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SLAVE REVOLTS AND NORTH CAROLINA QUAKER MIGRATION

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Daniel R. Kroupa

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SLAVE REVOLTS AND NORTH CAROLINA QUAKER MIGRATION

By

Daniel R. Kroupa

A THESIS

**Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

SLAVE REVOLTS AND NORTH CAROLINA QUAKER MIGRATION

By

Daniel R. Kroupa

This study will argue that the fear of slave revolts acted as the primary motivation for the migration of many members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) from North Carolina to the Old Northwest, especially Ohio and Indiana, during the early nineteenth century. From around 1800 until the outbreak of the American Civil War approximately 12,000 Quakers living in the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia migrated to Indiana and Ohio. More than half of these migrants came from North Carolina. Historians studying the Quaker "Great Migration" have generally agreed that economics and opposition to slavery played major roles in motivating Southern Quakers to move to the Northwest. However, the fear of slave revolts went beyond economics and general opposition to slavery as an inducement for North Carolina Quakers to migrate.

To my mother (and her computer).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
--------------------------	----------

Part One

THE GREAT MIGRATION.....	10
---------------------------------	-----------

The Quakers in Early North Carolina.....	10
North Carolina Quakers and the Great Migration.....	13
Moving to the Northwest.....	18
Straying From the Flock.....	22
The Great Migration and the Big Picture.....	26
The Lure of the Old Northwest.....	29
Conclusion.....	35

Part Two

SLAVE REVOLTS AND NORTH CAROLINA QUAKER MIGRATION.....	36
---	-----------

Introduction.....	36
North Carolina Quakers and Slavery.....	41
The Steps Toward Freedom.....	56
The Law of Slavery and North Carolina Quakers.....	59
Quakers and Racism.....	67
A Climate of Fear.....	72
Slave Revolts and Quaker Migration.....	83

CONCLUSION.....	87
------------------------	-----------

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	90
--------------------------	-----------

INTRODUCTION

The migration of American Quakers to the area once designated as the Northwest Territory began around 1800 and continued until the outbreak of the Civil War.¹ Although we will probably never know with certainty how many members of the Society of Friends actually participated in this movement, estimates indicate that tens of thousands of Quakers took part. And while American and British Quakers had been involved previously in large-scale migrations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the exodus to the Northwest became known as the "Great Migration" in Quaker literature due to its overall size and impact on the Society of Friends in America.²

The Quakers who participated in the Great Migration came from all parts of the eastern United States, but the Southern states of Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia provided the largest numbers (around 12,000) of Quaker migrants with most coming from North Carolina and Virginia.³ Indeed, more than

¹The Northwest Territory was established in 1787. It comprised the area now containing the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin as well as a portion of northeastern Minnesota. The Northwest Territory will be discussed further in Part One.

²The term "Great Migration" has been used to describe several large-scale population movements in American history. For example, the massive emigrations of African-Americans from the South to new locations in the North during the twentieth century are also referred to as the "Great Migration."

³See Hugh J. Barbour and J. William Frost, The Quakers, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), p. 155; and Stephen B. Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery: A Study in Institutional History, (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1968., first published in 1896.), pp. 69-70.

half of the Southern migrants came from North Carolina, especially between 1815 and 1835.⁴ Moving as individuals, families, groups of families, and occasionally as entire communities, these migrating Quakers followed several routes but moved primarily over the Blue Ridge Mountains in western Virginia and through the Cumberland Gap in eastern Tennessee. The majority of migrant North Carolina Quakers eventually settled in eastern Indiana while most Virginia Quakers tended to settle in southern Ohio.⁵ By establishing a stronghold for the Society of Friends in the Midwest, the Great Migration led to a major decline in membership among the Quakers in the southeastern United States.

This study is primarily concerned with understanding why Quakers left their homes in North Carolina by the thousands in order to move to the Northwest prior to the Civil War. A comprehensive study of the Great Migration with its many dimensions would require far more time and space to achieve.⁶ Focusing on

⁴The source most often cited by historians studying the numbers of Southern Quaker migrants is Stephen Weeks's *Southern Quakers and Slavery*. Weeks primarily researched Quaker meeting minutes in order to determine the numbers of Southern Quaker migrants. He was quick to point out, however, that in spite of his intensive research, Quaker records were not nearly complete enough to establish exact numbers (see p. 271). Weeks's research remains the starting point for understanding the numerical dimensions of the Great Migration. See especially the charts on pp. 269-70. Weeks's charts indicate an overwhelming movement of North Carolina Quakers moving to Indiana between 1815-1835.

⁵For a good general review of the migration of Southern Quakers to Ohio as a study in cultural geography see E. Leonard Brown, *Quaker Migration to "Miami Country," 1798-1861*, Ph.D. thesis, Michigan State University, 1974.

