their failures, their impact on peace movements and abolitionism is notable. Perhaps it can best be said that the influence of a powerful example is a sufficient legacy.

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CHAPTER I

QUAKERS COME TO CAROLINA

When the general public thinks of the Society of Friends in early America, it recalls naturally Pennsylvania and William Penn. There were, however, prominent groups of Quakers in most of the other twelve colonies. Foremost among these "other" Quakers were the Friends of North Carolina. Friends in North Carolina were an important influence on the development of the area in colonial and revolutionary times. The extent of their influence was profound and has not received the credit due such a people. Because of the size of the denomination and the influence it exerted in the colonial government, Friends lived in what amounted to a "Golden Age" in the province from 1672 to 1725. As the colony became more Anglicized, however, Quakers lost out to the Church of England and their troubles began, troubles that were to worsen with the coming of the American Revolution. The bright promise of a Quaker sanctuary in the South would remain forever unfulfilled.

The idea that Quakerism provided a sanctuary against corruption of the Inner Light was not an idea that originated in America. George Fox in his early writings noted:

When all my hopes in . . . men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do; then O! then I heard a voice which said, "There is one, . . . Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition;" . . . and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy . . . [and] I

was come up to the state of Adam, which he was in before he fell.¹

It was the promise of a "New Eden," an "American Canaan" and a fresh start from the distractions of corrupting civilization which drew the first Friends to the wilderness that was the northern part of the colony called Carolina. There individuals could start a new life, worship as they pleased, and remain true to their beliefs. The first recorded Quaker in North Carolina was Henry Phillips, who settled in 1665 in the northeastern part of the colony, across the Virginia line on the banks of the Albermarle Sound. Phillips had fled New England where he and his wife had been converted to Quakerism. The harshness of New Englanders toward dissenters led Phillips and his family to seek shelter in the South.² Quakers in New England suffered heavy fines, ear croppings and tongue borings, and men and women were stripped to the waist and whipped. Even the death penalty, imposed by law in 1658, was used against three men and a woman.³ The earliest Friends in Carolina immigrated not only from New England but also from Virginia, to escape the strict laws passed by the House of Burgesses. Although punishments were not as severe as in New England, Quakers were imprisoned and fined in the Old Dominion during the 1660's.⁴

¹George Fox, A Journal or Historical Account of the Life, Etc., of George Fox (2 vols., Leeds, 1836), I, 92, 105-06.

²William Edmundson, "Journal of the Life of William Edmundson," in William Evans and Thomas Evans, eds., The Friends' Library: Comprising Journals, Doctrinal Treatises, Etc. (14 vols., Philadelphia, 1837-50), II, 111.

³Peter Brock, Pacifism in the United States: From the Colonial Era to the First World War (Princeton, N.J., 1968), 28-29.

⁴Francis C. Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends: The Story of Quakerism in North Carolina (Boston, 1959), 59.

If New Englanders and Virginians discouraged dissenters, the eight Lords Proprietors of Carolina did just the opposite. The eight--Edward Hyde, George Monck, William Craven, John Berkeley, Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Sir John Colleton, Sir George Carteret, and Sir William Berkeley--had been granted joint ownership of the area in 1663 by King Charles II. They were given land for meritorious service in returning the throne to the son of the executed Charles I. Although Sir William Berkeley as governor of Virginia had vigorously opposed both Quakers and Puritans, he and the other absentee landlords now were much more concerned with profit than religion in Carolina. They planned to operate a real estate office, offering to supply land to meet the ever present demand of immigrants to America. Not only did they envision benefits through annual payments of quitrents, but also they hoped to realize handsome profits through the production of such scarce and desirable resources as sugar, ginger, indigo, cotton, wines and whale oil.⁵ To encourage settlers, the Proprietors offered liberal terms concerning religion, barring only Catholics and atheists. They further guaranteed all settlers "the rights of Englishmen."

Correctly assuming that their colony would be worthless in its backward state, the proprietors encouraged almost anything that would increase the population and thereby increase the amount of money in their pockets. In the colony's earliest charter granted by Charles II, the now famous Carolina Charter of 1663, provision was made for toleration of dissenters, although it was always assumed that the

⁵Hugh F. Rankin, Upheaval in Albermarle: The Story of Culpeper's Rebellion, 1675-1689 (Raleigh, N.C., 1962), 4-5.

Church of England would be the Church in the Carolinas. The second charter, issued in 1665, was only a supplement to the original, but it retained the generous religious terms previously established. These ideas were put to practical use in 1665 when the settlers at Cape Fear were given terms which revealed an unusual breadth of toleration for that period. The terms read:

No person . . . shall be any ways molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question for any differences in opinion or practice in matters of religious concernment, but every person shall have and enjoy his conscience in matters of religion throughout all the province.⁶

To reinforce the rights of dissenters, John Locke, philosopher, physician, and confidant of Ashley-Cooper, either wrote or collaborated with the Proprietors in 1669 in drawing up the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina. This strange document, which combined feudalism and democracy, provided that any seven persons agreeing upon any religion should give some name to distinguish it from others. The Fundamental Constitutions also provided that no person of one faith should disturb or molest the religious assemblies of others or persecute them for their religious opinions or ways of worship.⁷ Everything possible was done by the Proprietors to invite dissenters to come to the northern part of the colony of Carolina, and Friends were not slow to take advantage of this open door.

⁶"Articles of Agreement had and made betweene Edward Earle of Clarendon . . ." in Walter Clark, William L. Saunders, and Stephen B. Weeks, eds., Colonial and State Records of North Carolina (25 vols., Raleigh, Goldsboro, and Charlotte, N.C., 1886-1914), I, 80-81; hereafter cited as N. C. Recs.

⁷"The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, Drawn up by John Locke, March 1, 1699," ibid., I, 187-207.

Although the earliest Quakers in Carolina brought their religion with them, many Friends in the colony were converts from the Church of England. William Edmundson, an aide to the Society's founder, George Fox, was primarily responsible for this great wave of conversion. He and Fox had sailed to America from England by way of Barbados and Jamaica to spread the word. They reached the shores of Maryland and then proceeded northward to New England. From there, Edmundson and Fox traveled to Virginia to proselytize. They then separated after a number of days, with Fox moving north again and Edmundson turning toward the south. Edmundson crossed the Great Dismal Swamp from Virginia into North Carolina in May of 1672.⁸ Stephen B. Weeks, the foremost historian of Southern Quakers, described the founder of Quakerism in North Carolina as ". . . a man of rude eloquence, of earnest piety, and shrewd common-sense. He showed unusual self-denial and was charitable to a fault."⁹

Edmundson and two companions traveled several days through the dangerous and treacherous wilderness. After many grueling miles, they arrived at the home of Henry Phillips, who had been the first Quaker in the area, but the group did not suspect and was overjoyed to find a fellow Friend. It seemed as if Divine Providence had directed them to that very home.¹⁰ As Edmundson recorded in his journal:

⁸Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 57.

⁹Stephen B. Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery: A Study in Institutional History (Baltimore, 1896), 30.

¹⁰J. S. Bowden, History of the Society of Friends in America (2 vols., London, 1850-54), I, 409-10.

"He [Phillips] and his wife had been convinc'd of the Truth in New England, and came there to live, who having not seen a Friend for seven years before, they wept for joy to see us" ¹¹ There in Phillips's home, Edmundson preached the first sermon ever heard in North Carolina to a people "who had little or no Religion, for they came and sat down in the Meeting smoking their pipes." They listened carefully, however, and in "a little time the Lord's testimony arose in the authority of his power, and their hearts being reached by it, several of them were tendered and received the testimony." ¹² Bibles were almost non-existent in the colony and few could read. The coming of Edmundson was thus a welcome relief and break in the monotony and drudgery of early colonial life. Hundreds came long distances, often on foot, to hear the Gospel. There appears not to have been a religious sect in the colony, and Quakerism could grow and prosper without interference from the Established Church. ¹³

Six months later, in October of 1672, George Fox himself followed up Edmundson's visit to Carolina with an eighteen-day stay of his own. When Fox arrived in the Albermarle country, he found a little Quaker nucleus there as the result of Edmundson's work. Fox took that nucleus and nurtured it until it took firm root. Together he and Edmundson carefully laid the foundations for their Society in North

¹¹Edmundson, "Journal," 111. Unless otherwise indicated, all spelling has been left in its original form within quotations in an effort to preserve the original flavor and emphasis of the work.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 57.

Carolina which has survived to this day.¹⁴ Governor Henderson Walker, writing to the Bishop of London in 1703, commented that Fox's influence on North Carolina was great: "George Fox . . . did infuse the Quaker principles into some small number of the people, which did and hath continued to grow ever since very numerous."¹⁵ One missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts wrote, "Some of the most ancient inhabitants after George Fox went over, did turn Quakers."¹⁶ After Fox's visit, Edmundson revisited Carolina in 1676. Even though this journey and his others to the southern colonies were extremely difficult for him, he felt it was his duty to go. As he recorded in his journal, "I was moved of the Lord to go to Carolina, and it was perilous traveling, for the Indians were not yet subdued, but did mischief and murdered several."¹⁷ Although the settlers were in the midst of Indian troubles, Edmundson found that the seed he and Fox had planted had fallen on fertile ground. He held "many precious meetings" along the Albermarle, revisited old Friends who were converted on his former trip, and saw "several turned to the Lord."¹⁸ He concluded that "People were tender and loving, and there was no room for the priests, for Friends

¹⁴Bowden, History of Friends, I, 412.

¹⁵"Henderson Walker to the Bishop of London" (October 21, 1703), N. C. Recs., I, 572.

¹⁶"Mr. Gordon to the Secretary" (May 13, 1709), N. C. Recs., I, 710. Hereafter the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts will be cited as SPG.

¹⁷Edmundson, "Journal," 123.

¹⁸Ibid., 124.

were finely settled . . . I left things well among them."¹⁹ By 1680 the Society's potential for growth appeared unlimited, and Quaker beliefs, such as pacifism, were firmly established.

It was in this type of environment that the Society flourished in many parts of early Carolina. Its contributions were recognized and appreciated during this time more than at any other point in colonial history. Although the major Quaker settlements were in the present-day counties of Perquimans and Pasquotank, Friends also settled in present Northampton and Chowan counties. The first recorded regular monthly meeting was in 1680 at the home of Francis Toms, a magistrate in Perquimans. Although this was the first recorded meeting, according to the usual custom of Friends there were probably meetings "for the affairs of truth" prior to this date.²⁰ Toms held many important positions in the Society and exercised great influence in early Carolina as a Provincial Councillor and magistrate. Hugh Smith, whom George Fox had visited on the Chowan River, also held meetings at his home in Perquimans.²¹

According to the minutes of the Eastern Quarterly Meeting of June 4, the first North Carolina Yearly Meeting was organized in 1698 at the home of Thomas White. The minutes read:

It was unanimous agreed by friends . . . that on the last day of the 7th month in Every year to be the yearly meeting for this Country at the house of Francis Toms the

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Rufus Jones, et al., Quakers in the American Colonies (New York, 1962), 307.

²¹Fox, Journal, II, 172.

Elder, and the Second day of the week following to be set apart for business.²²

These early Friends thus took the torch from Fox and Edmundson to insure that Quakerism would survive in North Carolina. Other Friends who also held meetings in their homes were Calub Bundy of Pasquotank and Stephen Scott.²³ All of these Friends, as were most of the early colonists, were probably farmers. Several Quakers, however, did hold government office. Early members of the Society in public positions were Daniel Akehurst, a judge; Emanuel Lowe, representative of a Proprietor; Thomas Symond, a judge; and Francis Toms, who was a Provincial Councillor and magistrate.²⁴ All of these men represented a small but powerful minority in Carolina, which made the province all but a Quaker colony.²⁵

The population of Carolina was always meager, and a sizable minority such as the Friends was easily visible. There are no exact population figures for the early years of the colony, but there are several estimates. Hugh T. Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome judge that the population of North Carolina in 1675 was 4,000; by 1701 it had grown to 5,000, and it stood at 7,000 by 1707.²⁶ Evarts B. Greene and

²²North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1698, Guilford College, Greensboro, N.C., Quaker Collection. All Standing Committee, Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meeting Minutes cited are from the Quaker Collection.

²³Pasquotank Monthly Meeting Minutes for January 1704.

²⁴Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 149.

²⁵Jones, Quakers in the American Colonies, 339.

²⁶William T. Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, North Carolina: The History of a Southern State (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1973), 715.

Virginia D. Harrington disagree, however, and place the total population of North Carolina at only 1,400 in 1677.²⁷

James Adams, a missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, wrote the Secretary of the Anglican Society in 1708 that "The Quakers though not the seventh part of the inhabitants . . . have in a manner the sole management of the country in their hands. . . ."28 Writing previously in 1704, James Blair, another Anglican missionary, had offered a different opinion:

For the country may be divided into four sorts of people: first the Quakers, who are the most powerful enemies to Church government, but a people very ignorant of what they profess. The second sort are a great many who have no religion, but would be Quakers, if by that they were not obliged to lead a more moral life than they are willing to comply to. A third sort are something like Presbyterians . . . [and] A fourth sort, who are really zealous for the interest of the Church.²⁹

These two letters can loosely be interpreted to place the number of Quakers in North Carolina at the turn of the eighteenth century in a range from 1,000 to 1,750 by Lefler and Newsome's figures. If James Blair's "would be Quakers" are included, as many as 3,500 could have been in some way associated with the Society of Friends. By Greene and Harrington's figures the number would be far less numerically but in the same proportions.

This period in which so many settlers were connected with the Society, 1672 to 1725, is generally considered the "Golden Age of

²⁷Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, eds., American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790 (New York, 1932), 156.

²⁸"Mr. James Adams to the Secretary" (Sept. 18, 1708), N. C. Recs., I, 686.

²⁹"Mr. Blair's Mission to North Carolina," ibid., I, 601-02.

Quakerism" in North Carolina. There was little hostility to Friends during this period and many Quakers held public office. A Friend, John Archdale, even served as governor from 1696 to 1697. Archdale, + who bought a Proprietorship from John Berkeley, especially protected the Friends in North Carolina and perhaps did more than any other man to usher in this "Golden Age." Under Archdale, the Friends at one time controlled half of the seats in the Assembly. This was in character, for Quaker participation in public life was an essential aspect of their concept of religion.³⁰ From the beginning, the Book of Discipline of some yearly meetings encouraged Friends to partici- + pate in public affairs. They were to "engage in some honorable occupation and secure a competency by the time they were sixty and then retire and devote themselves fully to public service."³¹

Archdale selected a Quaker Council, and since the leading colonists were members of the Society, they in turn elected a Quaker Assembly. In addition, many justices and other public officials were also Friends. Furthermore, Archdale was successful in getting the Assembly to pass an act exempting from service all Friends whom the governor should decide were motivated in their refusal to bear arms by genuine religious scruples. Prior to the passage of this act in 1696, Quakers were technically subject to imprisonment and fines for such refusals.³² Under Archdale's protection, Quakers in America had at

³⁰Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 50. Stephen B. Weeks first coined the term "Golden Age" for Quakerism in North Carolina from 1672 to 1725, when the Council, Assembly, public officials, and general public were in sympathy with the Friends.

³¹Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 148.

³²Brock, Pacifism in the United States, 65.

least one haven where they could escape persecution. Archdale's importance to North Carolina Quakerism cannot be overestimated. James Adams, the SPG missionary, recognized it when in his letter to the Secretary of the Anglican Society he wrote: "The Quakers . . . by the assistance and contrivance of Archdale, a Quaker and one of the lords proprietors, have in a manner the sole management of the country in their hands, ..." ³³ As a staunch Quaker, Archdale wanted to fulfill the dream of early members for a place where the Society could grow and prosper in peace.

Peace was of paramount importance to Quakers and has been so since the early years of the movement. Pacifism has been more clearly associated with the Society of Friends than any other single idea. It was this idea of nonviolence that drew most of the criticism and hostility from the public in North Carolina. The Quaker attitude toward military service implied treason toward the state and for this reason the government looked at members of the Society with suspicion. In addition, their direct competition with the doctrine of the Established Church earned them the hatred of the Anglicans.

To comprehend the pacifist position of North Carolina Friends, it is necessary to have a proper understanding of the ideas of the founder of the Society, George Fox. In a declaration to Charles II in 1660, Fox and five other Quakers stated their position in this respect clearly:

We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or pretense whatever;

³³"James Adams to the Secretary" (Sept. 18, 1708), N. C. Recs., I, 686.

this is our testimony to the world. . . . The Spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing of evil, and again to move us into it; and we certainly know and testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with the outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world. . . . Therefore we cannot learn war any more.³⁴

The actual peace testimony, however, began even before the Society was founded. In 1650, two years before the Society of Friends was established, Fox met a severe test which was to influence the course of Quaker history. When offered the position of captain of a company of soldiers to fight for Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth, he bravely refused. In his Journal Fox wrote, "I told them, I knew from whence all wars arose, even from the lust, according to James' doctrine; and that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars."³⁵ Rufus Jones, perhaps the most famous of all modern Quaker historians, calls this "the birth of the Quaker testimony for peace."³⁶ It was from this first protest against war and "the powers of darkness" that Fox was thrown into a "dungeon amongst the rogues and felons" for almost a year.³⁷ Thus developed the first conflict between Friends and authority; it would set the precedent for many similar episodes to follow.

³⁴Fox, Journal, I, 534-36.

³⁵Ibid., I, 142.

³⁶Rufus Jones, Faith and Practice of the Quakers (London, 1911), 106.

³⁷Fox, Journal, I, 142.

These episodes frequently would center on an ancient Biblical axiom--"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." The difficulty for Tar Heel Quakers often lay in determining just what belonged to God and what to the civil authorities. Friends in North Carolina presented a solid conscientious objection to any military service, which would be passed from father to son for many successive generations. This was the proud tradition which John Archdale as governor wished to preserve in Carolina. Unfortunately for North Carolina Quakers, however, Archdale's return to England coincided with a shift in policy by the other proprietors to bring their colony more in line with the philosophy of the Church of England. In order to strengthen the Established Church, several Vestry Acts were forced through the General Assembly of the Carolinas. Pressure from England and the lack of a strong protector in the New World eroded Quaker support and thinned the ranks of the Society. The Vestry Acts of 1701 and 1703 provided that all members of the Assembly must take an oath that they were members of the Church of England. In addition, it required an oath of allegiance to Queen Anne, which Quakers could not take in good conscience. Thus a large number of Quakers elected to the Assembly were denied the right to serve in their offices.³⁸ After Archdale and the passing of the Golden Age, the Society's direct political influence in North Carolina came to an end with the arrival of men and money from the SPG to quell the rising Quaker tide. Quaker influence after the Golden Age became more subtle, but did produce considerable influence upon

³⁸Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 53.

colonial North Carolina. After 1700 the Anglican Society viewed Quaker growth with increasing alarm and fear. As the SPG and the government placed restrictions on membership in the Society, the general public began to look with disfavor upon Quakers.

The Quaker fall from power in North Carolina was quite different from a similar occurrence that took place in Pennsylvania in 1756. There Quakers were more solidly entrenched and much more sophisticated in the affairs of government. The members of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting were forced by their own convictions, and not necessarily by outside forces, to abdicate their political power in the colonial government. It was the advent of a declared war against the Delaware and Shawnee Indians that made them lay aside the reins of power for what they believed would be only a short period of time. Power was roughly torn from the hands of the North Carolina Friends by comparison.³⁹

By 1709 William Gordon could write to the Secretary of the Anglican Society that "There are few or no dissenters in this government but Quakers, ..." ⁴⁰ Giles Rainsford, another SPG missionary, feared for the survival of the colony unless Quaker influence could be ended. In a letter to the SPG, he reported "that poor Colony will soon be overrun with Quakerism and infidelity, if not timely prevented by your sending over able and sober missionaries as well as

³⁹Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The Colonial Experience (New York, 1958), 61.

⁴⁰"Mr. William Gordon to the Secretary" (May 13, 1709), N. C. Recs., I, 708.

Schoolmasters to reside among them."⁴¹ John Blair, another Anglican missionary, feared Friends as "powerful enemies to church government" and regarded them as a people "very ignorant of what they profess."⁴²

+ Gordon singled out the Quakers of Perquimans as "very numerous, extremely ignorant, insufferably proud and ambitious, and consequently ungovernable."⁴³ Quakers were seen not only as a threat to the Anglican Church in North Carolina, which made them a threat to the Crown, but also as a heretical religious sect which corrupted the true word of God. An early reputation for fanaticism and immorality did not strengthen the cause of the Society either.

There would be many differences of opinion among Quakers, Anglicans and the government in the years to follow. The first such recorded collision between Friends and the authorities occurred in the spring of 1680. The Perquimans Monthly Meeting reported that this dispute resulted from its conscientious objection to war.

There some sufferings fell upon friends which we not finding in the old Book, we thought good to insert here; so that it may be for generations to come: It was thus, the Government made Law that all that would not bear arms in the Musterfield, should be at the pleasure of the Court, fined, Accordingly, friends not bearing arms in the field, should be at the pleasure of the Court, fined them that had a good Estate, a great fine & the rest according to their Estates and cast them into prison: & when they were in prison, they went and

⁴¹"Giles Rainsford to SPG" (Aug. 17, 1706), ibid., II, 245.

⁴²"Mr. Blair's Mission to North Carolina," ibid., I, 601.

⁴³"William Gordon to the Secretary" (May 13, 1709), ibid., I, 713-14.

levied their fines upon their Estates. There were nine friends put in prison. . . .⁴⁴

In 1680 such incidents were rare, but around the beginning of the eighteenth century they began to increase with alarming frequency. Quaker historian Stephen Weeks considered such treatment unusually harsh for North Carolina during that period. He attributed it to resentment over political rather than religious disagreements. Prior to this time, Quakers were the objects of unhappiness at the time of the so-called Culpeper Rebellion of 1677. During this crisis, Friends did their best to keep from becoming entangled on either side of a movement which involved bloodshed. Some Quakers did become individually involved, however, and the entire Society was blamed for the misdeeds of a few.⁴⁵ Yet during the rebellion, the Society in North Carolina showed that it was true to its convictions.

The "rebellion" was a conflict whose causes were deeply rooted and can be traced to the beginnings of Carolina's history. It arose from two somewhat related factors: a factional fight between what might be called the proprietary and the antiproprietary parties, and the efforts of England to enforce its Navigation Acts. The proprietary government had never been very popular in the colony, or even acceptable to many of the settlers. The enforcement of the Navigation Acts, which might exclude some settlers, including Quakers, from

⁴⁴Undated insertion in Perquimans Monthly Meeting Minutes, Vol. I, 1680-1762, Quaker Collection, Guilford College. The incident happened in 1680 but was not recorded in that year's minutes. It was recorded many years afterwards on a slip of paper and slid into the bound volume of minutes.

⁴⁵Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 172-73.

profitable trade with New England, merely fanned the flames. Some settlers were determined that the trade laws should not be enforced, resulting in a factional struggle for control of the colony's government in 1677. Armed rebellion broke out when the antiproprietary rebels surrounded the home of Governor Thomas Miller, captured and imprisoned him, seized the tobacco which he had collected for duties and took possession of the customs revenues and records. They then proceeded to arrest other officials of the colony and to take control of the government.

John Culpeper was the rebel who lent his name to the revolt. He and another of the colony's leading citizens, George Durant, were considered the leaders of the rebellion. Durant was thought by many to be a Quaker, but his name cannot be found in any of the Society's records, and he apparently was not a member of the sect.⁴⁶ Because of Durant's alleged connections with the Society and the fact that forty citizens of the heavily Quaker-populated Pasquotank precinct provided arms for the takeover of the governor's house, many people blamed the Friends for the rebellion.⁴⁷ As a result of these misunderstandings, Friends sent a memorial to England in 1679 proclaiming their innocence and asking for protection from Durant and the rebels. It was signed by twenty-one men "who are in scorne called Quakers." They wished ". . . to Inform . . . that [we] are a seperated people and have stood single from all the seditious actions which hath

⁴⁶Julia S. White, "Was George Durant a Quaker?" Friends Historical Association Bulletin, V (1913), 8-14.

⁴⁷Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 49.

happened within this county of Albermarle As will appear by what was acted in the year of 1677."⁴⁸ Much later, Governor Miller escaped from imprisonment and carried his case to the Proprietors. Culpeper also went to England to defend his actions and was promptly thrown into prison. Wisely the Proprietors chose a new governor, Seth Sothel, who was of neither faction, and he attempted to bring the rival groups together.

The Culpeper Rebellion and its results were to foreshadow the growing conflicts Friends would have with the authorities after 1700. It forewarned of a change from the previously tolerant attitude that had prevailed in the province. This change resulted partly from the efforts of the Anglican establishment to gain the upper hand. Both the crown and the majority of the Proprietors now supported these efforts, as zealous Anglican Henderson Walker was appointed to follow Sothel as governor. To solidify the Established Church in North Carolina, Walker forced the Vestry Act of 1701 through the Assembly. It was the first church law in the province and provided for the establishment of parishes, the organization of vestries, the erection of churches, and a poll tax for support of clergymen. The Quakers were furious and protested the law on the grounds of both principle and the increased taxes.

Friends were relieved when the Proprietors rejected the legislation but for financial and not philosophical reasons. The Quaker triumph was short lived, however, for Walker did succeed in pushing through a second Vestry Act in 1703. It provided that all

⁴⁸"Shaftesbury Papers," N. C. Recs., I, 250.

members of the Assembly must take an oath. Quakers were even denied the right to affirm instead of swear the oath, which they had done for many years.⁴⁹ This hostility erupted in a second rebellion, brought about by the exceedingly hostile attitudes of the new governors, and matters came to a head when Thomas Cary assumed the governorship of the colony.

In 1707, an antiproprietary party was formed to fight these changes. This time, the Society officially supported these efforts until it became apparent that the movement's leaders would resort to violence. Although Friends as a group were not responsible for this bloodshed, it was called by many "the Quaker War."⁵⁰ More often, however, the affair was called "Cary's Rebellion" after Governor Cary. At first the rebels supported newly installed Governor William Glover, but when he proved more inflexible than Cary, they ironically turned to Cary to oust Glover. Thomas Cary has the unusual distinction of having been involved on both sides of the rebellion which bore his name. Cary was a son-in-law of John Archdale but was not himself a Quaker. However, Emanuel Lowe, another son-in-law connected with the revolt, was a Friend.

Cary did receive help from individual Friends and this, coupled with his close association with Archdale, threw much suspicion on the Quakers. The Society as a whole condemned the rebellion, but William Saunders, the chronicler who edited the Colonial Records of North Carolina, believed Friends were greatly involved. He said:

⁴⁹Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 258.

⁵⁰Ibid., 150.

There seems to be but little doubt that the Quakers, how many, it is now impossible to say, bore arms during the Cary Rebellion. This violation of the principles of their faith was doubtless due to the fact that they were not born Quakers, and were still under the domination of the natural habit of belligerency.⁵¹

Acting Governor Colonel Alexander Spotswood of Virginia also felt that Friends were the main culprits of the rebellion. He wrote the Earl of Rochester that Quakers in North Carolina "often [have] taken up arms to maintain themselves."⁵² It was with the help of Spotswood that the rebellion was eventually put down. His indictment seems powerful, but a closer examination of primary sources reveals little to support his accusations. The suppressed revolt marked the end of Quaker dominance of the government and hurt their prestige, but Friends generally remained true to their testimonies. A few members had become involved in Cary's Rebellion, but they were in the minority. A committee of the Society was appointed in 1711 at the end of the insurrection,

to inquire into the action of [Emanuel] Lowe in stirring up a parcell of men in Arms, and going to Pamlico, and from there to Chowan In a Barkentine with Men and Force of Arms contrary to our Holy Principles.⁵³

Lowe was removed from the Yearly Meeting's executive committee, but presumably because he expressed suitable regrets for his actions and promised to refrain from warlike behavior in the future, he was not disowned by the Society. Thus the Yearly Meeting as a body was always very firm in its beliefs concerning war, even if a few individual members were not. A minute of 1711 emphasizes this point:

⁵¹N. C. Recs., I, xxix.

⁵²"Governor Spotswood to Earl of Rochester" (July 30, 1711), N. C. Recs., I, 798.

⁵³North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1711.

Those Friends who have given away their Testimony of Hiring, Paying and Working to make any fort or defence against enemies do give from under their hands to the monthly meeting for the clearing of the truth.⁵⁴

Friends found in violation of this policy were required to apologize in front of the meeting and perhaps stand for questioning or be disowned. It was, therefore, these two rebellions with their resulting conflicts and the passage of the Vestry Acts which broke the political power of the Friends in North Carolina and badly prejudiced much of the population against them. Rising hostility from both government and the common people forced Quakers to retreat into a period of "quietism."

When Quaker power and influence in the more populated areas of eastern North Carolina faded, Friends from both outside and inside the colony searched elsewhere for the utopian American Canaan. The same current of migration which had brought fresh streams of Quakers into eastern North Carolina now surged westward. This search for another "Eden" led them to the Piedmont section of North Carolina. In the last half of the colonial period, 1725 to 1775, there occurred a large and very influential migration to western North Carolina. Although Friends were not the only settlers in this pilgrimage, they comprised a large proportion of the total number. What initially induced Friends to settle in the wild and inhospitable piedmont, in addition to spiritual reasons, was the availability of the prized colonial commodity, land; and they were joined by others from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and New Jersey. Elijah Coffin, one

⁵⁴Ibid.

of the first Quaker settlers in the Piedmont, distilled the reason he moved to one word, "Soil!" Land in the west was cheaper, the climate more favorable, and the growing season was longer. Since most Quakers were farmers, these were powerful inducements to settle western North Carolina.⁵⁵ Thus Quakers came to the Piedmont for economic as well as spiritual reasons, although many may have been filled with the spirit of adventure that prompted others as well to make this move. They travelled along the "Great Wagon Road" through the Great Valley from the northern colonies. Between 1740 and 1770, Friends came in two major waves of migration from Pennsylvania by way of the other provinces. A few would also migrate from eastern North Carolina in the years 1760 and 1761, and some came from Ireland; but these would be overshadowed by the tremendous influx of immigrants from Nantucket Island off the coast of Massachusetts between the years 1771 and 1775.⁵⁶ These Quakers settled primarily in the present-day counties of Guilford, Alamance, Randolph, Chatham, and Surry.

One of the first of these western settlements was at Cane Creek in Orange County, what is now Alamance, and it was there that the first monthly meeting in western North Carolina was held and still flourishes as one of the oldest active meetings in the state.⁵⁷ It was

⁵⁵Errol T. Elliot, Quakers on the American Frontier: A History of the Westward Migrations, Settlements, and Developments of Friends on the American Continent (Richmond, Indiana, 1969), 35.

⁵⁶Jones, Quakers in the American Colonies, 297.

⁵⁷The story of these Friends who carved out a life for themselves in the wilderness of the Cane Creek Area is retold every summer in the outdoor drama, "The Sword of Peace," at Snow Camp.

in 1751 that Friends at Cane Creek requested the Quarterly Meeting at Perquimans to grant them the status of monthly meeting. The very first matter to come before the newly established business meeting was the request from the Quakers of the New Garden settlement, in what is now Guilford County, for permission to hold a monthly meeting for worship also. They cited extreme hardship in having to travel the thirty-five miles from New Garden to Cane Creek through backwoods wilderness to attend meeting. This was duly approved and both settlements grew into strong centers of Quakerism in the South.⁵⁸

Most of the Friends who settled in the Cane Creek area were Pennsylvanians, as revealed by the large number of certificates of membership transferred to the area. A considerable number of Nantucket Friends settled in the New Garden area and established the subordinate settlements of Centre and Deep River.⁵⁹ Gradually, New Garden became the center of Quakerism not only in North Carolina but also in the entire South. From the New Garden center, numerous Quakers moved out to establish settlements in the adjacent counties and eventually even into areas beyond the boundaries of North Carolina. Though now only a scattered minority, the church government of the Society drew the Quakers of the colony into a close-knit organization. Eventually, there were twenty-three monthly meetings, each composed of representatives from several individual meeting houses, who sent delegations to two Quarterly Meetings in the eastern and western parts of the

⁵⁸Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 79.

⁵⁹Seth Hinshaw and Mary Edith Hinshaw, eds., Carolina Quakers: Our Heritage of Hope Tercentenary, 1672-1972 (Greensboro, N.C., 1972), 21.

province. A Yearly Meeting of North Carolina Friends met and maintained contact with Yearly Meetings in Philadelphia and London.⁶⁰

In 1665, Henry Phillips could never have envisioned how vigorous and strong his Society would grow in North Carolina. Although the colony did not turn out to be the new paradise of which he had dreamed, neither was it tyrannical in the manner of New England or Virginia. The Lords Proprietors provided incentive to immigrate to the new land in the form of liberal charters and constitutions. Thus in spite of their motives, the Proprietors provided an open door to Quaker dissenters. However, Quakerism would never have become so strongly rooted if it had not been for the efforts of William Edmundson and George Fox. The visits of these two men turned North Carolina, for a while, into a virtual Quaker colony.

In later years, Friends would migrate for economic as well as spiritual reasons and pump fresh new blood into the Society. They settled in the northeastern parts of the colony first and then spread south and westward. Although a minority of the population, perhaps as little as one-seventh or as much as one-fourth at one time, they were highly visible and important members of the province. In addition to their church positions, the Quakers were important farmers and governmental officials. They met with little opposition in the early years of the settlement, but as their power grew and the SPG claimed its neglected parishes, friction occurred in the form of many small disputes and two large rebellions. The promise of an aggressive and rapid growth foreshadowed in the youth of Quakerism was not to be

⁶⁰Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 324-44.

fulfilled in its later years. Friends in North Carolina twice were given a chance to start the world over again; however, shock waves of these early efforts continued to make their presence known in the colonial and revolutionary world of North Carolina. The Society was an important part of the colony and later the state. Quaker roots were deep in North Carolina and the role they played contributed to the mind of the entire province. The Quakers' mere presence made Carolina a little more liberal than its other Southern neighbors.

Generally the early years of settlement in both east and west were periods of prosperity. However, Friends soon encountered storm clouds. Their uneasiness proved correct, for the truly good days of Friends in North Carolina were behind them. Ahead lay the French Wars, battles with the Indians, clashes with civil authorities, and the coming of a revolution that would shake the very foundations of the Society.

CHAPTER II

FRIENDS AND THE ANGLO-FRENCH WARS

Even though the years between the "Golden Age" and the American Revolution were difficult for Quakers in North Carolina, Friends still flocked south, remaining an important influence in the colony. They faced many tribulations--Indians, the Anglo-French Wars and demands from the province for men, money and loyalty. The Society was unjustly implicated in the War of the Regulation in 1771 and was swept up in the fury of the coming of the American Revolution. All this could never have been foreseen, however, and the Friends prior to the Revolution immigrated in large numbers to the gentle green hills of Piedmont North Carolina. Although he had never visited North Carolina, Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur wrote about its western section in a glowing report gleaned from secondary information:

No spot of earth can be more beautiful, it is composed of gentle hills, of easy declivities, excellent lowlands, accompanied by different brooks which traverse this settlement. I never saw a soil that rewards men so easily for their labours and disbursements.¹

It was this report and others like it that drew Quakers and others to the southern colonies to begin a new life. Friends were not only immigrating westward in North Carolina but southward as well. As the population grew around the Albermarle Sound in northeastern North

¹Michael G. St. John de Crèvecoeur, Letters from an American Farmer (New York, 1957), 128.

Carolina, Quakers gradually pushed south until a chain of meetings stretched down the entire coast of the province. Core Sound Monthly Meeting was established in 1773 in Carteret County, and Falling Creek Monthly Meeting in 1748 in what is now Lenoir County. Stephen B. Weeks, the great Quaker historian from Trinity College (now Duke University), claims that by the middle of the eighteenth century there were probably Quaker meetings in Hyde, Beaufort, Craven, Carteret, Jones, Bladen, and Lenoir Counties.²

Yet Friends soon learned that North Carolina, with its many benefits, still possessed a few disadvantages. One of these was the American Indian. Quaker attitudes toward these native Americans gave them a unique reputation among the "savages." It was this reputation of benevolence that helped Friends in North Carolina stay out of serious Indian troubles, and there are few references to Indians in Society Minutes. This Indian policy grew from the Friends' belief that there is a part of God in every man, including the red man.

George Fox, during his visit to the province, was told by a Carolinian that Indians did not have the spirit of God within them. Fox strongly disagreed and set about to prove the man wrong, as he related in his Journal:

Whereupon I called an Indian to us, and asked him, "Whether or not, when he did lie, or do wrong to any one, there was not something in him that did reprove him for it?" He said, "there was such a thing in him, that did so reprove him; and he was ashamed when he had done wrong, or spoken wrong."³

²Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 87.

³Fox, Journal, II, 172-73.

Thus Indians too were to be included in the family as the "Children of God." In the formative years of the colony, Friends clearly demonstrated that a policy of cruelty and barbarism was not necessary in dealing with the Indian. The Quakers always purchased their land from the Indians instead of taking it in the usual English fashion. It was for this reason, for example, that George Durant of Culpeper's Rebellion fame was thought to be a member of the Society, for he had purchased his land from the Indians.⁴ Most settlers in North Carolina, however, ignored the Quakers' good example and simply seized land and mistreated the Indians of the colony for years thereafter.

Finally the Indians, resentful of white land grabbing and aware of the refusal of the large Quaker element to bear arms in time of trouble, could stand it no longer. They launched a surprise attack on eastern white settlements in 1711. This Tuscarora War (1711-1713) was the worst Indian war in North Carolina's history. The Indians, many of the Tuscarora tribe, massacred hundreds of settlers, burned their homes, stole their valuables and destroyed their crops. Christopher Gale, writing to the Governor of South Carolina reported:

One hundred and thirty people massacred at the head of the Neuse and on the south side of the Pamlico rivers, in the space of two hours; butchered after the most barbarous manner that can be expressed, and their dead bodies used with all the scorn and indignity imaginable; their houses plundered of considerable riches (being generally traders),⁵ then burned, and their growing and hopeful crops destroyed.⁵

Contemporaries reported that women were forced to lie on the floor while stakes were driven through their bodies. Pregnant women had

⁴Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 33-34.

⁵N. C. Recs., I, 827-28.

their babies ripped from their wombs. Furthermore, it was reported that more than eighty infants were slaughtered. Men, women, and children lay mutilated and dead in the hot sun, prey to dogs, wolves, and vultures.⁶ The province was utterly unprepared and the colonists, suspecting nothing, fell victim to a fatally false sense of security. Had the majority of the colonists treated the Indians according to Quaker principles, perhaps the results of Indian-White relations would have been less disastrous.