⁶Readers familiar with Quaker history will notice that the internal religious separations beginning in 1827 are not covered. This is due to the fact that the separations, while arguably a result of the Great Migration, did not motivate North Carolina Quakers to migrate to the Northwest to any significant extent. The North Carolina Yearly Meeting was virtually unaffected by the religious separations of the early to mid-nineteenth century. Those interested in Quaker religious separations and realignments should read Rufus Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism* (hence cited as Jones, LPQ.), vol. I, (London: MacMillan and Co., 1921), especially chapter XII, "The Great Separation," pp. 435-87 and chapter XIII, "The Second Separation," pp. 488-540. For an excellent introduction to

the motivations of the Quakers who migrated from North Carolina to the Northwest can be justified for several reasons. As mentioned above, North Carolina provided more Quaker migrants to the Northwest than did any other single region of the United States. It would therefore be difficult to grasp the importance of the Great Migration without understanding the central role played by the Quakers of North Carolina. By examining the motivations for this Quaker migration, it is possible to understand better some of the larger issues confronting not only the Society of Friends but also North Carolinians in general. Moreover, the issues surrounding North Carolina Quakers and the Great Migration were of great importance to all Americans concerned with the meaning of freedom and the destiny of the nation.

Historians studying the Great Migration have analyzed and explained the motivations of Southern Quaker emigrants in a number of different ways. While most historians generally have agreed on what factors influenced the migration of Quakers from North Carolina, they have disagreed over the degree of importance of those factors in relation to each other. The main area of disagreement has been concerned primarily with the influences of economic conditions affecting the Quakers; and the problems of slavery in North Carolina. The conflict surrounding slavery and the Society of Friends in North Carolina will be treated in greater detail later in this study. For now it is enough to know that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Society of Friends took steps toward eventually eliminating the practice of slavery among its members. It needs to be emphasized, however, that economics and Quaker antislavery were by no

nineteenth-century Quaker religious change see Thomas D. Hamm, The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907, (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988).

means mutually exclusive. In fact, they were often interconnected. Historian Ruth Anna Ketring explained this in 1937:

The real causes of this migration have to be drawn from many factors. If a westward bound Friend had been asked his reason for leaving the South, he would promptly have explained that his opposition to slavery was the sole cause. In this he was undoubtedly sincere. But together with this reason which was uppermost in the Quaker mind, were other less tangible elements. *When Quakers held slaves they had no quarrel with tidewater society, but so soon as they renounced slaveholding their social status fell, and economically they came into competition with slave labor. Land hunger, the pioneer spirit, the lure of something better that lay beyond, and the perennial conflict between backcountry and tidewater added a complexity of subconscious motives (emphasis mine).*⁷

That the participation of North Carolina Quakers in the Great Migration was ultimately a product of many factors should not be disputed. Migrations rarely, if ever, result from one set of factors. It has been argued that the decision to migrate is often the result of a combination of negative factors working to push potential migrants from their homeland, and positive factors working to pull them to a new homeland. Therefore, from an economics/slavery standpoint, the economic problems involving the Society of Friends and slavery coupled with the opportunities to be had in the Northwest worked to compel Quakers to migrate.⁸

But while keeping in mind individual Quaker circumstances, several historians have pointed to general motivations that went beyond economic "push-pull" factors. For example, in 1921 Quaker historian Rufus Jones concluded that

⁷See Ruth Anna Ketring, Charles Osborn in the Anti-Slavery Movement, (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1937), p. 5.

⁸For a more thorough description of this "push-pull" theory see Donald J. Bogue, Principles of Demography, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1969), especially pp. 753-57. See also Larry Dale Gragg, Migration in Early America: The Virginia Quaker Experience, (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1980) especially pp. 47-82.

"Most of the Friends who left their old homes to create new ones in the free Northwest Territory had gone forth, in high faith and in obedience to what they believed was the divine light, to escape the environment of slavery and to help make a great area for freedom in the uncontaminated West."⁹ According to Jones, this Quaker migration was rooted primarily in the desire to leave North Carolina due to an ideological opposition to slavery and its effects.¹⁰

More recently, in 1970, John Michael Shay agreed with Jones with regards to the primacy of antislavery ideology as an incentive for North Carolina Quakers to migrate. Shay's study of *The Antislavery Movement in North Carolina* argued that Quakers left in larger numbers than other North Carolinian migrants relative to the general population of the state. "Obviously Quakers were considerably more anxious to leave their native state than other North Carolinians," Shay concluded. "The explanation for this differential in tendency to emigrate, particularly in view of their generally superior economic position, lies in their hatred of slavery." Shay pointed to the fact that Quaker migrants settled almost exclusively in the free Northwest while four out of five non-Quaker migrants settled in other slaveholding areas. The combination of choice of destination along with the well known Quaker aversion to slavery, according to Shay, "provide a convincing argument for the importance of antislavery principles in the Quaker migration from North Carolina." ¹¹

⁹Quoted in Jones, *LPO*, vol. I, p. 430.

¹⁰ See Judith Shuval, "The Role of Ideology as a Predisposing Frame of Reference for Immigrants," *Human Relations*, XII (February, 1959), pp. 51-61. Shuval examined the ideological influences of Zionism on immigrants arriving in Israel, and how those influences, or lack of them, affected cultural adaptation.