However, many people felt that the Quakers were responsible for the unpreparedness of the colony. Carolina Governor Edward Hyde complained that "factions and the fact that one-half of the people were Quakers made it impossible to raise one-half as many troops as there were Indians in arms."⁷ Friends refused to fight in the war and steadily exhorted each other not to "pick up the carnal sword," and those members who paid the £ 5 penalty attached to the refusal were punished.⁸ At the Monthly Meeting in Pasquotank on September 16, 1711, they even discussed the possibility of disowning those who helped the combatants in any way. Ephram Overman was singled out as an example.

The friends appointed to visit Ephram Overman have discoursed with him concerning his forwardness in assisting Soldiers to defend himself and others with carnal weapons contrary to our knowing principles that which after further Consideration

⁶"A Letter from Major Christopher Gale" (Nov. 2, 1711), N. C. Recs., I, 825.

⁷Luther Lafayette Gobbel, "Militia in North Carolina in Colonial and Revolutionary Times," Historical Papers of the Trinity College Historical Society, XIII (1919), 43.

⁸Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 173.

he acknowledged to be an error in him and hoped for the future to take better care and walk more circumspectly.⁹

This refusal to participate in the war drew the wrath of officials at home and from other colonies. Governor Alexander Spotswood of Virginia held the same low opinion of North Carolina Quakers as Governor Hyde. Spotswood wrote in 1711:

I have been mightily embarassed by a set of Quakers who broach Doctrines so monstrous as their Brethren in England have never owned, nor indeed, can be suffered in any Government. They have refused to be employed in the Fortifications, but affirm that their consciences will not permit them to contribute in any manner of way to the defence of the country even so much as trusting the Government with provisions to support those that do work.¹⁰

He also accused deserters from the militia of "sheltering themselves under the masque of Quakerism."¹¹ Apparently less than courageous soldiers sometimes deserted and joined the ranks of Quakerism to escape military service. Since Virginia had to provide soldiers in place of Quakers and deserters to put down the Indian war, Spotswood's criticism is understandable. Later, he repeated these accusations, saying:

. . . and a new assembly being called, passed an act to raise 400 £ for prosecuting the war against the Indian enemy and because they could not raise a sufficient body of men in that Province [North Carolina] where Quakers make a great Number of the Inhabitants, they made application to me for an assistance of 200 men from this colony [Virginia].¹²

⁹Pasquotank Monthly Meeting Minutes for September 1711.

¹⁰"Governor Spotswood to Lord Dartmouth" (Oct. 15, 1711), N. C. Recs., I, 814.

¹¹"Col. Spotswood to Lords of Trade" (Feb. 11, 1712), ibid., II, 13.

¹²"Col. Spotswood to Lords of Trade" (May 8, 1712), ibid., II, 40.

Thomas Pollock, who succeeded Edward Hyde as governor of Carolina in 1712, also complained bitterly about Quaker influence in the province.

And as the Quakers with their adherents have been great occasion to the rise of war, so they . . . have been the chief cause that the war hath not been carried out with the vigour, it ought, by their disobedience to the government encouraging others to disobey. . . .¹³

However, interestingly enough, after the Tuscarora War was over, Pollock was forced to admit that some Quakers under his administration were good citizens. Doubtless this was due to the cessation of resentment toward them for their peace testimony.¹⁴

The SPG found additional evidence to discredit Quakerism during the years of the Tuscarora War. Missionary John Urmston wrote:

. . . having experienced the cowardice of our Quakers and their adherents who like other sectarists never care to fight except it be against the Church and Crown, the Indians will not dally nor trifle with us as they did at first.¹⁵

These episodes, together with the hostility of influential politicians, stained the Quaker image in North Carolina. They also signaled the beginning of tougher official attitudes toward Friends in the colony, even though Quakers remained an important influence in North Carolina. Yet the attitude of the majority of the population toward the Society was quite ambivalent. Viewpoints swung like a pendulum in times of peace and war; exemption from military service was granted and favorable feelings were exhibited in peacetime but both disappeared upon the outbreak of hostilities.

¹³"From Pollock's Letter Book" (April 30, 1713), ibid., II, 40.

¹⁴Ibid., II, v.

¹⁵"Mr. Urmston to the Secretary" (Sept. 22, 1714), ibid., II, 144.

Of the four Anglo-French Wars that rocked America before the American Revolution, only the first, King William's War, fought from 1689 to 1697, had no direct effect on North Carolina. The second, Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), led indirectly to the disastrous Tuscarora War but resulted in little more than a few minor Spanish naval attacks on the province's coast. It was the third, King George's War (1744-1748), that saw North Carolina troops in action for the first time as part of the British army. In 1729, George II had purchased the shares of seven of the eight Lords Proprietors and North Carolina became a royal colony. Sir George Carteret's share was not sold but was incorporated into the colony later as the Granville District. South Carolina had become a royal colony ten years earlier in 1719 when the two Carolinas were officially divided.¹⁶ It is interesting to note that the end of the Quakers' "Golden Age" closely coincided with George II's purchase of North Carolina. By living in a colony now owned by the King who was more interested in loyalty than the profit-minded Proprietors, Quakers would find greater difficulty in practicing their unique form of Christianity.

When the third Anglo-French War thrust itself so abruptly into the lives of the North Carolina colonists, some of the frontier settlers abandoned Quakerism. During such times of violence, it was not only politically expedient but much safer to reject the nonviolent and lenient Indian policies of the Society.¹⁷ Thus the Anglo-French Wars provided the most critical test of Quaker devotion to their

¹⁶Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 73-75.

¹⁷Robert W. Ramsey, Carolina Cradle: Settlement of the North-west Carolina Frontier, 1747-1762 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1964), 136.

traditional religious testimonies. Friends refused to fight, pay taxes for war purposes, take oaths of allegiance to the King or do anything connected with war. Yet many gave more money toward peace efforts than all the taxes would have cost them.¹⁸ In the intervals between the wars, Friends were urged to maintain their peaceful ways by many epistles from London. They were reminded

That Friends be vigilant in keeping up the peaceable Principles possessed by us as a people and in no manner join with such as may be for making warlike preparations offensive or defensive but upon all occasions to demean themselves in a peaceable manner thereby to demonstrate to the World that our Practices (when we are put to the Trial) correspond with our Principles.¹⁹

Although many frontier Quakers abandoned their faith, the majority of Friends in North Carolina obeyed these instructions meticulously and demonstrated their obedience by their daily opposition to anything military.

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The fourth Anglo-French War, known in America as the French and Indian War, set the stage for Quaker "sufferings" for several succeeding decades. This war, which lasted from 1754 to 1763, placed great demands on North Carolina for men and supplies. It also demanded unswerving loyalty from the royal subjects of the colonies. The Quakers of North Carolina could in good conscience supply none of these.

¹⁸Elizabeth Gray, Contributions of the Quakers (Wallingford, Pa., 1947), 80.

¹⁹Rayner W. Kelsey, "Early Books of Discipline of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting," Friends Historical Association Bulletin, XXIV (1935), 22.

During the Anglo-French Wars, the most commonly misunderstood Quaker principle was the Society's refusal to allow its members to serve in the colonial militias. By 1705, Quakers who refused to serve were subject to fines, distraint of goods, or imprisonment.²⁰ Such persecution was rarely carried to its fullest extent, but there was a great deal of harassment, injury, and loss of property. The North Carolina Quakers had always puzzled their neighbors with regard to their refusal to bear arms; consequently, local courts often seized the property of delinquent Quakers. The less conscientious Friends who purchased exemptions were criticized by their more dedicated brethren.²¹ Years later, the 1743 Yearly Meeting settled this dispute by giving their members the "liberty" to pay the fine or to face legal action.²²

The Yearly Meeting frequently pressed the royal governors and Assembly for complete exemption for their members from military service. In 1738, the Assembly exempted Quakers from duty if they would provide a suitable substitute, but even this did not suit the conscience of many Friends. Thus North Carolina Quakers were imprisoned for not attending musters, paying fines, submitting to the distraint of goods, or providing substitutes.²³ In 1755, Friends

²⁰Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 150. "Distraint," a term frequently used in Quaker minutes and governmental documents, means the seizure of property for non-payment of taxes.

²¹Patrick Soule, "The Quaker Conscript in Confederate North Carolina," Quaker History, LVI (1967), 90.

²²North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1743.

²³Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 150.

again proposed an exemption but were refused. The North Carolina Assembly, speaking to the committee which proposed the bill, stated: ". . . we find you have exempted the Quakers from enlisting or mustering as militia, and as we think such exemption must be attended with bad consequences we cannot pass the Bill. . . ." ²⁴ Earlier the Assembly had tried to recognize the uniqueness of the Quaker position and proposed ". . . that they [Quakers] shall be obliged to muster as other Pioneers with a good axe, spade, shovel or Hoe" in place of the regular musket. ²⁵ Although this amendment was never passed, it represented an attempt by the colonial government to respect the Quaker principle of conscientious objection.

Yet many individuals refused to consider any concessions for the Society. Colonel Griffin Rutherford of Bladen County urged that Quakers should be made to attend muster or pay "as in the northern counties." He also complained that fines were not high enough to oblige the militia to attend muster and should be raised. ²⁶ In 1756, an act was passed requiring every twentieth man in each county to be drafted and sent to the frontier to fight in the French and Indian War. Those who refused were to be court martialed. The North Carolina Yearly Meeting directed its Standing Committee to select four members to attend the court to explain why Friends could not attend muster. ²⁷ The Standing Committee reported:

²⁴N. C. Recs., V, 506.

²⁵Ibid., V, 269.

²⁶Ibid., V, 161.

²⁷North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1757.

The Committee taking into consideration that it might be necessary to prefer opposition to the Governor, Council and Assembly on account of the Militia Act now in force in the province where upon a petition for that purpose was read and approved and signed by those of the committee . . . to refer the said petition to the Governor, Council and Assembly. . . .²⁸

The Standing Committee was also to assist those Friends who had become entangled with the military. They appointed "Joseph White to attend the Court Martials if one should be held in the county of Perquimans, the Yearly Meeting in order to give friends reason for not attending musters" and several Friends in Pasquotank were chosen for the same purpose.²⁹ In 1770, an amendment was made to the militia laws of the colony which recognized that "whereas there are in divers parts of this province several people called Quakers, who demean themselves in a quiet and peaceable manner, and from religious principle, are conscientiously scrupulous of bearing arms," they were not obliged to muster. Friends had to enlist under a captain, however, and in case of insurrection were forced to serve or furnish a substitute or pay a penalty of £ 10.³⁰ Later, in 1771, after many petitions Quakers finally received a long-awaited exemption, provided they could produce a certificate of membership in good standing from the Society. The Yearly Meeting sent a memorial of appreciation to the Assembly. It read:

²⁸Standing Committee of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1757.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰N. C. Recs., IX, 176-77.

Gratitude at this time constraineth us in behalf of ourselves and Friends, to return to you an Humble and dutiful acknowledgment for your great and unexpected favor and indulgence in passing an Act at the last session of Assembly, to exempt us from the sufferings we have been exposed to on account of our religious and conscientious scruples with respect to the Militia or learning the Act of fighting with the Carnal Sword.

And as our peaceful principle of non-resistance leads us to a passive submission of our superiors, in cases that doth Interfere with our consciences We hope and believe that no disadvantage will ever arise to our fellow subjects from your favor to us therein. We shall think ourselves in duty bound to use our best endeavours, to detect Hypocritical pretenders who may be desirous to screen themselves under our profession. . . .³¹

Thus after decades of fruitless petitioning, the royal government made some attempt to compromise with the Society at the conclusion of the Anglo-French Wars. Unfortunately, this attitude would prevail only five short years until the outbreak of hostilities which led to the American Revolution.

Closely connected with Friends refusing to bear arms was their unwillingness to pay taxes, militia fines, or any other monies that would support the war effort. In 1740, Quakers protested the tax levied to provide a powder magazine for each county as an offense to their consciences. Some paid the tax but justified it by saying that they were not responsible for the way the money was spent. In the same year, they consulted London Friends as to the payment of such taxes used for troop support. Although there is no recorded answer, it is known that the Standing Committee conferred with the authorities on this issue as well as matters concerning military service.³² Each of

³¹North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1711.

³²Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 173; Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 151.

the Quaker meetings routinely listed the amount of "sufferings," the term sometimes used by Friends for monies collected by force. The amount ranged from yearly totals for each meeting of £ 85 in 1759 to 26 shillings, 8 pence in 1765. In 1768 there was again a rise in the amount to £ 15, 4 shillings.³³ John Woolman, the famous Quaker abolitionist from Pennsylvania, related in his journal how some of this money was collected. When journeying through North Carolina in 1757, he met a Friend, a minister and working farmer possessing no slaves, who had refused to pay a recently imposed war tax. This Quaker preferred to have his goods distrained rather than contribute in this way to an activity he believed inconsistent with Quaker beliefs. Woolman wrote:

. . . but as he was the only person who refused it in those parts and knew not that any one else was in the like circumstances, he signified that it had been a heavy trial to him, especially as some of his brethren had been uneasy with his conduct in that case.³⁴

It was very difficult for a Friend to watch all his material possessions sold for taxes, and it took a strong Society with firm beliefs to provide support for those who might falter. However, no matter how difficult it was to remain true to their principles concerning taxation and fines, the majority of Friends resolutely defied the Crown.

In addition to men, money and supplies, the North Carolina colonial government demanded the intangibles of sworn loyalty and

³³North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1759, 1765, and 1768.

³⁴John Woolman, The Journal and Essays of John Woolman, ed. Amelia Mott Gummere (London, 1922), 200-01.

allegiance from its citizens during the Anglo-French Wars. The province required that a pledge of loyalty be taken by every white adult male. The old Vestry Acts had commanded every member elected to the Assembly to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown. In 1715 the Assembly had passed "an Act for Liberty of Conscience and that the Solemn Affirmation of the people called Quakers shall be accepted instead of an oath in the usual form"--the only minority to be singled out for such special treatment.³⁵ As the title implies, the act allowed Friends to affirm instead of swear. Still many Quakers could not even accept the affirmation, as these Society minutes relate:

. . . accounts received that Seven of our Religious Society have so far deviated as to act contrary to the wholesome rules and advices heretofore given by taking the present affirmation of Fidelity which hath brought pain and sorrow over many of our minds, and we apprehend trends to lay waste our Christian Testimony.³⁶

By 1747, even this act had been allowed to lapse and a duly elected member of the Assembly, Quaker William Borden, was denied his seat because he refused to take the oath of office. The Assembly recorded the action in the following manner:

Mr. William Borden one of the members of Carteret County appeared and acquainted the Gentlemen of his Majesties Honourable Council that were appointed to Qualify the members of the House that he would not take oaths appointed by Law for the Qualification of Public Offices being one of the People called Quakers and therefore desired his solemn affirmation might be taken as in other cases which said members of his Majesty's Council rejected.³⁷

³⁵N. C. Recs., XXIII, 11.

³⁶Cane Creek Monthly Meeting Minutes for June 1715.

³⁷N. C. Recs., IV, 855-56.

Although Borden was denied his seat, the act for affirmation was reenacted in 1749. Toward the end of the French and Indian War in 1762, Friends were once again allowed to give "affirmation or declaration as may remove the Difficulty which many of them are under."³⁸ Here the colonial government is clearly attempting to compromise and allow members of the Society to remain part of the province. The royal government demanded loyalty, but it seems at a much lower price than the more valued commodities of men and money. This period of reconciliation would be shortened, however, by the ominous rumblings of the coming of the American Revolution.

³⁸Ibid., XXIII, 559.

CHAPTER III

FRIENDS AND THE COMING OF THE REVOLUTION

It was during the years just prior to the American Revolution that Quakerism in North Carolina experienced its second great wave of migration and growth. The western part of the colony attracted other groups to the Piedmont including the Germans, Moravians, Scotch-Irish, Dunkers, and Mennonites. The infusion of these diverse ethnic and religious groups into North Carolina during the eighteenth century transformed the make-up of the province. Between 1750 and 1770, the population grew from an estimated 65,000 to 250,000. In the early 1750's only one-third of the population lived in the Piedmont, but by the early 1770's one-half resided there. The political consequence of this western expansion was intense sectional hostility between the eastern planter aristocracy, which through malapportionment of the Assembly kept a stranglehold on political power in the colony, and the emerging middle-class leadership in the Piedmont.¹ It was this struggle that would so involve Quakers in the Piedmont that they would be blamed for its eventual violent culmination.

Friends were blamed for many things because they were such a large visible minority in the west. The large settlements of Friends in present-day Alamance, Chatham, Guilford, Randolph, and Surry Counties were formed by Quaker immigrants, not by expansion of the

¹Robert M. Calhoon, Religion and the American Revolution in North Carolina (Raleigh, N.C., 1976), viii.

native element. This stream of immigration was strong, healthy, and vigorous, and according to Weeks, "It added a stable element, fortified still by the presence of thrift, frugality, and energy, to the making of the State."² Carver's Creek in Bladen County, Dunn's Creek in either Cumberland or Bladen Counties, and Cane Creek in Alamance were among the first settlements. Some of the founders of Quakerism in western North Carolina included John Powell, Joseph and John Doan from Bucks County, Pennsylvania; Simon Dixon, John Standfield and Thomas Cox from Kennet, Pennsylvania; and William Reynolds, Richard Sidwell, and Jeremiah Piggott from East Nottingham, Pennsylvania. Others included Thomas Carr from Gunpowder, Maryland; and John Hiatt, Aaron Jones, Eli Vestal, William Beeson, Mordecai Mendenhall, and William Hunt all from Hopewell, Virginia.³ Most were farmers or tradesmen and helped to lend an aspect of stability to the wild land.

Cane Creek and New Garden meetings were formed around 1750, Deep River in 1753, Eno in 1754, and Centre in 1757. New Garden later became one of the largest and most influential of the western meetings. These western meetings also extended great influence over the non-Quaker communities of the Piedmont. The western Quakers represented some of the oldest and best Quaker families in Pennsylvania. Many English Quaker names had been adopted for towns in America, and it was from Pennsylvania that Friends carried the name "New Garden," which had come originally from the Old World, to North Carolina. In turn

²Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 101-03.

³Ibid., 103.

migrating North Carolina Quakers carried this name to Indiana.⁴

However, the North Carolina element was reinforced by other migrants from old Quaker stock. Elijah Coffin tells of one such migration from Nantucket Island, Massachusetts:

The island of Nantucket being small, its soil not very productive, a large number of people could not be supported thereupon. . . . The population of the island still increasing, many of the citizens turned their attention to other parts, and were induced to remove and settle elsewhere, with a view to better their condition as to provide for their children, etc. A while before the Revolutionary War, a considerable colony of Friends removed and settled at New Garden, in Guilford County, North Carolina, which was then a newly settled country. My grandfather Coffin was one of the number that thus removed. His removal took place, I believe, in the year 1773.⁵

Although New Garden served as an example for most of the meetings in the section, it was Cane Creek that emerged as the center of the discontent that culminated in the War of the Regulation.

In the late 1760's and early 1770's, North Carolina Quakers became involved in the insurrection in which the rebels called themselves "Regulators." This group of backcountry farmers and small merchants grew impatient with high taxation and official corruption. Even Lord John Earl Granville, who had been rewarded with nearly one-half of North Carolina by the King for his services--the so-called Granville District--admitted that fees and taxes were excessive and that 50 percent of the taxes collected were embezzled by his agents.⁶ However, not all historians have viewed the War of the Regulation as

⁴Ibid., 104-07, 109.

⁵Elijah Coffin, Life with a Reminiscence by His Son, Charles F. Coffin (n.p., 1863), 10.