¹¹See John Michael Shay, *The Antislavery Movement in North Carolina*, Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 1970, especially pp. 311-315. Shay rejects the claim that antislavery was growing gradually in strength in North Carolina through organizations like the North Carolina Manumission Society until radical abolitionism made antislavery unpopular. Shay

In an earlier study, Quaker historian Elbert Russell agreed that the Great Migration was due to the desire among Southern Quakers "to escape from the influence of slavery." But Russell also pointed strongly to the desire to obtain better lands. He emphasized the economic effects of slavery on Quakers after they had adopted an antislavery position. Those effects included difficulties in adjusting to a Southern slaveholding society "which put a social stigma on manual labor." The Northwest offered a chance to escape that negative environment without a great deal of sacrifice due to tremendous opportunities in terms of land available to settlers.¹²

Other historians have also emphasized the influence of economics and slavery on North Carolina Quaker migration. For example, John William Buys stated in his study *Quakers in Indiana in the Nineteenth Century* that the "existence of the institution of slavery was a primary reason for the Quaker flight, but the economic factors were equal to any others."¹³ Buys then immediately explained how slavery and economics in North Carolina simultaneously affected Quakers. He acknowledged that slavery played a role in motivating Quakers to migrate but ultimately concluded that land and opportunity operated as the central reasons for their move to Indiana. That the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 had banned slavery in the area was, to Buys, only one incentive among equals to migrate.

Although all of the arguments presented above are valid in a number of ways, they fail to appreciate the overarching reason as to why Quakers left North

claims that the effects of North Carolina antislavery efforts were more apparent than real, and that slavery was not in a state of decline prior to the rise of radical abolitionism.

¹²See Elbert Russell, *The History of Quakerism*, (Richmond, Ind.: Friends United Press, 1979), quotations on p. 271.

¹³See John William Buys, *Quakers in Indiana in the Nineteenth Century*, Ph. D. thesis, University of Florida, 1973, p. 10-11.

Carolina and relocated in the Northwest. In short, this study will argue that Quakers emigrated by the thousands from North Carolina to Ohio and Indiana primarily due to fears generated by the threat of slave revolts in North Carolina. Historians, including the ones mentioned above, have usually listed the fear of slave revolts as simply one reason out many for Quakers leaving North Carolina. An important exception to this rule was historian Herbert Aptheker. In critiquing the history of Quaker antislavery activity, Aptheker noted that while many Quakers opposed slavery due to its immorality, they were also "keenly aware of the violence, terrorism, and militarism which were necessary for the maintenance of the institution and which were directly contrary to the pacifistic tenets of their faith. *It is undoubtedly for this reason, essentially, that mass exoduses of Quakers from the South followed periods of serious slave unrest* (emphasis mine). . ."¹⁴

Aptheker did not elaborate much at all on the above statement. That is unfortunate as well as odd considering Aptheker spent much of his scholarly career studying slave revolts in America. It should be pointed out that this present study did not begin with Aptheker's statement in mind. In fact, it was not until most of the research for this study had been completed that his statement came to light. Though not the starting point, it did much to reinforce what the evidence will demonstrate: The fear of slave revolts went beyond economics and general opposition to slavery to act as the primary reason for Quaker migration from North Carolina to Ohio and Indiana.

¹⁴See Herbert Aptheker, "The Quaker's and Negro Slavery," The Journal of Negro History, XXV, 1940, p.341.

Part One of this study will provide a basic overview of North Carolina Quaker migration patterns. It will begin by briefly describing the early history of the Society of Friends in North Carolina. Next, some of important aspects of earlier Quaker migrations will be outlined. The Great Migration of the nineteenth century was preceded by several Quaker migrations during the eighteenth century. Some of the primary reasons for those earlier migrations and their effects on the Great Migration will be described and analyzed. Part One will then examine some of the methods of travel and routes taken during the Great Migration. Quakers spent a great deal of time and effort in perfecting their moving techniques while also developing a chain of communications between the places of origin and the points of destination.

These and other developments involved with the Great Migration must be understood along with the underlying Quaker motivations for leaving North Carolina. While motivations are the main subject of this study, they need to be seen as part of a larger migratory process. In other words, migration is more than simply a matter of having a reason to leave and a place to go. Furthermore, like thousands of other Americans during the early nineteenth century, Quakers were in fact taking part in a much broader phase of American migration. The similarities and differences between Quaker and non-Quaker emigrants moving from North Carolina will be reviewed. The similarities were many. The chief differences lay in Quaker motivations and their choice of destination. Analyzing their choice of destination will add further to our understanding of how the fear of slave insurrections influenced participation in the Great Migration. Part One concludes with an introduction to the problem of Quakers and slavery in North Carolina.

Part Two will examine the relationship between slave revolts and North Carolina participation in the Great Migration. It begins by discussing some of the

methodological problems involved with studying Quaker motivations for migrating. With a few important exceptions, they did not leave a great deal of written information revealing their reasons for moving. It is therefore necessary to place Quaker movements within the context of their times in order to understand why they migrated to the Northwest. To this end, Part Two reviews several of the crucial elements in the historical context of Quakers and slavery.

After defining the problem of slavery and Quakerism, Part Two will describe and analyze steps taken by Quakers to end slavery within the Society of Friends. That analysis will include an account of the social, religious, and legal implications of slavery on the Quakers; and how their antislavery efforts led to numerous confrontations with other North Carolinians, especially the colonial and state governments. However, Quaker antislavery efforts take on a paradoxical appearance when their thoughts on race are considered. In spite of their antislavery ideology and actions, as a group, Quakers harbored many racial prejudices which fueled their fears of slave insurrections. The climate of fear created by actual and rumored slave uprisings in and around North Carolina is the final topic of this study. By examining the nature, sources, and implications of that fear, it will become clear that problems generated by the fear of slave revolts served as the overarching reason for North Carolina Quaker migration.

Part One

THE GREAT MIGRATION

The Quakers in Early North Carolina

Before analyzing the primary motivations for the Quakers who chose to emigrate from North Carolina to the Northwest, we need to review some of the basic dynamics of their participation in the Great Migration. To this end, a brief outline of the Society of Friends in North Carolina and its organization followed by an overview of the history of North Carolina Quaker migration will help to serve as an introduction for understanding the problems discussed later in this study.¹⁵

The Society of Friends (Quakers) originated in England under the leadership of George Fox during the mid-seventeenth century. Beginning around 1652, Fox began preaching among his fellow Englishmen that the presence of God's "Inner Light" could be found in every human. According to Fox, this truth made traditional religious organizations, with their ceremonies and professional clergy, unnecessary. Quaker group meetings of worship usually involved sitting in silence, sometimes for hours, until someone felt moved by the Inner Light to

¹⁵For good introductions to Quakerism and the history of the Society of Friends in North Carolina see Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*; Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery*; and Hiram Hilty, *Toward Freedom for All: North Carolina Quakers and Slavery*, (Richmond, Ind.: Friends United Press, 1984.) For a more detailed study of Southern Quakerism see Howard Beeth, *Outside Agitators in Southern History: The Society of Friends, 1656-1800*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Houston, 1984.

offer a sermon, prayer, or song. The Society held to an idea of a basic spiritual equality among all people, most outwardly visible in modes of plain dress and speech.

In addition to the above, Quakers began a practice of non-cooperation with the State. They refused to attend or pay tithes to churches in their parishes and also refused to swear any oaths of allegiance due to the biblical command to "swear not at all." Their belief that violence interfered with the Inner Light -- and therefore their salvation -- led them to practice a strict form of pacifism. Although often severely persecuted for their anti-establishment views, the Society of Friends grew in England during the rest of the seventeenth century. Quaker experiences as a persecuted people often influenced them in expressing concern for others suffering mistreatment.¹⁶

Quakers eventually carried their preaching activities beyond England and inevitably found their way to the British colonies in North America. The Society of Friends established major enclaves during the colonial period in Rhode Island, western New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina, as well as smaller settlements in New York, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina. Quakers experienced a mixed reception in America. They were violently attacked by the Puritans in New England. And while tolerated to a greater extent in Virginia and North Carolina, their refusal to pay church taxes or to support the militia made them unpopular in many cases. On the other hand, as is well known, Pennsylvania became known as the Quaker Colony. Founded by William Penn as

¹⁶See Ernst Troeltsch, "Sect-Type and Church-Type Contrasted," Religion, Culture and Society: A Reader in the Sociology of Religion, Louis Schneider, ed., (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964), pp. 457-65.

a holy experiment, Pennsylvania came to be a haven and focal point for Quakers living in America, although they lost most of their political power in the colony by the time of the American Revolution. Some Quakers did become politically prominent outside of Pennsylvania. Quakers served as governors in Rhode Island, New Jersey, and North Carolina.

Quakers moving to North Carolina during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries tended to settle in the Albermarle Sound region of northeastern North Carolina; the area originally planned for settlement by Walter Raleigh in the 1580s. The initial English failures in the Carolina region delayed its formal establishment as a colony until 1663. In that year, King Charles II issued a proprietary charter to a group of English lords for the land between Virginia and Spanish held Florida. Significantly, the constitution drawn up by the proprietors called for religious toleration in the colony.