⁶Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 151.

the simple east versus west confrontation of early interpreters. Recently Marvin L. M. Kay, James P. Whittenburg, and A. R. Ekirch have all suggested that the Regulation was a classic case of class struggle against conservative planters, merchants, and lawyers. Yet all three fail to discuss the role of the Quakers in the Regulation.⁷

One of the main leaders of this "War of the Regulation" was Hermon Husband, a former Quaker who had been disowned by Cane Creek Monthly Meeting in 1764. Some detractors of the Society were eager to link Friends to the rebellion and often called Husband a "Quaker Preacher."⁸ The fact that he had been disowned for over seven years before any real violence occurred and two years before the Regulation began seemed to have been overlooked. His dissociation from the Society was not always clear to his opponents and those of the Friends. Husband was evidently a man who was accustomed to speak fearlessly and was "guilty of making remarks on the actions and transactions" of the meeting. The Cane Creek Monthly Meeting Minutes reported that he spoke "his Mind," and was to blame for "publicly advertising the same."⁹ Husband's speeches caused much ill feeling and even produced

⁷A. R. Ekirch, "'A New Government of Liberty': Hermon Husband's Vision of Backcountry North Carolina, 1755," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., XXXIV (1977), 632-46; James P. Whittenburg, "Planters, Merchants, and Lawyers: Social Change and the Origins of the North Carolina Regulation," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., XXXIV (1977), 215-38; Marvin L. M. Kay, "The North Carolina Regulation, 1766-1776: A Class Conflict," in Alfred F. Young, ed., The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism (DeKalb, Ill., 1976), 71-123.

⁸Julia S. White, "A Church Quarrel and What Resulted," Friends Historical Society Bulletin, V (1914), 93.

⁹Cane Creek Monthly Meeting Minutes for January 1764.

scuffles on several occasions. Husband had come to North Carolina in 1751 from East Nottingham, Maryland. His hot temper and radical ideas later earned him the title of "the Thomas Paine of the South" and "North Carolina's first great liberal."¹⁰ Eli Caruthers, who studied the oral traditions among the people who knew Husband, described him as:

a man of superior mind, grave in deportment, somewhat taciturn, wary in consternation, but when excited, forcible and fluent in argument. He was a man of strict integrity and firm in his advocacy of the right.¹¹

The final event which resulted in Husband's expulsion from the Society concerned one Rachel Wright. She had committed some disorder but had offered an apology for her act, which seems to have been accepted; and in 1763 she asked for a certification of removal to Fredericksburg, South Carolina. Some of the members of the monthly meeting thought she was not sincere in her explanation and opposed the certificate.¹² Husband was caught up in this battle and when his attitude was judged quarrelsome and violent, he was disowned. The Cane Creek Minutes reported:

Hermon Husband being complained of for being guilty of making remarks on the actions and transactions of this meeting . . . and publicly advertising the same, and after due labor with him in order to show him the evil of so doing this meeting agrees to disown him.¹³

¹⁰Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 181.

¹¹Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 151.

¹²Julia S. White, "History of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting," Friends Historical Society Bulletin, II (1909), 12-13.

¹³Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes for January 1764; Cane Creek Monthly Meeting Minutes for January 1764.

Husband was not without his own following, and a number of Friends expressed dissatisfaction with the action. However, the disownment stood and many of Husband's supporters followed him out of the faith. Legend suggests that Husband sat upon the meeting house steps, removed his boots, and shook the dust off them in symbolic repudiation of the Society.¹⁴ It is significant to note that many of his ex-Quaker followers became Regulators. A few Friends who remained with the Society did become "rebels" at the time of the Regulation, but they were dealt with by their meetings for involvement in the movement.

Husband became a prolific pamphleteer and wrote several pamphlets which fostered the discontent that climaxed in violence at the Battle of Alamance in 1771. Among them were An Impartial Relation and A Fan for Fanning and a Touchstone for Tryon which particularly fired the public's imagination. It was Husband, the ex-Quaker, who more than anyone else expounded the aims of the Regulation: to make government more responsible to the people and to eliminate excessive taxes, graft and corruption in the backcountry. Husband's influence was aided by the additional attention he received from those who thought he was a Quaker.

Many of Husband's relatives and friends remained in the Society, among them Simon Dixon, also of Cane Creek. Dixon had married Husband's sister and was thought to be one of the first grist mill operators in the Piedmont. Several residents of the area accused him of having favored and assisted the rebels. In 1769 when the Cane Creek Meeting tried to disown him, he appealed to the Quarterly

¹⁴Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 150.

Meeting and was reinstated, no explanation of charge or decision being recorded.¹⁵ Two members of the meeting, Jeremiah and William Piggott, earlier had been accused of informing the governor's aide, Edmund Fanning, that Dixon and Husband were the leaders of the Regulators. They requested Fanning's aid in establishing their innocence, and their petition read:

Those that calls themselves Regulators Has Entertained an opinion that Brother Jeremiah and I was Qualified when we ware at Court that Simon Dixon and Harmon Husbands was the Ringleaders of the mob and we understand we are much threatened on the account of it therefore If thee would be pleased to send a few lines to Simon Dixon wheather it be true or faulse.¹⁶

In response, Fanning duly wrote this letter to Simon Dixon:

Sir--I this Day Received the Inclosed letter from William Piggott and in answer thereto and in compliance with His Request; I do, In Justice to the wrongfully blamed and accused Hereby Certify that I do not know neither do I believe, or did I ever hear that any Information was ever made by either of the said William or Jeremiah Piggott on their solemn against yourself Harmond Husbands or any other Person concerning their being engaged in the Late Miserable Unhappy Disturbance In this Country.¹⁷

Even though the Piggotts denied accusing Dixon and Husband of implication in the Regulation, many felt they were involved. It was thought that Dixon distributed Husband's circulars at his store and mill to stir up the Regulators to open resistance.¹⁸ The pamphlets, An Impartial

¹⁵Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes for May 5, 1769 and August 12, 1769.

¹⁶"William Piggott to Colonel Fanning" (May 10, 1768), N. C. Recs., VII, 745.

¹⁷"Edmund Fanning to Simon Dixon" (n.d.), N. C. Recs., VII, 745-46.

¹⁸Thomas C. Dixon, Geneology of the Dixon Family (Guilford College, N.C., n.d.), 2.

Relation and A Fan for Fanning and a Touchstone for Tryon, appear to have achieved their goal, for in 1771 the rioting and abuse of property by the Regulators in the backcountry reached such great proportions that Governor William Tryon marched west at the head of 1,400 militiamen to quell the disorders. The militia clashed at Alamance Creek with 2,000 backwoods insurgents on May 16, 1771. This "Battle of Alamance" lasted just over two hours and resolved once and for all the "Regulator" question. Before the actual fighting began, messages were sent back and forth until the patience of both sides was finally exhausted. The last message was from the Regulators, "Fire and be damned." The militia opened fire with both musket and cannon until, at the end of two hours, the return fire from the Regulators slackened. Tryon was quick to seize the advantage and called for an advance. As the militia moved forward, the Regulators broke and began to run, throwing away guns, supplies, and ammunition and leaving seventy horses in their haste. Tryon's losses were nine killed and sixty-one wounded; the Regulators had the same number of dead and a large but undetermined number of wounded.¹⁹

Twelve Regulators were tried for treason and all were convicted, but only six were hanged. The rest were pardoned by the governor, except Husband and a few other leaders. Tryon had offered clemency to all who would lay down their arms and submit to authority. Within six weeks, 6,409 submitted and later received pardons from the

¹⁹William S. Powell, The War of the Regulation and the Battle of Alamance, May 16, 1771 (Raleigh, N.C., 1976), 23.

King through newly-appointed Governor Josiah Martin.²⁰ Meanwhile, Husband had fled the field at Alamance before the battle, which led many to condemn him as a cowardly deserter who fled his followers in their hour of need. Some, however, remembered that Husband was of "Quaker association and proclivities, if not of Quaker birth and that possibly he looked upon the use of carnal force as sinful."²¹ Others were rather harsh in their views of Husband:

The odor thereof (i.e., Battle) reminded him of what up to that time he seems to have forgotten, that he was a Quaker with conscientious scruples against carnal warfare. So leaving his less pious followers to try conclusions with the hated Tryon he scampered away to Pennsylvania.²²

Many historians have sought to place the Society at the center of the War of the Regulation. While it is true the Regulation did break out in Orange County, a center of Quakerism in western North Carolina, the Society as a whole condemned the affair when it turned to mob violence and armed revolt. Yet historian Eli Caruthers seemed to think Quakers should share part of the responsibility for the war:

There is no class of people in the country who are better acquainted with all business transactions of ordinary life or who have a more correct understanding of their rights and privileges as citizens; but the Quakers, if they were not foremost in the Regulation, appear to have united heartily in all the measures for the correction of abuses, except fighting, and it is said that some of them had metal enough to try their hand at that too.²³

²⁰Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 189.

²¹N. C. Recs., VII, xxix.

²²White, "Church Quarrel and What Resulted," 93.

²³E. W. Caruthers, A Sketch of the Life and Character of the Rev. David Caldwell (Greensboro, N.C., 1842), 100.

This idea may have been founded partly on the charge leveled by Governor Tryon that the Regulators were a faction of Baptists and Quakers who were trying to overthrow the Church of England.²⁴ However, this charge is more easily made than proven. Well-known Quaker historian Stephen Weeks takes issue with it by responding: "Without entering at all into the merits of that struggle, it is sufficient to say that Friends, as a body, had nothing to do with it, and in their official capacity condemned it to the fullest extents."²⁵

Although the view that the Society supported the Regulators is unfounded, several Friends were later dealt with by their meetings for complicity in the movement. The minutes from Cane Creek for 1766, when the troubles were first mentioned, disclose that six members were disowned for attending a "disorderly meeting," probably one of the many mass meetings held in the county.²⁶ All throughout the Regulator years, 1766 to 1771, members were frequently disowned for anything associated with the movement. A close examination of the Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes disproves any accusation of Quaker involvement. In the Regulator period, Cane Creek disowned or had denials published against a total of twenty-eight members on grounds ranging from "attending a disorderly meeting" and joining a group refusing to pay taxes to actually taking up arms. In 1771 eighteen men were disowned, sixteen of them two weeks after the Battle of Alamance. The list of members disowned includes many prominent members of the

²⁴Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 178.

²⁵Ibid., 182.

²⁶Cane Creek Monthly Meeting Minutes for February 1766.

community: Hermon Cox in 1769 for joining the Regulators, and in 1771, Benjamin and James Underwood, Joshua Dixon, Isaac Cox and his two sons, Herman and Samuel, and Thomas Pugh, along with several others for aiding them.²⁷ The New Garden Meeting was equally zealous in maintaining the Quaker testimony against war. Jesse Lane and Edward Thornbrough were expelled for joining the Regulation. Three in all were disowned by the New Garden Monthly Meeting for joining, and a fourth condemned himself in meeting for aiding "with a gun."²⁸

However, for every Friend who helped both Regulators and militia voluntarily, there were many who were forced to contribute to the war against their will. From time to time during the period, Friends were forced to meet demands for provisions and equipment for the provincial forces fighting the Regulators. The Quakers living around Rocky River and Cane Creek in Orange County were requested by Governor Tryon:

. . . to furnish for His Majesty's Troops now marching under my command Six wagon loads of Flower [flour] from the people of your Society and also Six able wagons and teams with sufficient Drivers to attend the Troops with the said Flower. The Waggon and Teams will be returned when the service is over.²⁹

Although the governor promised to return what he "borrowed," it is doubtful that the Friends in question complied voluntarily with the order. When Tryon took six wagon loads of flour from the Quakers of Cane Creek, the Regulators intercepted them, thereupon Tryon's men recaptured them and took three additional loads from Simon Dixon's

²⁷Cane Creek Monthly Meeting Minutes for September 1769.

²⁸New Garden Monthly Meeting Minutes for June 1771.

²⁹N. C. Recs., VIII, 610.

mill, who according to the Crown "favored and assisted the rebels."³⁰

It is interesting to note that in a similar case the colonial government refused to fulfill its promise to pay for supplies it "requested." Friends made "sundry claims said to be incurred in the late Expedition reported as follows viz. Quakers between Reedy Fork and Haw River for 10 steers [steers] ± 27 15s."³¹ Friends also made military claims in 1773 for restitution of the flour wagons, and these too were disallowed.³²

The War of the Regulation was a forecast of the trials the Quakers would have to face in the coming revolution. When it became apparent that such conflicts would eventually result in greater bloodshed, the North Carolina Yearly Meeting convened on October 27, 1775, to issue an epistle which set forth the position of North Carolina Friends with regard to any future political contests. It read in part:

Dearly Beloved Friends and Brethren
It Seemth Good and necessary to us at this time of general distress and unnatural commotions to revive to you serious and weighty consideration for rule and practice the ancient and honourable testimony and principle of Friends in respect to the King and Government touching the present appositions of the Provincial and Continental Meetings.

We sincerely declare that it hath been our judgement and principle from the first to this day, that the setting

³⁰Ibid., XIX, 847.

³¹Ibid., IX, 527; William S. Powell, James K. Huhta, and Thomas J. Farnham, eds., The Regulators in North Carolina: A Documentary History, 1759-1776 (Raleigh, N.C., 1971), 541.

³²N. C. Recs., IX, 496-97.

up and pulling down of Kings and Governours is God's peculiar prerogative for causes best known to himself and it is not our business to have any hand or Contrivance therein, nor to be Bussie Bodies in Matters above our station much less to contrive the ruin and overturn of any of them; but to Pray for the King and for the Safety of our nation, and Good of all men that we may live a peaceable and Quiet life in all Godliness and Honesty under the Government God is pleased to set over us, and to yield a Chearful and active obedience to all good and wholesome Laws and give peaceable submission to all such Laws as do interfere with our conscience by suffering under them without resistance or anything more than to petition or remonstrate against them.³³

This epistle defined the principles which governed North Carolina Quakers throughout the turbulent revolutionary years. Reiterating their opposition to war yet avowing their allegiance to the Crown and insisting that many engaged in the dispute with England were "Honest and Upright," it also spoke of all "Plottings, conspiracies, and Insurrections as works of Darkness" and reminded Friends of advice from London and Philadelphia Quakers "not to interfere, meddle or concern in these party affairs."³⁴

The London Epistle of 1775 was quite explicit about staying clear of the fray: "We entreat all the membership to enter as little into consternation respecting them (present heats and commotions) and daily to seek for and abide under the influence of that heavenly principle which leads to follow peace all men. . . ."³⁵ In the same year, North Carolina Friends were able to reply that "they had been favored with that wisdom so as generally to endeavor to keep

³³North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1775.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Printed London Epistle for 1775, Guilford College, Quaker Collection. All Epistles hence cited are from this collection.

themselves clear in that respect."³⁶ All through the pre-revolutionary years the London Epistles urged loyalty to the King.³⁷ Continually linked with the message of loyalty was the tenet of peace. Friends were urged to avoid all acts, even that of being spectators at training grounds, which might in any way compromise their principles.³⁸

In 1772 the North Carolina Yearly Meeting also went to great lengths to establish its loyalty to the Crown. It sent Governor Josiah Martin, who had replaced William Tryon, the following message:

We have leave in true simplicity to congratulate thee on thy safe arrival in this Province and hope our Peaceable behaviour and submission to those in authority, according to our Religious Principles, will Manifest our Duty and affection to our King and Superiors. . . . Permit us, at this time to assert our Loyalty and attachment to King George the Third. . . .³⁹

Thus Quakers in North Carolina strove to be loyal to the King but not to his army. It was an extremely difficult task.

Quakers in the colony watched with growing alarm as they saw the lines being drawn between those who were dissatisfied with the Crown and those who defended it. Their religious principles forbade them from condoning the overthrow of any established government; obedience to the existing government, when such obedience did not run counter to conscience, was a fundamental duty. To American Whigs this seemed to place the Quakers in the Loyalist camp, but the Society

³⁶North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1775.

³⁷Printed London Epistles for 1763 and 1753.

³⁸Arthur J. Mekeel, "The Relation of the Quakers to the American Revolution," Quaker History, LXV (1976), 13.

³⁹North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1772.

was not a Tory organization. On the other hand, since the Friends would not directly help the Crown, they seemed to be in sympathy with the rebels. Friends as a united body probably did not always approve the shifting policies of the British ministry, but neither did they believe in revolution. They wanted to be counted out of the whole business, to remain peacefully in their homes and to be neutrals in the conflict which they saw coming. Such a course was impossible, however, in the heat of revolution, and the Society was soon dodging barbs from both sides. Since Friends had a concurrent testimony against war and revolution, they were placed in quiet opposition to the American cause.

One North Carolina Quaker who turned his back on the peace testimony was Joseph Hewes of Edenton, who signed the Declaration of Independence. Although not an active member of the Society, Hewes never officially separated himself from it and was never disowned. Historians differ in assaying Hewes's actions. One view gives the impression that Hewes very reluctantly gave in to the overwhelming pressures for independence and agonized greatly over that decision. The opposite view suggests that Hewes completely abandoned his Quakerism and that his old principles never influenced his decision to sign the Declaration. Walter Sikes, a noted North Carolina historian at the turn of the twentieth century, said "His Quaker training Hewes threw aside easily."⁴⁰ However, more contemporary evidence is provided by a fellow signer of the Declaration of Independence, John Adams.

⁴⁰Walter Sikes, "Joseph Hewes," North Carolina Booklet, IV (1905), 27.

Adams felt Hewes searched his soul before committing himself to the Revolution. In a letter Adams said:

For many days the majority depended on Mr. Hewes of North Carolina. While a member one day was speaking and reading documents from all the colonies, to prove that the public opinion, the general sense of all was in favor of the measure, when he came to North Carolina, and produced letters and public proceedings which demonstrated that the majority of that colony were in favor of it, he started suddenly upright and lifting up both his hands to Heaven, as if he had been in a trance, cried out, "It is done, and I will abide by it."⁴¹

Even though Adams was relying on memories of events several decades old, his view seems close to the truth.

Hewes, a birthright Friend, was originally from New Jersey where he retained his membership in the Chesterfield Monthly Meeting until his death. Many of his family were Friends, and the fact that he never relinquished his membership makes for a strong argument that he maintained at least some Quaker ideals.⁴² Hewes moved south to Edenton, North Carolina, to seek economic prosperity. He was described by Dr. Benjamin Rush as "a plain merchant, well acquainted with business. He seldom spoke in Congress, but was very useful on committees."⁴³ Thus Hewes was swept up in the revolutionary and military activities that swirled around many of his Quaker compatriots in North Carolina. He was but one of many Friends who were forced

⁴¹"John Adams to William Plumer, March 28, 1813," The Works of John Adams (10 vols., Boston, 1856), X, 35.

⁴²Charles Francis Jenkins, "Joseph Hewes, the Quaker Signer" in Children of Light: In Honor of Rufus M. Jones, ed. Howard H. Brinton (New York, 1938), 239.

⁴³Ibid., 214.

to fight the conflicting currents of patriotic impulse and religious principle.