Quakerism in North Carolina began with the missionary visits of George Fox and another Quaker leader, William Edmundson, in 1672. Their efforts at gaining members proved to be successful. Furthermore, the appointment of Quaker John Archdale to the governorship of the colony in 1695 initiated a short lived "golden age" for Quakerism in North Carolina. The Society of Friends continued to grow in the region to such an extent that North Carolina Yearly Meeting became formally established in 1698.¹⁷ Quakers played important roles

¹⁷The Society of Friends was (and still is) structured by a pyramid style system of meetings. At the bottom were the preparative meetings. These could best be described in the sense of individual congregations. One or more preparative meetings made up monthly meetings, the basic unit of Quaker organization. The monthly meetings held the power over individual standing and membership, the right to hold property, and the right to recognize marriage. Two or more monthly meetings constituted a quarterly meeting. Quarterly meetings dealt with whatever problems were deemed too difficult for the monthly meetings. The combination of several quarterly meetings made up a yearly meeting. The yearly meetings served as the final arbiters of Quaker doctrine and social

in the development of colonial North Carolina, and like many other people living in the British colonies, they sought religious freedom and economic opportunities.¹⁸ Their search for both sometimes entailed moving to new and different areas. The history of North Carolina Quaker migration provides examples of that search.

North Carolina Quakers and the Great Migration

The story of the Quakers and their migration from North Carolina to the Northwest has generally been broken down into distinct phases. The first phase to have a direct influence on the Great Migration of the nineteenth century took place during the early to mid-1700s and actually involved Northern Quakers moving into the western piedmont region of North Carolina. This coincided with a general migration of Northern colonists to the South, especially during and after the French and Indian War which lasted from around 1756 to 1763. Many of these migrants, including the Quakers, sought cheap land, while many others, especially those from Pennsylvania and New York, were fleeing the war-time violence in those colonies. In many cases Quaker migrants often chose to move into western North Carolina to escape the problems involved with black slavery in the Northern colonies. Although slavery had been utilized in tidewater North Carolina since the beginning of its colonization, the piedmont region held few slaves throughout most

discipline. Colonial America ultimately had Quaker yearly meetings for New England, New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. Although theoretically autonomous, in practice the yearly meetings looked to each other to establish continuity. The London Yearly Meeting served as the focal point for Quakers worldwide, with Philadelphia having an analogous role in America.

¹⁸For a thorough analysis of Quakers and economics see Frederick Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948). See also David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770-1823, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), especially pp. 233-54.

of the colonial period. Much Quaker antislavery thought and activity in North Carolina originated from these migrants and their descendants.¹⁹

The growth of settlements in piedmont North Carolina led to the western portion of the state to overshadow the much older settlements in the Albermarle Sound region of tidewater North Carolina. As historian Frederick Jackson Turner wrote: "Thus it happened that from about 1730 to 1760 a generation of settlers . . . poured into the southern uplands . . . and built up a new Pennsylvania in contrast with the old Quaker colonies, and a new South in contrast with the tidewater South."²⁰ The arrival of Quakers in western North Carolina continued until the outbreak of the American Revolution. They laid the population groundwork for the Great Migration of Southern Quakers to the Northwest during the nineteenth century.²¹

¹⁹See Hilty, pp. 17-20.

²⁰See Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History, (Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1986 (originally published in 1920)), pp. 100-01. Although Turner's interpretations have been the object of considerable (and justifiable) criticism, his emphasis on the importance of land in explaining the westward movement of Americans still has merit. Turner's essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" is a most important historiographical starting point in studying American migration patterns.

Turner's statement above points to some important socio-political developments in colonial North Carolina. For example, although piedmont North Carolinians began to outnumber those living in the tidewater region, the latter retained control of the colonial legislature. Protesters, known as "Regulators," committed acts of violence in opposition to high taxes and other alleged legislative abuses. In 1771, the colonial governor sent around a thousand militia into western North Carolina to arrest the protesters. The militia defeated a force of two thousand Regulators at the Battle of Alamance thus ending the insurrection. Most of the insurgent leaders were arrested and executed. Several Quakers who took part in the Regulator movement were disowned (excommunicated) from the Society of Friends for violating the Quaker peace testimony.

See Hilty, p. 21.

²¹For an excellent analysis of this Quaker migration to North Carolina see Larry Dale Gragg, Migration in Early America: The Virginia Quaker Experience. See also Weeks, Southern Quaker and Slavery, especially the chapter entitled "Expansion in the Eighteenth Century," pp. 70-125; and Rufus Jones, The Quakers in the American Colonies, (New

Another important migratory phase began around 1768 as many Quakers moved westward from North Carolina into the area that eventually became Tennessee. Quakers established official meetings there by 1787. Most historians studying this migration have agreed that economic problems and the desire for adventure chiefly influenced the movement. The rugged conditions of the move are described in several journal accounts. Stephen Grellet, a Quaker emigrant to Tennessee, who later in life became a prominent Quaker leader and traveler, described the move in his journal when he was twenty-six:

Providing ourselves with bread for some days, we set off for Tennessee. We met with many difficulties on that journey through a mountainous, unsettled country, having deep waters to ford, there being neither bridges nor ferries over them. Ours was probably the first carriage that had traveled that road . . .

We traveled slowly on account of the difficulty of the roads; sometimes they were so steep, that with our empty carriage, the horses could only get a few steps forward at once. Frequently, we had to open a road by cutting down the trees and removing them out of the way. But, notwithstanding the fatigue, we were favored with good health, and enjoyed the beauty of and grandeur of the scenery we often had before us. . .²²

In establishing Quaker settlements west of the Appalachians, this phase set important precedents for Quakers thinking of migrating during the nineteenth century. But there were problems. First of all, many North Carolina monthly meetings hesitated or refused permission to migrate due to concerns that such moves would deplete the meetings. Quaker leaders also expressed concern that religious standards would decline among Quakers if they became too far separated from larger Quaker communities. The new western settlements often drew

York: Russell & Russell, 1962 (originally published in 1911)), especially the chapter entitled "Quakers in the Southern Colonies," pp. 265-301.

²²Stephen Grellet, *Memoirs*, vol. I, pp. 66-99, reprinted in Rufus Jones, *LPQ*, vol. I, pp. 401-03;

criticism. "I thought this a poor place for Friends," complained one Quaker after arriving in Tennessee in 1797. "So much of the worldly spirit prevails that it hinders the growth of the Truth, and chokes the good seed . . . My condition was the feeling of a heavy heart; *for the general cry of the people seems to be for more land, but content with little religion* (emphasis mine)." ²³

The next phase of North Carolina Quaker migration began during the 1790s and lasted until about 1830. This phase involved the movement of hundreds of Quakers from the low-land tidewater eastern counties to the piedmont region in the central part of the state. For example, between 1797 and 1811 at least forty-five certificates of removal were granted to families desiring to move from eastern monthly meetings to meetings in the western part of North Carolina. ²⁴

The phases of Quaker migration within and from North Carolina described above occurred on a smaller scale than the two phases which followed them. From around 1800 to 1815 hundreds of Quakers moved from North Carolina to Ohio. The results of this migration to Ohio were staggering for many monthly meetings in North Carolina. For instance, by 1800 around 800 Quakers had left the Trent Monthly Meeting in eastern North Carolina for Ohio, causing that meeting to dissolve. Other meetings from around North Carolina experienced dramatic decreases in membership, leading in many cases to their dissolution.

²³Joshua Evans, quoted in Jones, *LPQ*, vol. I, pp. 400-01.

²⁴See Weeks, pp. 269-271. Quakers desiring to leave their monthly meeting in order to migrate had to first get permission from their monthly meeting. If permission were granted, the migrating Quakers were issued certificates with which to transfer their meeting memberships upon arrival in their new homeland. It is important to note, however, that the number of certificates of removal issued was not necessarily the number of individuals asking to move. Certificates were issued to heads of families; the number of individuals actually moving often greatly exceeded the numbers of certificates issued. Furthermore, Quaker records available to historians are often problematic due to their having been lost, incomplete, or destroyed. It was also not unusual for some Quakers to ignore the process altogether and move without first obtaining a certificate.

Eventually the Quaker population in southwestern Ohio grew large enough to establish a yearly meeting. The Ohio Yearly Meeting was established in 1813.²⁵

Though hundreds of Quakers moved from North Carolina to Ohio prior to 1815, thousands began to migrate to eastern Indiana after that year. The reasons for choosing Indiana as a destination will be discussed later. For now, it is important to know that many meetings in North Carolina which had not been affected greatly by the Ohio exodus were hit hard by the numbers leaving for Indiana. By 1860, North Carolina monthly meetings had issued at least 813 certificates of removal to Indiana with the vast majority granted between 1815 and 1835. Out of 136 monthly meetings 83 were laid down (dissolved) prior to the Civil War. While the western portion of the state provided the largest numbers of Quakers moving to Indiana, Quakers from the northeastern counties of North Carolina left in such large amounts that by 1860 only one monthly meeting still operated in the area.²⁶

Wayne County, especially White Water (now Richmond), Indiana became the hub of the migrations as Quakers poured into the settlements in that area. According to historian Stephen Weeks, "No section in the West represents, perhaps, more distinctly the effects of this Southern migration than does Wayne County, Indiana, and White Water Monthly Meeting, which is within its limits."²⁷ At first a part of the Baltimore and later the Ohio Yearly Meetings, Indiana

²⁵Ibid., pp. 250-52. See also John Michael Shay, *The Antislavery Movement in North Carolina*, pp. 299-303.

²⁶Barbour, *The Quakers*, p. 163. See also Shay, pp. 303. Information used in determining the origins of North Carolina Quaker migrants to Indiana can be misleading. While the western part of the state provided the largest numbers of emigrants to Indiana, many of them had originally moved to the western North Carolina from the eastern part of the state.

²⁷See Weeks, p. 280.