In addition to political discord, another problem that perplexed the Society was Negro slavery. In the colonial and revolutionary periods many Quakers in North Carolina owned slaves and only gradually and reluctantly did the Society begin to enforce its earlier anti-slavery principles. As far back as 1675, William Edmundson wrote an epistle to Friends in America in which he denounced the holding of slaves. William Penn took the same view of slavery and made attempts to improve the condition of slaves by legislation.⁴⁴ The man who most influenced anti-slavery forces in North Carolina, however, was the Pennsylvania Quaker, John Woolman. He visited the colony several times and summarized his position on slavery in an epistle to the Friends of New Garden and Cane Creek in 1757:

Where slaves are purchased to do our labour, numerous difficulties attend it. To rational creatures bondage is uneasy, and frequently occasions soundness and discontent in them that affects the family and such as claim the mastery over them. Thus people and their children are many times encompassed with vexations, which arise from their applying to wrong methods to get a living.⁴⁵

To Woolman, slavery was bad for the master as well as the slave. Many North Carolina Friends saw wisdom in Woolman's words and, through the Standing Committee of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting, urged the provincial Assembly to petition Parliament for the abolition of the slave trade. Written in 1772, their petition reads in part: "We

⁴⁴Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 198.

⁴⁵Woolman, Journal, 211.

cannot but invite our fellow subjects and especially the Representatives of North Carolina . . . to join . . . in presenting to the throne . . ., in order to have so great [a] torrent of evil effectually stopped. . . ."46 A year earlier the North Carolina Yearly Meeting prohibited all Friends from owning slaves, condemned slavery, and ordered members who owned slaves to set them free. Friends were forbidden to buy or sell slaves, except when necessary to keep a slave family together. Unfortunately, not all Friends freed their slaves, but the majority did. One such gentleman who tried was the wealthy and influential Thomas Newby of Perquimans.

In 1772 Newby expressed his uneasiness about possessing slaves and asked the Perquimans County Court to allow him to free his slave woman Hannah on grounds of her meritorious service and because she was too old to continue heavy work. The court refused and apparently Hannah was not freed.⁴⁷ However, Newby's actions show that the idea of abolition was acceptable to Friends in North Carolina and that some either freed or attempted to free their slaves.

It was in slavery that Friends were to find a fresh battleground with the new government of the United States of America. Quakers were quick to point out the inconsistencies between the revolutionary rhetoric about freedom for all men and the fact that blacks were still kept in slavery. Thus Quakers were forced to challenge the Declaration of Independence, not only on the grounds

⁴⁶Standing Committee of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting for 1772.

⁴⁷Calhoon, Religion and the American Revolution in North Carolina, 46.

that it promoted violence and the "pulling down" of an established government but also because it ignored the issue of slavery and only pretended to stand for the equality of all men.

Conflicts over black slavery were only some of the problems which threatened the Society in the years preceding the American Revolution. The issues of peace, war and allegiance, in addition to slavery, all combined to pull at the Society. The clouds which Friends had viewed with alarm at the turn of the eighteenth century were now directly overhead and turbulence had begun. The North Carolina Quakers were on the verge of entering a period of testing and suffering such as Friends had not experienced since the years of persecution a century earlier. They had remained true to their beliefs and still held some influence, but would they survive the turbulence of war once again? The answer to the question of whether the Society of Friends would weather the storm successfully lay many long bitter years into the future.

CHAPTER IV

THE "CARNAL SWORD" IS DRAWN: FRIENDS AND THE EARLY YEARS OF THE REVOLUTION

During the turbulent years of the American Revolution Friends in North Carolina faced serious problems, some of them similar to those of the colonial period; but it was the nature of the war itself, rather than any specific attack upon the Quakers, which caused the Friends much suffering. The Society continued to find it extremely difficult to live according to its ancient testimonies, and pacifism seemed nearly impossible. However, Quakers in North Carolina remained true to these testimonies and were neutral in thought as well as in deed. Friends were forced to face more directly than in any other period the problems of military service, loyalty oaths, and fines, and they were also compelled to deal with dissenters within their midst. They treated these wayward Friends with a harshness exceeding that of the state government toward Quakers themselves.

The major military campaigns of the American Revolution did not involve the South until the later years of the struggle, and the experiences of the North Carolina Friends reflected the situation. Although there was a large percentage of Tories in the state, the Loyalists had been dealt a crushing defeat at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge near Wilmington on February 27, 1776. This overwhelming American victory, which has been called the "Lexington and Concord of the South," discouraged a powerful British naval force from landing in North Carolina in May and sent them instead on a vain assault against

Charleston, South Carolina. The tide of war turned away from North Carolina, and during the next four years the state was free from invasion from without and insurrection from within.¹ Yet although there were no military battles in North Carolina during this period, there was a continuous series of legal battles being fought between Quakers and the newly-formed state government. In July of 1776, the Americans had declared their independence in Philadelphia, although there was no mention of this fact in any records of North Carolina Friends during that year. In ignoring the situation, North Carolina Quakers were following the lead of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, which simply established a code of conduct for the troubles which were to ensue with no other comment. If Carolina Quakers could ignore the Declaration of Independence, they could not ignore the actions of the government that represented it in North Carolina.

Among the earliest recorded legislation was a recognition of the uniqueness of the Quakers, Moravians, and Dunkards in their religious beliefs.² The state government was obviously willing to tolerate dissent and did not desire to drive Quakers from the area, considering them industrious, honest, and untroublesome. This did not mean that the government would exempt Quakers from sharing the burdens of the war, however, leading to an additional area of conflict between the two groups. It was still hazardous to be a Quaker in Carolina during the war years. In addition, old problems continued

¹Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 213-15.

²"Journal of the Provincial Congress" (April 19, 1776), N. C. Recs., X, 526.

to plague the Society during this time. North Carolina Quakers would not bear arms, pay muster or "draughting" fees, or hire substitute soldiers; and while the government was under arms their only connection with it came as they exercised their right of petition, for they would not take an oath or affirmation to it, pay taxes which might support its military operations, or hold office under it.³ Friends declined to vote for delegates to the state constitutional convention in 1776 and also debated over the use of paper money issued by the revolutionary government. Finally, the Standing Committee of the Eastern Quarter compromised and decided that since Friends were on a "level with their Neighbors and Fellow Subjects in Transacting Common Affairs of Business in this life," they were left free "to take or decline these bills according to the clear Freedom of their own minds."⁴ This compromising spirit permeated both Quaker and revolutionary thought during the period. Still, living consistently with the Peace Testimony took on a new complexity never foreseen in earlier days and produced severe economic repercussions.

Heading the list of problems was the old question of military service. Although North Carolina Quakers and other conscientious objectors had been virtually exempt from militia service at the time war broke out, fines were imposed in 1776 and were raised as the war progressed.⁵ Monetary chastisement seems to have been the major

³Dorothy Gilbert Thorne, "North Carolina Friends and the Revolution," North Carolina Historical Review, XXVIII (1961), 324-25.

⁴Standing Committee of the Eastern Quarterly Meeting Minutes for January 1776.

⁵Brock, Pacifism in the United States, 169.

way the revolutionary government punished dissenters such as the Quakers, not only for missing military service, but also for every conceivable offense. The Militia Law passed by the new state assembly in 1776 exempted "Quakers, Moravians and Dunkards, who conscientiously scruple bearing arms and as such have no occasion for fire arms." It also provided, however, that Friends must substitute others in their place or pay a fine of £ 10.⁶ Subsequent militia laws were passed in 1777 and 1778 to deal further with the military service of the traditional peace churches in North Carolina--the Friends, Moravians, Dunkards and Mennonites. The Act of 1777 provided that any person producing a proper authenticated certificate from the "Yearly or quarterly meeting of the Society of People called Quakers" would be exempt from military service. However, they would now be subject to a fine of £ 25 to be levied in "goods, and chattels, lands and tenements . . . in Lieu of their personal Service."⁷ Joseph Newby, who was disowned for marrying out (marrying a non-Quaker) objected to the draft in 1778. He was denied an exemption as all other non-Friends were, but nine other Quaker conscientious objectors who were better able to produce proof of membership were granted exemption.⁸ A few non-Quakers attempted to pass as members of the Society to escape military service but were never very successful.

Since the responsibilities of the state government included raising an army as well as securing money to support it, the militia

⁶N. C. Recs., X, 526.

⁷Ibid., XXIV, 117.

⁸Brock, Pacifism in the United States, 196.

law was changed in 1778 to require the Quakers to furnish substitutes.

The act read:

The Quakers, Dunkers, Moravians, and Mennonites shall furnish men in proportion to their respective numbers in each county, and in default thereof, the commanding officer of each and every county is hereby empowered to hire men instead of the men to be by them furnished.⁹

The act was unsuccessful, however, and never really produced adequate manpower. The 1776 and 1777 laws raised money but not men, and the 1778 law intended to do the latter failed also.

Although military service was traditionally the Society's greatest travail, more onerous was the money Friends were forced to pay in the revolutionary years. Quakers in the Tar Heel State kept a careful record of all fines they paid by distress or otherwise. These "sufferings" varied from year to year according to the demands of the government. Friends also refused to pay taxes to support the war, but they did not resist confiscations of their property for nonpayment of taxes. In 1777 the state of North Carolina passed an act concerning Quakers in Guilford County. Part III read:

Persons of the People called Quakers have been fined for not attending Militia Duty, and many of their Horses and other Effects have been sold for the Payment of the said Fines, whereby considerable Sums of Money remain in the Sheriff's Hands after satisfying the same, which the said People called Quakers, from conscientious Scruples, refuse to receive. . . .¹⁰

The fine was one of six pence over and above the three pence for every pound of taxable property belonging to the Quakers. In 1779, the

⁹North Carolina Gazette, May 8, 1778.

¹⁰N. C. Recs., XXIV, 137.

state confiscated Quaker property valued at more than £ 2,000 to settle military fines. Within two years the sum rose to over £ 4,000.¹¹

There were three distinct types of taxes levied which caused problems for the Tar Heel Friends: direct military taxes which they refused to pay; mixed taxes, toward which a considerable number of Friends adopted an attitude of non-cooperation; and those taxes that were unquestionably non-military. The most difficult problem concerning these taxes was that the Quakers did not know where to draw the line.¹² The Eastern Quarter paid war taxes, while the Western Quarter refused to pay. In a letter from Quaker Robert Pleasants to fellow Friend Thomas Nicholson in 1779, Pleasants argued against the payment of any tax. He attacked the Eastern Quarter for paying and praised the Western Quarter for its refusal.¹³ Several of the meetings took their own individual stands. The New Garden Monthly Meeting explained the reasons why it could not urge its members to pay:

Dear Friends we of the committee appointed to take under our consideration whether it will be consistent with our religious Principles, for Friends to pay the present Tax now demanded. . . . We do agree to report as our sense and judgement that Friends cannot (consistent with our holy profession) comply therewith. . . .¹⁴

¹¹North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1779 and 1781.

¹²Brock, Pacifism in the United States, 214.

¹³Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 185.

¹⁴New Garden Monthly Meeting Minutes for February 1778.

The Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes of 1778 agreed with New Garden "that Friends cannot consistent with our holy profession comply" with the war tax. A special committee was appointed to take under consideration whether or not Quakers could pay the "present taxes now demanded."¹⁵

Within two years the views of the Western Quarterly Meeting softened and it acknowledged the existence of "some difference in the sentiments of some friends in respect of giving in their rateables to be taxed."¹⁶ The North Carolina Yearly Meeting of 1778 had also urged Friends to carefully consider whether or not to pay the tax but made no iron-clad ruling.

Having been graciously owned together in our Deliberation throughout the Several Settings of this our honoured Assembly find freedom to recommend to Friends in general a close and solicit consideration whether the payment of taxes under the present commotions be consistent with our peaceable principles. . . .¹⁷

Whatever the differences between the Eastern and Western Quarters, the records of the Yearly Meeting indicate that over a period of six years (1777-1783) individual Friends paid about £ 9,888 in taxes, fines, and military requisitions.¹⁸ This form of financial punishment seems to have taken precedence over all other methods for controlling dissenters in the state.

¹⁵Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes for November 29, 1778.

¹⁶Standing Committee of the Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes for September 1780.

¹⁷North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1778.

¹⁸North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, 1780 and 1781.

However, military service and taxes were not the only areas in which Friends were pressured economically. Friends were forced to pay taxes and fines not only for exemption but also for refusing to take oaths of allegiance to the new government. North Carolina Quakers who declined to take the oath were required to pay a threefold tax, a sum triple the normal tax rate. Clearly here is another example of the monetary chastisement so prevalent in the early war years. Friends later were permitted to make a special affirmation to the state government on condition that they paid the threefold tax. In addition, Quakers were troubled by local taxes amounting to as much as seven times the normal tax that might be collected from an individual for refusing to take an oath of affirmation, serve in the militia or pay military taxes. A fourfold tax was used in a similar manner to force inhabitants of the state to provide an inventory of their taxable property. Since this list was used to seize property of delinquent taxpayers, it was probably directed against the Quakers. Friends offered only passive resistance to the tax law and lost many of their goods.¹⁹ It was their refusal to take the oath of allegiance, however, that led to even greater property loss. At one point, all the Friends in Perquimans County had their property confiscated for their refusal to subscribe to the test of allegiance. When they complained to higher authorities, the action was rescinded and their property was returned.²⁰ The revolutionary government was apparently

¹⁹Roger Sappington, "North Carolina and the Non-Resistant Sects During the American War of Independence," Quaker History, LX (1971), 43-46.

²⁰Mekeel, "The Relation of the Quakers to the American Revolution," 16.

willing to prevent alienation of a sizable minority whose support it desired.

The allegiance legislation passed in 1777 required the renunciation of the King and a declaration of loyalty to the continental cause. Its purpose was to weed out the Tories, but the Quakers, of course, ran afoul of it. Their punishment, as previously noted, was heavy fines. After the legislation was passed, the Yearly Meeting of 1777 declared that Friends could not take an oath of allegiance to the newly-established government of the United States. The minutes read:

As we have always declared that we believed it to be unlawful for us to be active in war, and fighting with carnal weapons, and as we conceive that the proposed affirmation approves of the present measures, which are carried on and supported by military force, we cannot engage or join with either party therein; being bound by our principles to believe that the setting up and pulling down of kings and governments, is God's peculiar prerogative, for cause best known to himself; and that it is not our work or business to have any hand or contrivance therein, nor to be busybodies in matters above our station; so that as we cannot be active for or against any power we hope you will consider our principles a much stronger security to any State than any test that can be required of us; as we are now and shall be innocent and peaceable in our several stations and conditions submissive to the laws, in whatsoever they may justly require, or by peaceably suffering what is or may be inflicted upon us, in matters for which we cannot be active for conscience sake.²¹

The Assembly, once again wishing to compromise, altered the oath of allegiance in 1778 in order "to quiet the conscience and indulge the religious Scruples of the Sects called Unitas Fratrum or Moravians, Quakers, Menonists and Dunkards." Here the influence of these sects, particularly the Moravians and Quakers, is seen.

²¹North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1777.

The principal changes in the law were the addition of the word "fidelity" and the provision for "either an active or passive obedience to the Powers and authorities of the government."²² The Assembly would compromise, but only to a point; the Quakers would have to make some concessions also. Yet these changes were not sufficient for the Society of Friends, as the Yearly Meeting's Standing Committee reported back to the General Assembly:

That notwithstanding we are in duty bound Gratefully to acknowledge your . . . suspending the Execution of the Act of Assembly Requiring the Test of Fidelity and Abjuration, and altering the word Allegiance to Fidelity to soften the former act and make it easier to us, yet we think it remains the same in substance. . . .²³

The Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes echoed those of the Yearly Meeting, saying: "we cannot consistently take any test while things remain unsettled and still to be determined by military force with which this meeting concurs."²⁴ The Standing Committee of the Western Quarter further advised its monthly meetings to "labor in a Spirit of Love and meekness" with any of their members who had "so far deviated as to act contrary to the wholesome rules and advices . . . by taking the present affirmation of Fidelity which hath brought pain and sorrow on many minds and we apprehend tends to lay waste our Christian testimony."²⁵ Members were to be gently made to see the error of their

²²N. C. Recs., XXIV, 219.

²³Standing Committee of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1779.

²⁴Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes for November 13, 1779.

²⁵Standing Committee of the Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes for September 1778.

ways and if they could not, were to be disowned. On this accord both Quarterly Meetings were in agreement.

The Standing Committee of the Eastern Quarter addressed a petition to the Assembly thanking them for their actions but explaining that their "peaceable principles . . . [which] in us lies . . . [makes us] keep clear from joining with any party engaged in disputes that are to be determined by military forces."²⁶ Thus these beliefs stood in the way of their taking the affirmation. The New Garden Monthly Meeting also firmly asserted that its members could not comply with the Allegiance Act. It appears that Friends were inflexible in this regard and would not accept the compromise offered by the revolutionary government. Clearly the Friends were the least cooperative of any of the religious minorities encountered by the new government during the Revolutionary War. It is interesting to note that the Moravians were always quick to point out that "we should not be confused with the Quakers . . . and put into the same class with them."²⁷

The most striking example of Quaker resistance to the demands of the state government occurred near the Piedmont monthly meeting of Centre. Soon after learning that the fighting had begun, Matthew Osborne, an expert gunsmith, directly disobeyed the government's demand for supplies. Osborne had made many hunting rifles for his neighbors in the surrounding countryside and was asked to produce guns

²⁶Standing Committee of the Eastern Quarterly Meeting Minutes for January 1779.

²⁷Adelaide L. Fries, ed., Records of the Moravians in North Carolina (8 vols., Raleigh, N.C., 1922-54), IV, 1690.

for the Continental Army. He not only refused to do so, but went around to his neighbors and bought back the guns previously sold them. These were taken back to his shop where the barrels were heated and bent back to make them useless. In this way, Osborne could make sure that no rifle he had made would ever be used in taking human life. Thus in his small way he prevented his shop from becoming a munitions plant for the "powers of darkness."²⁸ Other Friends had been asked to sell their firearms to the agents of the state government, although "no compulsion was to be exercised to induce them to this duty." In this same connection, the Senate and the House in 1778 considered the desirability of requiring the non-resistant sects to supply their share of clothing for the army. However, this measure evidently never became law.²⁹ In this instance, the North Carolina state government showed more tolerance toward the Society than had the previous royal colonial government.

Although a few industrious Friends in the Albermarle section of the state cooperated to the extent of making shoes and selling them to the army, most Friends simply wished to live in peaceful coexistence or neutrality but were caused great difficulties by those members who "bore arms in a warlike manner" and indulged in "other disorderly practices."³⁰ Meetings dealt rather harshly with these dissenters.

²⁸Seth Hinshaw, Quaker Influence on American Ideals: An Overview (Greensboro, N.C., 1976), 17.

²⁹Sappington, "North Carolina and the Non-Resistant Sects," 37.

³⁰Thorne, "North Carolina Friends and the Revolution," 350.

The new revolutionary government, in fact, was more lenient toward its nonconformists than the Society was toward its own wayward members. The meetings condemned those who deviated from the Society's ancient principles and expelled them from the religious community.

The meeting further condemned Friends who took the oath of affirmation to the new state government. Caleb Trueblood and Joseph Henry, members of the Pasquotank Monthly Meeting, were "fully and openly condemned for their taking of the affirmation."³¹ Other meetings followed suit and in 1779 Pasquotank again condemned six more members for taking the affirmation.³² Furthermore, the meetings were disturbed by other actions of members who participated in some way in the Revolutionary struggle. Perquimans, the first monthly meeting set up in the state, had trouble with Friends who enlisted or hired substitutes, and several complaints were recorded in the minutes: Joseph Griffin for "listing as a soldier," William Townsend for "being a partner in hiring a man to serve in a military capacity to save himself from the penalty of the Law in that case," and Frederick Nixon for "gameing and hiring a substitute." Demsey Elliot was disowned for "listing himself in military service," John Charles for "agreeing to repay a person for paying a draughted fine," and Nathan Pierce for "attending a muster and voting for men to act in the military service."³³ The Pasquotank Meeting disowned two men for enlisting and

³¹Pasquotank Monthly Meeting Minutes for December 1778.