Quakers established their own yearly meeting at White Water in 1821. By 1835 the 30,000 Quakers living in Indiana made that yearly meeting the largest in the United States.²⁸

Moving to the Northwest

Unlike the Quakers who had emigrated to Tennessee during the mid-eighteenth century, North Carolina Quakers moving to the Northwest mostly followed well established routes used by Indians or by previous migrants. Quakers moving from the western parts of North Carolina tended to move through the Cumberland Gap into Tennessee, and from there they followed the Boone Trail to Cincinnati. From Cincinnati, the migrants spread up the Great and Little Miami Rivers either settling along the way or (in most cases) moving on to Indiana. Quakers leaving the eastern part of North Carolina generally moved up through Virginia and then traveled along the Kanawah Road into Ohio and then Indiana. Most of the Quaker emigrants traveled on horseback or in covered wagons. They brought provisions and cooking utensils as well as farm animals so as to begin a farming lifestyle upon arrival in their new homeland. Having been migrants before, or the offspring of migrants, most of these Quakers understood how to plan for long journeys into wilderness areas. One participant even declared that the Quakers had developed migratory practices to the point of being a science.²⁹

David Hoover, a Quaker born in North Carolina in 1781, moved to Ohio and then to Indiana with other members of his family. Excerpts from his account

²⁸ Although eclipsed in size, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting retained its status as the most influential yearly meeting in the United States. See Barbour and Frost, p. 8.

²⁹ Brown, pp. 77-78. See also Weeks, p. 247.

offer good examples of the different practices and phases of North Carolina Quaker migration. Hoover's grandparents were German immigrants who settled in Pennsylvania and later in Maryland where Hoover's father was born. In 1754 Hoover's grandfather moved his family to North Carolina. "He left eight sons and five daughters," David Hoover recalled, "all of whom had large families. Their descendants are mostly scattered through what we call the Western country." Hoover then described the steps taken by his father in deciding to leave North Carolina for the Northwest.

My father had a family of ten children, four sons and six daughters. In order to better our circumstances he came to the conclusion of moving to a new country, and sold his possessions accordingly. He was then worth rising of two thousand dollars, which at that time, and in that country, was considered very considerably over an average point of wealth. On the 19th of September, 1802, we loaded our wagon and wended our way toward that portion of what was then called the Northwestern Territory.

The Hoovers traveled for five weeks until they arrived in Cincinnati. From there they moved to a point about twelve miles north of Dayton. The Hoovers became dissatisfied with the opportunities for acquiring good land containing spring water in that section of Ohio. Then in 1806, David Hoover recounted, he and four others accidentally traced a path thirty miles west of Dayton.

It was the last of February, or the first of March, when I first saw the White Water. On my return to my father's I informed him that I thought I had found the country we had been searching of. Spring-water, timber, and building rock appeared to be abundant, and the face of this country looked delightful. In about three weeks after this, my father, with several others, accompanied me to this "land of promise."

Hoover's family moved into the White Water region along with other Quakers from North Carolina. "Their location here had a tendency to draw others, and soon caused a great rush to White Water, and land that I thought would never be settled was rapidly taken up and improved."³⁰

With this last statement in mind, it needs to be pointed out that the successes or failures of migrations tend to encourage or discourage later migrations.³¹ David Hoover's account serves as a strong example of what scholars refer to as "chain migration." Chain migration is the movement of socially related individuals or groups from one place to another by means of various arrangements set up at the destination area geared toward providing aid, information, and encouragement to new or potential migrants. The participants of chain migrations tend to settle in the new destination among others from the same or a similar origin. In cases involving great distances, new emigrants generally rely on those already living at the place of destination to ease the way.³² Sune Akerman has pointed to the "multiplier effects" produced by the interpersonal relationships working within chain migrations. Akerman concludes that although chain emigrations typically begin slowly, "After a while the process begins to accelerate, and grows strongly, almost exponentially, until a saturation phase is reached . . . It impossible to understand such dramatic responses to the possibility

³⁰Quotations from David Hoover, The Memoir of David Hoover: A Pioneer of Indiana, A Settler of 1806, (Richmond, Indiana: James Elder, Publisher, 1857), pp. 12-15.

³¹See Wilbur Zelinsky, The Cultural Geography of the United States, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973). Zelinsky states that "the specific characteristics of the first group able to effect a viable, self-perpetuating society are of crucial significance for the later social and cultural geography of the area, no matter how tiny the initial band of settlers may have been (p. 13).

³²See Charles Tilly, "Migration in Modern European History," Human Migration: Patterns & Policies, William H. McNeill and Ruth S. Adams, eds., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp.48-68. Tilly discusses chain migration in detail on pp. 53-57.

of emigration without considering the multiplier effects that were released as a consequence of the interpersonal relations. "³³

Interpersonal communications, especially written correspondence, played a major role in forging the chain between Quakers in North Carolina and those already living the Northwest.³⁴ For example, in 1819 Jeremiah Parker, a newly arrived Indiana Quaker, wrote to family members still living in North Carolina. He described the fertile Indiana soil as well as his "log house cut 20 by 16. Plank laid down for under floor & a log chimney with the back sides done up with stone." In order to reassure his readers of the continuity of Quakerism as well as Quaker living patterns in Indiana, Parker mentioned the rapid growth of the monthly meetings in the area and that his family and their Quaker neighbors lived "about the same distance apart as we did in Carolina." Parker expressed satisfaction in his decision to migrate and encouraged others to do the same. "I do not know whether it would be Better for the rest of you to come to this country or not," Parker wrote. "I am sure if you were to think as I do it would be best."³⁵

Parker's letter illustrates how the emigration of Quakers to the Northwest was more than a matter of conditions pushing and pulling people from one place to another. The Great Migration involved an entire process which included the effects of human relations along with individual knowledge and perceptions of

³³Sune Akerman, "Towards an Understanding of Emigrational Processes," Human Migrations: Patterns & Policies, pp. 287-303. Quotation from p. 294 and p.303.