³²Pasquotank Monthly Meeting Minutes for March, April and July 1779.

³³Perquimans Monthly Meeting Minutes for May 1776, May 1777, January and July 1779.

two others for hiring themselves for the military service, not as soldiers but as workers.³⁴ The New Garden Meeting disowned three members for "appearing in a warlike manner" (appearing in military uniform in public), while another was disowned for "attending musters and hiring a man to go to the wars."³⁵ Thus adhering closely to their Quaker principles, most meetings disowned anyone who even remotely was associated with the war.

The Cane Creek Monthly Meeting disowned ten men before the war was over who so far departed from their Quakerism as to "fight with carnal weapons."³⁶ However, neither New Garden nor Deep River found it necessary to disown a member for holding public office in the unsettled state of affairs. The enforcement of Quaker discipline was apparently far from uniform from meeting to meeting. Cane Creek, for example, did have a prominent member who engaged in several doubtful activities before they finally decided they must disown him. The minutes recorded:

Thomas Chapman complained of in the first month last for taking a Justices Commission under the present unsettled state of public affairs contrary to advice of friends, and continuing to act therein after the time he informed friends his commission would be run out and that he would not accept of another or act any thing of moment without acquainting friends therewith or to this import, but to the reverse of this has himself acknowledged administered the oath, wrote tickets relating to the drafting as it

³⁴Pasquotank Monthly Meeting Minutes for July 1776, July 1777, and July 1780.

³⁵New Garden Monthly Meeting Minutes for April 1776, November 1776, and September 1779.

³⁶Cane Creek Monthly Meeting Minutes for November 1777, June 1779, February 1781, March 1781, June 1781, and November 1781.

is called, signed or granted a warrant or press to make guns for a military purpose. This meeting therefore disowns him after repeated labor extended.³⁷

An interesting postscript shows that in 1783, after the war, Thomas Chapman apologized for his misconduct and was restored to full membership. Meanwhile on the coast, Core Sound Monthly Meeting reached a similar decision against a certain William Borden. He was accused as one who "for a small season sheltered himself under our holy profession, but could not stand in it and hear his testimony of the truth when suffering appeared near at hand." His offense was not active participation in war but "double dealing." He had been very desirous of being "skreen'd from mustering under our denomination a few years past" but "was willingly concern'd as commissary in supplying troops with Provision" and had acted "we have reason to believe from motives of coveteousness and the love . . . of money. . . . He was disowned."³⁸

Chapman and Borden are but two examples of North Carolina Quakers who could be and were quite ambiguous in their peace testimony. Is it reasonable then to think that the majority of Friends in the Tar Heel State remained firm under what amounted to very trying circumstances? Were the Friends "Tories" as many of their neighbors charged, true neutrals as the Society insisted, or enthusiastic patriots as some ancestor-worshipping descendants seem to think? Two families point with pride to the fact that the descendants of

³⁷Cane Creek Monthly Meeting Minutes for March 1779.

³⁸Core Sound Monthly Meeting Minutes for December 1778.

New Garden's William Coffin and Richard Williams were admitted to the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution.³⁹

Their peace policy caused North Carolina Friends to be regarded by many as hostile to the cause of American independence. Some escaped the war by remaining in the Society and others left to participate in the Revolution. Some members who could not share belief in the Peace Testimony, even after they were purged from the Society, still remained against violence but sympathized with the aims and final goals of the Continental cause. They wanted liberty and responsibility in government, but they hoped to obtain it by peaceful means. There was still a third group, perhaps the largest of the three, who took a position that swung politically from attempted neutrality to one that at times was so close to loyalism that it was understandingly mistaken for such by the great majority of the Quaker's fellow citizens. Previously, loyalty to the government had become as much a part of eighteenth century Quakerism as the Peace Testimony.⁴⁰

Friends were branded Tories by neighbors who could not, or would not distinguish between passive neutrality and active aid to the British. They were misunderstood and hated as Loyalists and cowards. In wartime, nobody is as unpopular as the fence-sitter. If it were possible to penetrate the minds of the Friends during the Revolutionary War, much pro-Loyalist sympathy probably would be found.

³⁹R. H. Frazier, "Nantucket and North Carolina," Guilford College Bulletin, XLIII (1949), 9; Williams Family Genealogy (n.d., n.p.), 4.

⁴⁰Brock, Pacifism in the United States, 183 and 188.

Yet Friends as a majority took neither side actively. As far as possible, Quakers tried to ignore the struggle and proceed with business as usual, a position full of difficulties. The Society urged that those Friends who took sides "be not looked on as active members in the Society or Employed in any service."⁴¹ In 1779, the Yearly Meeting's Standing Committee repeated this message of peace, stating that its members were "to keep clear from joining with any party engaged in disputes that are to be determined by military force." In the same message, it further requested that "you [the revolutionary government] will not consider us as Enemies to our country. . . ." While exhorting their members not to join the revolutionary cause, Quakers went to great lengths to assure the Americans that the Society was not their foe. In its minutes, the Standing Committee explained why it could not support the new government: "The institution of slavery manifestly contradicts the Declaration and Bill of Rights on which your right to make Laws depend."⁴² By the 1770's the Society of Friends was the only religious organization to stand against slavery, and practically the only organization of any kind which found slavery to violate the natural rights principles that the American forces used to justify the Revolution. This position, of course, made the southern revolutionists, most of whom held slaves, even more uncomfortable.

⁴¹Eastern Quarterly Meeting Minutes for November 28, 1778.

⁴²Standing Committee of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1779.

Historian Stephen B. Weeks sees the North Carolina Friends as peaceable but still "a source of weakness to the American cause and one of strength to Great Britain." To Weeks, the Quakers did not act "inconsistently with their well known peace policy" but accidentally "injured the American cause."⁴³ These conflicts during the early years of the American Revolution put a tremendous strain on the Society of Friends in North Carolina. However, as has been illustrated, it was the involvement of this country in a war which led to the legal battles between the new revolutionary government and the Quakers. In some ways, the new government was more lenient than its colonial predecessor. Although it did impose heavy fines and taxes on the Quakers, the government simultaneously wished the support of the Friends and their participation in state life. By contrast, the royal government considered the Society virtually a plague. Nevertheless, clashes between the state government and the Quakers over military matters forced the two sides which wished only to cooperate to come into conflict.

Disputes were common over military service, fines, taxes, oaths and affirmation, and various other issues, and most of the sufferings which Quakers recorded were economic. Financial penalties seem to have been the major form of punishment for dissenters in the early war years. Friends were not very cooperative and soon gained the reputation of being the most intractable of the peace churches. The government was constantly forced to deal with one problem after another concerning the Quakers. They were basically true to their

⁴³Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 184.

peaceful religious convictions and were neither Tories nor Patriots, although a few members did deviate. Those who did were quickly disowned by their meetings. The Society was often accused of being Tory, but an examination of the sources suggests that while the majority of Friends were somewhat favorable to the Crown, they were not active supporters of the King. There were revolutionary supporters also, but they too were in the minority. The greatest trauma North Carolina Friends had ever experienced was the American Revolution. It severely damaged the Society in the Tar Heel State during the early years of the war. Unfortunately greater destruction and suffering lay in the future.

CHAPTER V

"YE FIGHT, YE KILL, YET WE HAVE NOT": FRIENDS AND THE LATER YEARS OF THE REVOLUTION

Although the early years of the American Revolution were a severe test for the Quakers of North Carolina, it was the later years of war which proved to be much more destructive to the Society. In the late 1770's, most of the fighting took place in the North; the 1780's, however, were different. At this point the grim realities of war quickly became apparent to North Carolina Friends. Quakers now felt the full impact of battle as they had never experienced it before, since previous wars had not touched Carolina Quakers directly. The Anglo-French Wars had been fought chiefly on the frontier and did not affect the more thickly populated areas; the same was true of most other Indian wars. The American Revolution, on the other hand, was not only a struggle against forces from without but also contained the elements of a civil war. For North Carolina Quakers, the Revolution was the first true test of their peace testimony. Since its origin, the Society in both England and America had found occasion to practice its testimony against participation in war but never so directly. In the case of the mother country, wars had been fought primarily on foreign soil, and when civil in nature, these wars were short and almost bloodless. Although the American Revolution was the most severe test Quakers in North Carolina had ever faced, it did not break their spirit and the influence of the Society of Friends, crippled but still alive, remained important in the Tar Heel State.

In addition to the new ravages of war, Friends still had to contend with heavy taxation, fines, and wayward members, since some Quakers fought back when war invaded their own backyards. The majority, however, remained neutral even when the battles of New Garden, Guilford Courthouse, and Lindley's Mill were fought virtually on Quaker soil. They could not be swayed by lofty proclamations from British or patriotic sources and always declared their allegiance solely to God. Whether through God's guidance or their own tenacity, they stayed when it would have been easy to flee; they stood, when it would have been comfortable to yield.

Although the horror of war itself was the major problem of North Carolina Friends in the later war years, Quakers also suffered greatly financially. The war brought such economic distress to Carolina Friends that British members of the Society raised thousands of pounds to aid Quakers in the state. English and Irish Friends ultimately gave more than £ 6,000 sterling to their American brethren and the bulk of it was spent on Nantucket Island and in North Carolina during the years 1780 and 1781.¹ In the 1780's, Tar Heel Friends themselves requested the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to send "money contributed for relief to these parts."² In 1781, which was the worst year for penalties, Friends paid a total of £ 4,134 to the British and Americans. Over a period of four years during the 1770's, it had

¹Sydney V. James, A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth Century America (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 262.

²Daisey Newman, A Procession of Friends: Quakers in America (Garden City, N.J., 1972), 75.

cost the Quakers £ 4,465 for holding true to their principles; the cost rose to £ 5,423 for the same number of years in the 1780's.³ In 1781, the Western Quarterly Meeting alone reported over £ 2,148 taken by the Patriot forces and over £ 675 by the British.⁴ Although Friends disliked these penalties immensely, they never went so far as to physically refuse to pay fines or to resist confiscation as punishment for non-payment of taxes with force. Furthermore, however great the Society's need for money during the war, the North Carolina Yearly Meeting did not hesitate to give charity to the distressed as soon as the British evacuated Charleston and Savannah. The fact that much of this relief was directed to non-Friends speaks well of the Quakers who settled North Carolina.⁵ When Rich Square Meeting decided in 1781 to raise £ 40 in gold and silver to help the poor, one man, Robert Peele, agreed to advance the whole amount.⁶ In the midst of their suffering, Friends still could not forget the Quaker belief in compassion.

If Friends came willingly to the aid of the poor, their "donations" to the revolutionary government were less cheerful. The Cane Creek Monthly Meeting and the Western Quarterly Meeting's Standing Committee both recorded this identical message:

[Friends are] to be exceedingly careful in the course of their conduct when such persons may come to their houses

³North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, 1780, 1781, 1782, and 1783.

⁴Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes for January 5, 1781.

⁵James, A People Among Peoples, 262.

⁶Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 191.

as are appointed to collect the present Tax that they balk not the Testimony we profess to hold forth by a faulty conduct . . . but that we demean ourselves in all things as becomes the followers of Christ.⁷

However, Quakers soon discovered that they could now lose not only personal property but their real estate as well. Both the Standing Committees of the Western and Eastern Quarters experienced this problem and each sent a petition of protest to the government.⁸ Unfortunately the problem continued long after the fighting had ceased. During this period, the government again demanded money and provisions from the Society and once again Carolina Quakers felt they must explain their opposition. The Standing Committee of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting wrote in December of 1780 that after

taking under solid consideration the paying or not paying of a provision Tax, which is likely to be demanded of Friends, in consequence of an Act of Assembly, designed for the Immediate Support of the Army and Navy; after a time of weighty conference, thereon, give it as our Sense, that we cannot consistent with our peaceable Principles, pay any part of the aforesaid Tax.⁹

Friends would pay taxes but only under duress and never voluntarily for war provisions.

Yet provisions and monies were exactly what the Assembly needed to run the war. On January 30, 1781, the state of North Carolina levied a tax of seven times the sum which "good citizens payed" upon dissenters like the Quakers. This law charged three

⁷Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes for September 13, 1780.

⁸Standing Committee of the Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes for May 17, 1782; Standing Committee of the Eastern Quarterly Meeting Minutes for March 25, 1780.

⁹Standing Committee of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for December 1780.

times the regular amount in lieu of military service and four times that for neglecting to return the list of their taxable property. These two sums combined produced what amounted to a seven-fold penalty on the Quakers.¹⁰ Earlier that same year, the Assembly had received "the remonstrance of sundry people called Quakers" which evidently asked for a clarification of this law. The Assembly, ready to settle on a maximum penalty, concurred that there should be a clarification. Agitation on this matter must have continued, however, for the Assembly in 1782 enacted a law which clearly stated "that no Moravian, Quaker, Mennonists or Dunkard, shall be subject to under any pretence more than . . . [a] four fold tax on the whole."¹¹ Further evidence of the government's flexibility was demonstrated when, toward the end of the war, the Assembly took steps to return its policies to a more normal condition. One of these changes in 1783 was to abolish the special wartime taxes on the non-resistant sects. The state government lightened these levies because they wanted Quaker help in running the state. The liberal spirit of the revolutionary government was also documented in the idea that no citizen "shall pay an extraordinary tax on account of religion."¹² After all of the troubles Friends had experienced concerning penalties, taxes and fines, the words of a contemporary ancestor-worshipping descendant exhibit a distinct lack of understanding for their cause:

¹⁰N. C. Recs., XVII, 642-43.

¹¹N. C. Recs., XXIV, 413.

¹²Ibid., 434.

It should ever be remembered that the Quakers did more than their part in building America. In the time of Revolutionary War, they paid double often triple the taxes because they refused to carry arms and fight; this went a long way in paying for the war and without the heavy taxes imposed upon them . . . the war might have had a different ending.¹³

Blinded by patriotism, this modern writer attributes to Quakers the very reverse of their stated purpose during the Revolution.

During the later war period, Friends continued to disown members for violation of the Peace Testimony. New Garden Monthly Meeting disowned John Rudducks "for giving of his property to hire a man to go to war, and taking his gun and giving it up when demanded, and for assisting to drive away his Neighbors cattle for the use of the Army." In the same meeting, four other men were disowned for disregarding the principles of their faith.¹⁴ Pasquotank Monthly Meeting also disowned six men during the period for various war-related offenses. Furthermore, in the east, Pasquotank and Core Sound Monthly Meetings expressed concern about their members who were serving on armed vessels. Pasquotank refused a certificate of passage to the West Indies to Micajah Clark on the grounds that "the vessel he intended to enter on board of is to carry guns in order to make some defense."¹⁵ Core Sound disowned John Harris who "contrary to advice . . . of his Friends made a cruise on board a privateer vessel of War."¹⁶ Perquimans County also had trouble with members involved with privateering vessels. It

¹³Mabel Williams Bean, Williams-Enoch Genealogy, History, Biography, Tradition, Legends, Anecdotes (n.p., 1953), 31.

¹⁴New Garden Monthly Meeting Minutes for November 1780.

¹⁵Pasquotank Monthly Meeting Minutes for November 1782.

¹⁶Core Sound Monthly Meeting Minutes for November 1781.

reported that Lemuel Murdaugh had "entered himself on Board an armed vessell in order to retake some vessells that was taken out of port by English privateers."¹⁷ Besides those members who were censured for sea-related offenses, Perquimans continued to disown members like Ephraim Griffin for "bearing arms in a warlike manner."¹⁸

In the west, Deep River disowned three men who bore arms in 1780 and later convinced Joseph Wilson to condemn his action "in going out with a company of men in a hostile manner to disarm some of his neighbors."¹⁹ Upon examining these figures, one might mistakenly conclude that these Friends officially joined the contending armed forces. However, of the sixty-nine Friends who were disowned for war-related infractions, only twenty can be found on the roster of North Carolina troops during the American Revolution. Thus only a fraction of Friends who were disowned actually seem to have served in the North Carolina militia or the Continental Army.²⁰ Considering that there were 4,000-5,000 Quakers in the Carolinas around 1780 and that three-fourths of this number resided in North Carolina, the number of enlistees would be but a small proportion even if all sixty-nine disowned were actively involved in the war.²¹

¹⁷Perquimans Monthly Meeting Minutes for June 1781, March 1783 and April 1783.

¹⁸Perquimans Monthly Meeting Minutes for April 1781.

¹⁹Deep River Monthly Meeting Minutes for December 1780 and July 1782.

²⁰Roster of Soldiers from North Carolina in the American Revolution, published by the North Carolina Daughters of the American Revolution (Durham, N.C., 1932).

²¹Jones, Quakers in the American Colonies, xvi.

During the latter years of the Revolution, Friends not only had to deal with financial burdens and disownments but also the bitter fighting that took place in their midst. All around them guerilla warfare prevailed in which bands fought from ambush or in the open. Neighbor was pitted against neighbor; even families were divided. Murder, revenge, pillage and robbery were the prevalent forms of combat with Quakers often becoming the victims. Some Friends' communities in the valleys of Cane Creek, Deep River and the Cape Fear River were in the worst of the conflict.²² Friends were caught between Loyalists and Patriots, accused by each side of supporting the other. In a few cases some Friends became actively involved in the war.

Although it has become clear that Friends generally were not Tories, contemporaries at the time were not so sure. For example, Dr. John Pyle, a prominent ex-Quaker, was a colonel in the royal militia.²³ Pyle, who figured prominently in the later years of the American Revolution in western North Carolina, was a rare example of the Quaker who strayed to the point of actually picking up arms and participating in the war. The war had been so harsh for him as a Quaker that he abandoned his faith completely and vented his frustration in the form of violence. As the commander of a group of Loyalists, Pyle was marching his band to join the British army on February 25, 1781, when he encountered a white-coated cavalry officer whom he

²²Hinshaw and Hinshaw, eds., Carolina Quakers, 26.

²³Powell, Huhta and Farnham, eds., The Regulators in North Carolina, 591; Mary Elinor Lazenby, Hermon Husband: A Story of His Life, 1724-1795 (Washington, D.C., 1940), 59.

mistook for an Englishman. Pyle was so deceived by this officer, Virginian Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lee, that he addressed him as British Colonel Banastre Tarleton. Pyle spoke with great enthusiasm of the local support for the Crown. Lee, deciding to take advantage of the situation, carried out this deception to the end. Praising the Tories, he rode up to Pyle and shook his hand. Later Lee recalled that it was his intention to tell Pyle that he was surrounded and at his mercy and that he should surrender his forces; however, firing broke out at the end of the column as the leaders met. It appeared to Lee that the Tories caught sight of his approaching militia and from the green sprigs in their hats recognized that they were Whigs. Witnesses closer to the scene recalled that it was the mounted militia at the end of Lee's column, unaware of their commander's deception, who first started to fire when they saw the red cloth strips in the hats of the Tories. Some of the Tories still thought there was a ghastly error and many shouted: "You're killing your own men! We're friends of His Majesty. Hurrah for King George!" Lee heard the shouts of assurance and also cries for quarter, but the affair was now out of control. The American militia hacked at the enemy so fiercely that many of their homemade swords were bent or broken. Colonel Pyle, wounded several times, escaped by hiding in a small pond near the site, which today is called "Pyle's Pond." His skirmish is commemorated as "Pyle's Massacre."²⁴ The eighteenth century writer Charles Stedman, who was traveling with Cornwallis, wrote of this action:

²⁴Burke Davis, The Cowpens-Guilford Courthouse Campaign (Philadelphia, 1962), 126-29.

They called out for quarter, but no quarter was granted; and between two and three hundred of them were inhumanly butchered while in the act of begging for mercy. Humanity shudders at . . . so foul a massacre.²⁵

Lee later replied:

It was no foul, and was unintentional; The fire commenced upon us, and self-preservation commandeered the limited destruction which ensued. Only ninety of the loyalists were killed . . . and less than ninety could not have been spared from the close condition of the dragoons and the necessity of crushing resistance instantly.²⁶

Edward R. Murrow, famous newscaster from North Carolina, related the story to historian Algie Newlin of another Quaker Loyalist in the Piedmont who found it difficult in the later war years to remain neutral. The Tory sympathizer named Dix would always offer his beaver slide as a hiding place for his Whig friends. However, after a particularly resounding Loyalist defeat, the Whigs offered Dix his own beaver slide to escape the wrath of avenging Patriots.²⁷ Legend also holds that David Fanning, the most infamous Tory in North Carolina, was hidden in the woods and was supplied provisions by "some Quakers and other Loyalists in the neighborhood."²⁸ This is probably contemporary opinion, however, and if there were Quakers who did help the Tories they were in the minority.

²⁵Charles Stedman, The History of the Origin, Progress and Termination of the American War (2 vols., London, 1794), II, 22.

²⁶Henry Lee, Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States (New York, 1869), 259.

²⁷Edward R. Murrow to Algie Newlin as told to the author March 23, 1978 at Guilford College, Greensboro, North Carolina.

²⁸N. C. Recs., XXII, 184.

Although he contradicted himself in later writings, historian Eli Caruthers insisted that "the Quakers, with a few exceptions, were adverse to Independence."²⁹ However, modern Loyalist historian Wallace Brown seems to think that few Quakers were Tories. He cites the fact that very few Quakers appeared before the claims commissioners for damages suffered during the American Revolution and supports the view that the Friends were generally neutral, not Tory.³⁰ It appears that there was no organized Quaker group of Loyalists in North Carolina, but neither were there "Free Quakers" like those of Philadelphia who broke from the traditional way of peace and fought as Quakers for independence. Some Friends may have agreed with the basic principles of the Free Quakers, but if they openly endorsed these beliefs, they were disowned. Unfortunately, many of those disowned were the young. In one family, for example, two sons who had been disowned for "marrying out of unity" joined the Tory forces. A third brother was clerk of the local meeting during the war, and another became prominent in state government after the war. In another family, some of the sons remained loyal to the Quaker faith while two others joined the Whig forces, one reaching the rank of captain.³¹ Another soldier, Peter Rifel, who was a cavalryman in Lee's Legion, is said to have been a member of the Society of Friends but no proof of

²⁹Caruthers, David Caldwell, 181 and 239.

³⁰Wallace Brown, The King's Friends: The Composition and Motives of the American Loyalist Claimants (Providence, R.I., 1965), 268.

³¹Hinshaw and Hinshaw, eds., Carolina Quakers, 26.

his membership has been found.³² There is also a story that a sixteen year old son of the Hunt family, who killed a British captain during the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, was a Quaker. Since the boy's first name is not known, it is impossible to check the records of the New Garden Monthly Meeting for his membership. However, the New Garden Minutes do not show that anyone by the name of Hunt was disowned during the Revolutionary period for behaving in a warlike manner.³³ While some Quakers responded to the pressures of war close at hand by taking up arms, the majority remained passive and true to their peaceable principles despite great provocation.

Friends were forced to deal with roving bands and military units of both belligerents, which considered anyone who would not join them as an enemy. Some Friends are known to have had their lives threatened by members of both sides. One owed his life to the failure of a gun to fire and the subsequent intercession of one of his captors. Many others were the victims of foraging and pillaging, and some were subjected to painful beatings for refusing to join such roving bands.³⁴ Marching armies also caused members of the Society a great deal of pain. They lived off the country through which they passed, and Quaker homes, barns and pastures were subject to ruthless destruction.

³²E. W. Caruthers, Revolutionary Incidents: And Sketches of Characters Chiefly in the "Old North State" (Philadelphia, 1854), 154.

³³Algie I. Newlin, The Battle of New Garden (Greensboro, N.C., 1977), 30.

³⁴Hinshaw and Hinshaw, eds., Carolina Quakers, 26.

As has been stated, most Friends withstood the temptation to fight back. One of these men was Nathan Hunt, whose home was a few miles from the fierce Battle of Guilford Courthouse. He and most Friends of the area tried their best to ignore the war in spite of great losses. Hunt's farm was a target for foragers and he was robbed of livestock and provisions.³⁵ He recorded in his Journal:

About this time the revolutionary War commenced and was the Source to me of many trials. The British army robbed me of my cattle, and the American of my horses and some other things leaving me almost destitute of the means of subsistence. The American light Horse sometimes surrounded my House endeavoring to decoy me, but I was mercifully preserved from their getting any advantage over me. May praise and honor ever be given to the great name for his manifold deliverances!³⁶

Hunt's provisions were so low at one time during the war that when six Friends on their way from Abott's Creek to the Quarterly Meeting at Cane Creek called at his home for dinner, all that was served was one apple turnover! According to Mary Mendenhall Hobbs, "This was divided; each ate his portion; all were satisfied. Hunt was thankful for the privilege of having something to give and continued his unwavering trust in God."³⁷ When the British soldiers were camped at New Garden, they used the Meeting House and all surrounding houses to nurse their wounded and sick. Hunt, in spite of the opposition of family and friends, benevolently ministered to their needs. In consequence of his exposure, he caught smallpox but suffered only a light

³⁵Mary Mendenhall Hobbs, Quaker Biographies: Nathan Hunt (Series 2, 10 vols., Philadelphia, 1909), I, 93.

³⁶William Hunt, ed., Memoirs of William and Nathan Hunt, taken chiefly from their Journals and Letters (Philadelphia, 1858), 87.

³⁷Hobbs, Nathan Hunt, 166.

case; he survived the war and died at an elderly age. Hunt was an example of the majority of Quakers who stayed true to their beliefs and also of the importance of the stabilizing Quaker example amid the madness of war.

Richard Williams, a fellow Quaker of Hunt's, was not so lucky. Williams, one of the first settlers in the New Garden area, died of smallpox contracted from a wounded British soldier he was caring for in his home.³⁸ Another Quaker who suffered through plundering was Elijah Coffin. He was reared on a farm near that of Nathan Hunt and recorded that "the citizens of that part of the country felt in various ways the cruelty and horrors of such a conflict."³⁹ Robbers pretending to be soldiers came to the Coffin home in the middle of the night, threatened the life of Elijah's father William, and then proceeded to rob one of his neighbors. At another time, soldiers came to the Coffin home and took clothing from the family. One of the soldiers placed a gun to the head of William and pulled the trigger only to have the gun misfire. Later Elijah continued, "my father ever looked upon this preservation and protection as a kind of interposition of Divine Providence."⁴⁰ Tradition does tell of a time when plunderers failed at the Coffin house. The men were in the field and Mrs. Coffin had gone to care for a friend ill with smallpox. The only one left in charge of the family was a half-witted woman who stuttered a great deal when excited. The soldiers found it hard to understand her, but when

³⁸Thorne, "North Carolina Friends and the Revolution," 337.

³⁹Newlin, Battle of New Garden, 29.

⁴⁰Ibid.

she mentioned the word "smallpox" they hastily beat a strategic retreat.⁴¹ Not all encounters with foragers were so fortunate and most Friends in the area suffered.

War came to the Western Quarter early in 1781. The British had conquered all of Georgia and South Carolina and now turned their attention to North Carolina. Cornwallis commanded the British army; ironically his adversary was an ex-Rhode Island Quaker named Nathanael Greene. Cornwallis chased Greene throughout the countryside before Greene decided to turn and fight. Unfortunately for North Carolina Quakers, he chose the fields surrounding Guilford Courthouse. Directly between Greene and Cornwallis lay the Quaker settlements of Deep River and New Garden. The marching armies lived off the country through which they passed and as has been noted, Quaker homes, barns and pastures were subject to their ruthless attacks. A large part of the British army camped by the Meeting House of the Deep River Friends. They found the area so depressed that Lord Cornwallis reported, "This part of the country is so totally destitute of subsistence that forage is not nearer than nine miles, and the soldiers have been two days without bread."⁴² Nathan Hunt also described the situation:

The Battle of Guilford Courthouse was about five miles from our house and the British army passed in sight of us. We often had to hide our horses and cattle from scouting parties of both armies, and yet with all our care at one time both my horses were taken by the British soldiers, and at another time my only cow was driven away.⁴³

⁴¹Levi Coffin, Reminiscences (Cincinnati, 1880), 2.

⁴²Thorne, "North Carolina Friends and the Revolution," 336.

⁴³Hobbs, Nathan Hunt, 101.

On March 13, 1781, Cornwallis moved his army to the Quaker Meeting House at New Garden. It was there that Friends had been previously subjected to a skirmish between the soldiers of Henry Lee and Banastre Tarleton. Historian Algie Newlin has since called this the Battle of New Garden. By the time Cornwallis reached the area with the bulk of the British forces, the fight was already over and he was forced to regroup, advancing toward the enemy several miles away. Exactly what Friends in the area did during this terrible day remains unclear. According to historian Eli Caruthers, one Thomas White "a very clever and respectable Quaker," finding that "his house would come within the sweep of the contending armies," retired into his potato hole under the floor where "amid the roar of cannon and clash of arms and the fierce conflict of human passion" he could meditate on the horrors of war.⁴⁴ Other Friends are said not to have been so passive. William Armfield, a member of the New Garden Meeting, is said to have grown incensed that his farm was constantly being swept clean of grain, cattle and horses by the British foragers. Armfield is rumored to have taken his squirrel gun and joined Greene's army for the day of battle. Historian Algie Newlin relates:

When he left home early that morning, as the story goes, he told his wife that he was going on a day's hunt, and she provided food for the day. When he returned late in the evening empty handed, his wife asked: "Didn't thee kill any game?" His reply was: "Nothing worth bringing home."⁴⁵

Legend suggests that as many as three hundred men from a wide area around the courthouse volunteered their services to the American army

⁴⁴Caruthers, Revolutionary Incidents, 63.

⁴⁵Newlin, Battle of New Garden, 30.

and fought in the battle, returning home that evening. If this were true, it would seem logical that a few of these men were Quakers. Yet only one man, John Wright, was censured "for taking arms in a warlike manner." One month later, he was disowned; the date suggests that Wright may have been engaged in the battle.⁴⁶

Despite these isolated cases, the majority of Quaker inhabitants of the New Garden community probably waited in silent dread as dawn broke on the morning of March 15, 1781. Throughout the morning and well into the afternoon, hostile forces maneuvered, charged, fought, and retreated along the New Garden Road near Quaker homes. Tradition pictures most of these Friends at a safe distance, watching as much of the spectacle as they could.⁴⁷ The battle turned out to be a technical victory for the British but left Cornwallis beaten, bloodied and crippled, with many of his officers dead or wounded. The British were so decimated that there was very little they could do for the wounded of both sides who survived the night after the battle. The army had marched many miles before going into action and had neither baggage nor wagons to tend the wounded. There were no tents, and rain began to fall as darkness fell. Greene had provided an additional burden, for he had retreated leaving his dead and wounded on the field of battle. When wagons could be found, the local Friends helped the British send the wounded of both sides to the New Garden Meeting House for treatment. There is no word of these activities in the Quaker minutes, but fifteen British soldiers were buried under an old oak

⁴⁶New Garden Monthly Meeting Minutes for July 1781.

⁴⁷Newlin, Battle of New Garden, 7.

tree in the meeting's graveyard. Beside them the bodies of their dead rivals were interred. The New Garden Monthly Meeting met as usual on March 31, 1781. Undoubtedly there were wounded soldiers still in the meeting house, but again there is no mention directly or indirectly of the battle, the wounded, or the war in the minutes.⁴⁸ Since the meeting house was overflowing, numerous Friends took the wounded into their homes. These instances give clear evidence that Carolina Quakers made no differentiation between friends or so-called enemies in their efforts to bind up the wounds of the war. Here is evidence that the Friends of New Garden placed their ancient testimonies above their own lives, for smallpox broke out among the wounded. There can be little question about the effects of the battle on the Quakers of the area. Historian Algie Newlin wrote: "It was first a shock, then a tremendous burden, followed by an agonizing memory."⁴⁹

The benevolence of the Quakers left them with many colorful legends, but the one which has endured the longest deals with the wounded soldiers who were placed on crude plank beds outside when the meeting house was filled. These boards, which still bore traces of the soldiers' blood, are said to have been used in the construction of the ceiling of a new meeting house. Young children who gazed upon what looked like bloody fingerprints on the ceiling asked Nathan Hunt to explain. He replied: "Whether the red marks thee speaks of and which I have often seen are blood marks of the British soldiers I

⁴⁸North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1781.

⁴⁹Newlin, Battle of New Garden, 44.

cannot tell."⁵⁰ For almost two hundred years this talk was part of the folklore of the area. However, research by Quaker historian Algie Newlin reveals several reasons for doubting this tradition. The log meeting house in which the wounded were treated after the Battle of Guilford Courthouse did have large splotches of blood on the floor. However, it was destroyed by fire in 1784 and the new frame meeting house was not constructed until 1791. If the boards used for beds had been prepared in 1781, it seems unlikely that they could have been kept in good condition for ten years. Furthermore, the stains were more in the shape of fingerprints and there were no splotches as would be expected. More likely, the red fingerprints which so enthralled traveling ministers and worshippers were not bloodstains at all. Dried blood would not have remained so brilliantly red as the stains are said to have appeared. They were probably red chalk marks from the fingers of the carpenters who cut the boards for construction of the new ceiling.⁵¹ Even though the story appears to be false, it does show the great lengths to which North Carolina Friends went to live up to their reputation of Christian virtue.

Soon after his disastrous victory at Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis abandoned his pursuit of Greene and retreated toward Wilmington where he could be supplied by the sea. This path carried him directly toward another Quaker settlement, Cane Creek. The Earl marched his army thirty miles southeast and encamped near Cane Creek Monthly Meeting House on the premises of Quaker Simon Dixon. Dixon had

⁵⁰Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 129.

⁵¹Newlin, Battle of New Garden, 36.

been one of the original settlers of the Cane Creek area, in what is now Alamance County. He had been associated with the Regulators of the early 1770's and was the brother-in-law of the rebellion's leader, Hermon Husband. Dixon "deemed it prudent to leave . . . [the] premises."⁵² Traditions vary, but most agree that Dixon was known to be wealthy and somewhat sympathetic to the revolutionary cause. Thus he fled for his life, leaving his grist mill to the mercy of Cornwallis. Dixon's son, however, stopped British attempts to grind meal by locking the millstone in place. Cornwallis evicted Dixon's family from its dwelling and made it his headquarters. While the British were encamped there, they killed 250 sheep and 75 cattle in addition to using all of Dixon's fences for firewood. Dixon had been forced to endure trying ordeals even before Cornwallis invaded his home. Robbers had plundered his house and destroyed much of his property. His livestock was butchered in the Cane Creek Monthly Meeting House, and for years the old benches showed the marks of cutting knives and axes.⁵³

Dixon fled the area, leaving his family behind. His wife, a prolific pipe smoker, had been forced out of her home without her pipe. When she remembered that it was in the house, a burly sentry barred her way. Upon hearing the argument Lord Cornwallis came out, listened and finally gave her permission to retrieve her pipe. Legend also holds that the King's men were later not so easy on Dixon himself. One story suggests that he was tortured to death by those

⁵²Thorne, "North Carolina Friends and the Revolution," 339.

⁵³Ibid.

who wished his hidden gold. A pair of fire tongs is preserved today as the instrument of torture. Both Dixon and his son died as a result of British visits to his stone house--the elder Dixon probably of camp fever contracted from the soldiers, and a son by a blow from a Tory robber.⁵⁴ The British took much from the area but unwittingly left a permanent fixture. While camped at Cane Creek, a huge snow storm occurred. The British named the place "Snow Camp," a title which has remained with the area until the present day.⁵⁵

Cornwallis finally left the area, but Cane Creek was not without conflict for long. In September of 1781, a Tory army consisting of Loyalists under David Fanning and Scotsmen under Archibald McDougal were ambushed at Lindley's Mill on Cane Creek, near the Friend's Meeting House at Spring. Fanning listed twenty-seven Loyalists and twenty-four Rebels killed, with sixty Tories and ninety Whigs seriously wounded at this Battle of Lindley's Mill. The two armies departed, leaving the care of the wounded and the burial of the dead to the mercy and conscience of the people of Cane Creek. Within a day or two, burial of both Whigs and Tories was complete. With the large Quaker population in the area there easily could have been Society assistance after the battle, but no details survive.⁵⁶

The duration and severity of the battle near the meeting house lends support to the tradition that a number of the men killed in the

⁵⁴Dixon, Genealogy of the Dixon Family, 2-4.

⁵⁵Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 265.

⁵⁶Algie I. Newlin, The Battle of Lindley's Mill (Burlington, N.C., 1975), 20.

battle were buried in the Quaker cemetery. Dr. John Pyle, the colonel of the Loyalist regiment which had been cut to pieces by Whig forces under Colonel Henry Lee only six months earlier, lived barely a quarter mile from Lindley's Mill and almost in sight of the main scene of battle. Much to his credit, he was among those who went immediately after the battle to care for the wounded left behind by both armies. Quakers of the area, in spite of great hardship, did not fail to live up to the Christian love George Fox had so long preached.⁵⁷

It was to these simple and compassionate people that Lord Earl Cornwallis issued his proclamation after the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. His printed announcement read:

Whereas, by the blessing of Almighty God, His Majesty's arms have been crowned with signal success, by the complete victory obtained over the rebel forces on the 15th . . . I . . . call upon all loyal subjects to stand forth and take an active part in restoring good order and government. . . .⁵⁸

He even went so far as to offer pardons to all rebels, except murderers, who would surrender themselves within a month. Cornwallis recognized the importance of enlisting the minds and hearts of the people before he could govern them. To do this he must first secure the support of such neutral groups as the Quakers of the Piedmont. A few Friends did falter and this proclamation caused a great deal of concern among the Whigs, especially after an incident shortly thereafter involving Colonel William Washington.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Stedman, History of the American War, II, 351; Banastre Tarleton, A History of the Campaigns of 1780-1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America (Dublin, 1787), 286-87.

While scouting with a group of his cavalymen near the British camp at Bell's Mill, Washington saw a group of thirty or more men approaching from a distance. He ordered his men to hide and observe the approach of the unknown men. Their manner of dress and their broad hats indicated that they were Friends. They were from the Back Creek, Carraway, and Uwharrie sections of Randolph County. Not expecting to see an American soldier so near to the British camp, they mistook Washington for a British soldier, and Washington made no effort to correct their mistaken impression. Instead he gained their confidence so that they openly told him

. . . that Greene had been defeated and driven out of the country, or obliged to retreat to Rockingham [County], the British arms were now completely triumphant, that they were going to pay their respects to friend Cornwallis, and tell him they were peace-loving, sober, quiet people, having no enmity toward him or the British government.⁵⁹

This interpretation of recent events was exactly what Cornwallis hoped would result from his proclamation and certainly it is what Greene feared would come of it. It is not surprising that a group of Piedmont Friends should wend their way to assure Cornwallis that they would abide by a restored colonial government. Friends, of course, were in the practice of abiding by the will of the established government as long as it did not require them to violate their peace testimonies. Their section of the state had experienced some of the worst of the Tory-Whig fighting. They were tired of war, plunderers, and the total lack of competent government. One Quaker told Cornwallis's historian Charles Stedman that "the people experienced

⁵⁹Caruthers, Revolutionary Incidents, 179.

such distress . . . I believe they would submit to any government in the world to obtain peace."⁶⁰ Peace at any price seemed the answer to many hours of prayer. However, the evidence clearly shows that these men were in the minority, for very few Quakers expressed approval for either of the fighting sides. Had Cornwallis been able to secure Quaker acquiescence to his cause, it would have been a great propaganda coup for the British.

Colonel Washington allowed the unsuspecting Quakers to talk freely before revealing his identity. He then ordered his men to surround the whole group while he gave them a stern lecture. Before telling them to go home and live by the principles of their faith, he ordered six of the best dressed to exchange clothing with six of his men whose clothes had become the most shabby looking. Then he ordered a similar exchange of horses. Caruthers notes that long after the war Quaker tradition kept alive this colorful story.⁶¹ The picture of these men, some perhaps elders and overseers, returning home dressed in worn out cavalry uniforms must have brought looks of astonishment from their families. Similarly, one can imagine the men of the cavalry of Colonel Washington, dressed in Quaker hats and coats, charging down upon the enemy. It is a certainty that Washington must have given Greene a full report of his encounter with the Quakers, their interpretation of recent events, and their unquestioning acceptance of Cornwallis's propaganda.⁶²

⁶⁰Stedman, History of the American War, II, 348.

⁶¹Caruthers, Revolutionary Incidents, 180-81.

⁶²Newlin, Battle of New Garden, 40.

In the days following the publication of Cornwallis's proclamation, Greene showed his uneasiness about this development. He took energetic steps to counter the propaganda that Cornwallis was scattering over the countryside. For several weeks after the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, the rival commanders waged a vigorous psychological battle for the minds and support of the people of North Carolina. The key group to win was the Quakers in the western section; hence a battle for Quaker sympathy followed. It was expected that the battle would decide the issue, but since the battle was only a draw, the matter of loyalty still remained in doubt.⁶³ To strike a blow against Cornwallis's propaganda and to ask his fellow Quakers to see to the care of his wounded, Greene wrote a letter to the members of the New Garden Monthly Meeting. He clearly realized their importance in the state and wished to win them to his side. The letter was both a warning and a request for aid. It read:

Friends and Countrymen: I address myself to your humanity for the relief of the suffering wounded at Guilford Court House. As a people I am persuaded you disclaim any connection with the measures calculated to promote military operations; but I know of no order of men more remarkable for the exercise of humanity and benevolence; and perhaps no instance ever had a higher claim upon you than the unfortunate wounded in your neighborhood.

I was born and educated in the professions and principles of your Society; and am perfectly acquainted with your religious sentiments and general good conduct as citizens. I am also sensible from the prejudices of many belonging to other religious societies, and the misconduct of a few of your own, that you are generally considered as enemies to the Independence of America. I entertain other sentiments, both of your principles and wishes. I respect you as a people, and shall always be ready to protect you from every violence and oppression which the confusion of

⁶³Ibid., 58.

the times afford but too many instances of. Do not be deceived. This is no religious dispute. The contest is for political liberty, without which cannot be enjoyed the free exercise of your religion.

The British are flattering you with conquest and exciting your apprehensions respecting religious liberty. They deceive you in both. They can neither conquer this country, nor will you be molested in the exercise of your sentiments. It is true, they may spread desolation and distress over many parts of the country, but when the inhabitants exert their force, the enemy must flee before them. There is but one way to put a speedy end to the extremities of war, which is, for the people to be united. It is the interest of the enemy to create divisions among you, and while they prevail your distress will continue. Have the enemy any friends to suffer or feel for? They have not, neither do they care how great your calamities if it but contributes to the gratification of their pride and ambition. You would neither have liberty nor property could the enemy succeed in their measures. How have they deceived you in their proclamations? and how have they violated their faith with your friends in South Carolina? They are now fleeing before us, and must soon be expelled from our border if the people will continue to aid the operations of the army.

Having given you this information, I have only to remark that I shall be exceedingly obliged to you to contribute all in power to relieve the unfortunates at Guilford, and Dr. Wallace is directed to point out the things most wanted, and to receive and apply donations, and from the liberality of your order upon the occasion I shall be able to judge your feelings as men . . . and principles as a Society. Given at Headquarters, North Carolina, March 26, 1781, and the fifth year of American Independence.⁶⁴

Greene's plea for New Garden Friends to give at least their sympathetic support to the cause of independence fell on deaf ears. He had high hopes for the letter and no doubt expected it to reach most of the Quakers in the area. To Greene, the Friends of North Carolina clearly were an important and influential minority that deserved a great deal of his attention. Superficially the letter may

⁶⁴American Museum, VI (1789), 213; Phillips Russell, North Carolina and the Revolutionary War (Charlotte, N.C., 1965), 222-23.

be viewed as a strong lecture to area Quakers on the basic issues of war, but a careful reading reveals Greene's true motive--to win the propaganda war against the British for the minds of the people of North Carolina, particularly the Society of Friends. Greene was trying to counter Cornwallis's pronouncement, attempting to do by letter what Colonels Washington and Lee had been doing by military force.⁶⁵ To his plea the Quakers replied:

Friend Greene: We received thine, being dated March 26, 1781. Agreeable to thy request we shall do all that lies in our power, although this may inform you that from our present situation we are ill able to assist as much as we would be glad to do, as the Americans have lain much upon us, and of late the British have plundered and entirely broken up many among us, which renders it hard, and there is at our meetinghouse in New Garden upward of one hundred now living, that have no means of provision, except what hospitality the neighborhood affords them, which we look upon as a hardship upon us, if not an imposition; but notwithstanding all this, we are determined, by the assistance of Providence, while we have anything among us, that the distressed both at the Court House and here shall have part of it with us. As we have as yet made no distinction as to party and their cause--and as we have none to commit our cause to but God alone, but hold it the duty of true Christians, at all times to assist the distressed.⁶⁶

In the last sentence of the Quaker message, Friends gave their response to Greene's argument against the British. They steadfastly defended their ancient testimonies and renewed their allegiance only to God. If it had been Greene's intention to convince the Society to act favorably toward the American cause, he failed.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Newlin, Battle of New Garden, 37 and 41.

⁶⁶Russell, North Carolina and the Revolutionary War, 223-24.

⁶⁷Newlin, Battle of New Garden, 42-43.

Even in the bitter 1780's then, most Quakers in North Carolina remained true to their peace testimony in spite of pitched battles in their communities. Quakers in the state were caught between their doctrine and political preference. Although both sides, particularly the Patriots, treated members of the Society roughly, each group wished the support and loyalty of Friends and struggled to offer whatever concessions they could afford at the moment. Both Patriot and Briton recognized the importance of the Society of Friends in the state and waged a fierce propaganda battle for their support. However, as much as the rival governments wished to accommodate the Quakers, they could do little to change the Friends' principles and their attitudes toward the war. What the war did do was to profoundly change the character of the Society in North Carolina.

CHAPTER VI

EPILOG--THE AFTERMATH OF THE REVOLUTION

From its beginnings, the Society of Friends suffered for its beliefs. The culmination of this suffering in North Carolina was the American Revolution. It was this traumatic war linked with the well-known Quaker aversion to slavery that spelled the end of a vigorous Society in the state. Although the Religious Society of Friends still exists in North Carolina today, it is not as prosperous or as visible state-wide as it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The effects of the war on the Society were disastrous. Many young Quakers left the faith, and between 1783 and 1800 only thirteen certificates were received from immigrants in New Garden, the heart of the Quaker community in North Carolina.¹

Quakers suffered during the Revolution--indeed the war threatened their very existence--but in one sense, war served to strengthen the Society. Arthur Mekeel, modern-day Quaker historian, thought the war caused the Society to prune away its dead wood: "Only those who were willing to suffer in maintaining their religious ideas were allowed to remain in its ranks and in this respect it underwent a process of purification."² In other words, a stronger but smaller

¹R.D.W. Connor, North Carolina: Rebuilding the Ancient Commonwealth (2 vols., Chicago, 1929), I, 391.

²Mekeel, "Relation of Quakers to the American Revolution," 391.

Society emerged from the American Revolution. Charles Jenkins, another modern Quaker historian, agrees and calls the war "a series of major surgical operations and that the patient survived, is a testimonial to its inherited good health, soundness and spiritual strength."³ Thus in the midst of war and its sorrowful aftermath, North Carolina's small Society of Friends cleansed itself and sheared off its marginal members.

To deny that the war was a traumatic ordeal for Quakers would be a misrepresentation of the facts. Although the question of the testimony against war became relatively unimportant in North Carolina after the Revolution, there still remained the burning issue of slavery, and many Quakers worked for emancipation.⁴ The North Carolina Yearly Meeting's Standing Committee of 1787 used the Declaration of Independence to refute slavery.⁵ On November 23, 1787, the Yearly Meeting presented a petition which called "for the emancipation of the Slaves, the property of the people called Quakers, under certain rules and restrictions."⁶ It was, therefore, this disapproval of slavery coupled with opposition to the American Revolution that eroded the normal toleration given to Quakers during peacetime.

The success of the Society of Friends in surviving the trying days of the Revolution was itself a testimony to the soundness of its

³Jenkins, "Joseph Hewes," 233.

⁴Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 194.

⁵Standing Committee Minutes for North Carolina Yearly Meeting for 1787.

⁶N. C. Recs., XX, 144.

basic beliefs.⁷ Friends acquired an "unpatriotic" reputation during the Revolution. Because of their views on peace and war, they were taunted as Tories and cowards, and many became convinced that the South held little future for them. Some Friends became disillusioned, and there was no longer expectation that immigration from the North would strengthen the Society in the South.⁸ This attitude prevailed long after the war. In 1797, for example, North Carolina Congressman Nathaniel Macon noted that during the hostilities, Quakers in his state "were generally Tories."⁹ His thoughts may have been fostered by the fact that Quakers declined to illuminate their windows at night to commemorate the British defeat at Yorktown.¹⁰

It is important to note that Quakers were the first organized and the most disciplined and determined group in the South to dissent from the prevailing folkways and practices of the region. Because of their peculiarities of dress, speech and tribal unity, they were looked upon as a singular people who appeared to be in constant conspiracy against the worldly thinking of the majority.¹¹ Their liberalism in a region noted for its resistance to change caused the

⁷Jenkins, "Joseph Hewes," 232.

⁸Anscombe, I Have Called You Friends, 179.

⁹Joseph Gales, Sr., ed., The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States (Washington, D.C., 1834-56), 5th Congress, 2nd Session, 622 (Nov. 30, 1797).

¹⁰Claude H. Van Tyne, The Loyalists in the American Revolution (New York, 1902), 210.

¹¹Howard Beeth, "The South and the Outsider: Origin of a Partnership," Southern Humanities Review, IX (1975), 354.

Quakers to be considered outsiders in their own land. In actuality, however, they were not "outsiders" at all. Friends were among the first settlers in North Carolina and grew with the area as it expanded. According to modern Quaker historian Howard Beeth: "Generally . . . Southerners received Friends with a tolerance which if not uniform was nevertheless measurably different from which they encountered elsewhere."¹² A search of the literature reveals that the general attitude toward Quakers in America at this time was ambivalent.

Yet with the cessation of fighting came the beginning of a new era in North Carolina. Friends gained a certain measure of tolerance from the new government. In 1784, the Assembly granted Quakers the right to affirm their loyalty to the new government, and the Yearly Meeting withdrew its objection to its members participating in politics.¹³ The next year conscientious objectors were excused from attending musters. This clause was reenacted in the new militia law passed in 1786, and with the enactment of this law, Quakers had obtained all their demands in the matter of military affairs.¹⁴ The Assembly even went so far as to exempt Quakers from the House of Commons rule that each member must remove his hat when in the House.¹⁵

Despite these gains, the Society was one of the four religious sects in North Carolina which lost ground or remained almost static

¹²Ibid., 347.

¹³North Carolina Yearly Meeting Minutes for 1784.

¹⁴N. C. Recs., XXIV, 716 and 819.

¹⁵N. C. Recs., XXI, 9 and 197.

after the Revolution--the others being the Anglicans, Moravians and German Reformed.¹⁶ As soon as the war was over, Friends accepted the results. Quakers had never blindly obeyed despotism. They had steadily resisted it in England; they did the same in America. According to Stephen B. Weeks, "They were then logically and historically, on the side of the colonists in the question at issue. They differed from them in regard to the method that should be employed to attain the end."¹⁷

After the war certain other changes can be noted. The Friends became willing to accommodate themselves to the way of life of the rest of the state's inhabitants.¹⁸ The return of peace helped to reduce the hostility of non-Friends toward the Society, and Quakers then "went on making themselves a holy army to fight for the good of the whole civil community."¹⁹ The American Revolution wiped out the assumption by Quakers that they could remain a unique group apart from society. The war gave the church a new commitment to be more active in the civic life of the community. They also became optimistic about the spiritual effects the Revolution would have on their neighbors, hoping that war would have a purifying effect on the people and make them look inwardly toward God. Yet as it turned out, the

¹⁶Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 132.

¹⁷Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery, 185.

¹⁸Calhoun, Religion and the American Revolution in North Carolina, ix.

¹⁹Sydney V. James, "The Impact of the American Revolution on Quakers' Ideas About Their Sect," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., XIX (1962), 377.

Quakers themselves were the ones who went through an unexpected transformation, particularly in their relationship to the civil community. The Revolution revealed weaknesses in Quaker faith and "challenged the Quakers either to find a new role in American society or to accept further isolation from it."²⁰ Thus out of the crisis of war came the need to reevaluate the place of the church in the world. Quakers abandoned the idea of general conversion and replaced it with one of social service. Furthermore, they accepted the idea of their own purity within a tainted society.²¹ Although these new ideas about the church did not satisfy every Quaker or prevent disagreement over its role in later years, they made it possible for the Society of Friends to remain an important part of the state and nation.²²

However, there was one area in which Friends refused to compromise and that was on the issue of black slavery. Many North Carolina Quakers refused to live in a community which accepted slavery, so they left the state. This great migration drained North Carolina of a large number of its Friends, many migrating to the Middle West. This mass migration was caused not only by opposition to slavery but also was brought about by the chaos of the Revolution which disrupted the whole economic and social system of the state. This flow of population from the upper South to the old Northwest had considerable influence on American history. The North Carolina

²⁰Ibid., 382 and 360.

²¹Ibid., 365 and 378.

²²Ibid., 382.

Quakers who migrated across the Ohio River removed a valuable anti-slavery element from the South and weakened the cause of liberalism in that region.

As has been seen, the story of early North Carolina Quakerism is far from simple, and many historians have wrestled with its complications. Yet there are clear and concise themes which can be extracted from the overall picture. The early Friends came to North Carolina for economic as well as spiritual reasons. They settled in the northeastern part of Carolina and then migrated to other parts of the colony. Always a minority, perhaps as few as one-seventh or as many as one-fourth of the population at the time, they were highly visible and important members of the province. The Quakers were important as farmers and governmental officials as well as spiritual leaders. They met with little opposition in the early years of settlement, but as their power grew and the S.P.G. claimed its neglected parishes, this friction manifested itself in many small disputes and two large rebellions. The promise of an aggressive and rapidly growing Society was thwarted during these early years.

During the second period of Quaker history in North Carolina, that of the Anglo-French Wars, Friends experienced increasing difficulty with the provincial government over a variety of issues. Quakers became increasingly unpopular, mainly because of their opposition to the use of force against the Indians. During the years prior to the American Revolution, Friends most often clashed with authorities in three main areas: (1) military service, (2) payment of monies for military operations, and (3) the swearing of oaths. Some Friends were disowned for submitting to official pressure, but the

majority remained true to their beliefs. The War of the Regulation proved to be the most severe test of the pre-revolutionary days for the Society. It was these issues of peace, war, allegiance, and finally slavery which first began to tug at the foundations of the Society preceding its most traumatic ordeal in North Carolina, the American Revolution.

The American Revolution was clearly the greatest calamity in history to hit the North Carolina Quakers. Although in practice, the new revolutionary government acted more harshly than the old colonial government, it at least gave the appearance of trying to understand and accommodate Quaker ideas. In spite of government efforts, Friends found it difficult to maintain a neutral stand. Disputes were common with the government over the old issues but most of the suffering in the early years arose from the monetary demands of the new state government.

As in the Anglo-French Wars, Friends were generally true to their beliefs; a few members deviated but were quickly disowned by their meetings. Greater suffering took place in the later war years when the fighting actually came to the South. The grim realities of war plus even heavier monetary punishment combined to make the 1780's the most difficult of the war years for North Carolina Quakers. Three battles were fought near Quaker settlements--New Garden, Guilford Courthouse, and Lindley's Mill--each bringing the fallout of ravaging armies. Both the British and colonials vied for the Quakers as allies but neither won the propaganda contest from a people who maintained allegiance only to God.

The aftermath of the war was in many ways as difficult as the Revolution itself. The Revolution, linked with the Quaker aversion to slavery, spelled the end of a vigorous Society in the state. However, in a strange way it was the weakening which actually strengthened the Friends. With the wavering members of the Society gone, those who remained were stronger and more dedicated than ever to the Quaker way of life. Quaker immigration stopped after the American Revolution and Friends, in turn, migrated westward to the old Northwest to escape slavery. Quakers in North Carolina were still looked upon as unpatriotic and part of a conspiracy, which may have also contributed to this vast exodus. In an effort to keep these valuable citizens in the state, the Assembly passed several laws which gave Quakers all the demands they had wished for previously, but even this did not stem the outward movement. The war profoundly changed Quakerism in North Carolina in that it also caused the Society to turn from growth to social service and from grand public displays to small quiet victories.

In spite of all that has been written about North Carolina and Southern Quakers, there still remains a lack of understanding about their place in the history of the state and the region. The distinguished Richard Beale Davis chastises the Quakers of the South for leaving "sad evidence of their lack of dynamic leadership."²³ He despairs that their "moral conscience and consciousness, if it had any effect on the southern mind, is an effect too subtle and tenuous to

²³Richard Beale Davis, Intellectual Life in the Colonial South, 1585-1763 (3 vols., Knoxville, Tenn., 1978), II, 696.

trace today."²⁴ Davis suggests that the Quakers failed and were reduced after the colonial period to the living of quiet spiritual lives. North Carolina Quaker historian Seth Hinshaw views the matter differently: "Blessed are the peacemakers even when they fail."²⁵ Although Davis concludes that Southern Quakers produced no great leaders or attracted great leaders to their beliefs, he recognizes the difficulty of tracing Quaker influence today. However, Davis does concede that "the strong anti-slavery feeling of many of the southern revolutionary patriots, notably Jefferson and his friends, almost surely came in part from their Quaker neighbors and kinsmen."²⁶ Even if the Quaker effect on the South was as subtle and tenuous as Davis suggests, one is reminded again of Seth Hinshaw who said: "It is difficult to measure precisely the influence of a powerful example."²⁷ This then is a legacy which the North Carolina Friends left their state, the South, and the nation.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Hinshaw, Quaker Influence on America, 17.

²⁶Davis, Intellectual Life in the Colonial South, II, 696.

²⁷Hinshaw, Quaker Influence on America, 17.

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