³⁴ In discussing general American migration patterns during the time period of the Great Migration, geographer D.W. Meinig notes that a familiarity with the new homeland and its description in guidebooks, promotional tracts, and in "letters sent home from the vanguard of pioneers was fundamental." See D.W.. Meinig, The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 years of History, Vol. 2, "Continental America, 1800-1867." (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 237-38.

³⁵Jeremiah Parker, Wayne County, Indiana, to his brother, Josiah Parker. 4th month 9th day, 1819. *Josiah Parker Family Papers*, Richmond, Indiana: Earlham College Archives.

moving to a new homeland. This combination of factors went far to link Quakers in North Carolina to those who had already moved to Ohio and Indiana.³⁶

Straying From the Flock

Although Ohio and Indiana proved to be attractive to many North Carolina Quakers, problems did arise. As was the case during earlier migrations, many Quakers desiring to leave North Carolina for the Northwest were denied permission due to fears among their religious leaders that moving away would have negative effects not only on the vitality of the meetings, but on the migrating Quakers themselves. When an individual or group decided to leave a monthly meeting, they were required to acquire the permission of that meeting. Yet Quakers sometimes did migrate in spite of the fact that their monthly meeting denied them permission. Quakers were also required to relocate with membership to another meeting. This presented a rather difficult problem for the first waves of Quaker migrants living on the Northwest frontier because the nearest meeting site could be many miles from the actual spot a pioneer Quaker chose to settle.

That many North Carolina monthly meetings were initially slow to permit their members to move is not surprising given the potential dangers to preserving cultural and religious ties.³⁷ Since most Quaker leaders sought to maintain a definite distinction between the Society of Friends and the rest of the world, migration appeared at first to be only a potential disrupter of Quakerism. For this reason, the early responses to those wishing to migrate tended to be negative.

³⁶For a general introduction to different patterns of migration and the importance of human relations within these patterns see Leslie Page Moch, Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe Since 1650, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), especially chapter 1, "Putting Migration into History," pp. 1-21; see also Sune Akerman, "Towards an Understanding of Emigrational Processes."

³⁷Meinig, pp. 253-54.

However, conditions eventually developed which led North Carolina meetings to yield to, and even encourage, the requests of those choosing to leave. Migration began to serve the Society of Friends as a means of removing Quakers from influences perceived as culturally damaging.³⁸

Changes in the social control wielded by the Society of Friends proved to be crucial to the increase of the Great Migration. Part Two of this study will demonstrate that the fear of slave revolts in North Carolina acted as the overarching reason for Quakers leaving that state. The fear of slave revolts led the Society of Friends to lessen its resistance as a barrier to migration largely because Quakers increasingly regarded remaining in North Carolina as more dangerous to themselves and their religion than moving to the Northwest.³⁹

Although the Northwest came to appear safer than North Carolina to many Quakers in many ways, the corrupting influences involved with migration did begin to emerge according to various observers. As the number of Quaker settlers in Indiana and Ohio soared, so did the number of Quaker disownments. Disownments from the Society of Friends occurred when an individual disobeyed the Society's *Discipline*, which gathered together the rules and regulations that Quakers were expected to live by. Certain aspects of the Discipline pertained directly to religious beliefs and practices, but most dealt with daily living. Historian Howard Beeth has noted that although Quakers professed to experience God on an individual level through the "Inner Light," the body of the Society of Friends practiced a communalistic program of group worship and cultural unity. The Discipline was designed to ensure the conformity of the Society's members to

³⁸See Gragg, pp. 80-83.

³⁹See Akerman, p. 300-01, for a discussion of the importance of social control in the emigration process.

rather exacting standards as well as to ensure that individual Quaker activities did not distract members from their relationship with God.⁴⁰

Large numbers of Indiana Quakers were disowned during the early nineteenth century for reasons such as "deviating from plainness of dress and address," administering oaths, divorce, excessive drinking, swearing, fighting, gambling, fornication, playing the fiddle (fiddling usually led to dancing), and perhaps worst of all, marrying outside of the Society of Friends. As an example of disownment for violating the Quaker testimony against war, Rufus Jones described "one of the most remarkable cases of disownment" when "a man, who during border troubles, in the period of the 'war of 1812,' *went into a fort for protection and refused to condemn his conduct*. White Water Monthly Meeting disowned him, 26th June 1813."⁴¹

When a Quaker violated the Discipline, his or her monthly meeting usually appointed a subcommittee to look into the matter. Through interviews and personal testimony the committee determined whether the accused was genuinely penitent. If the accused acknowledged his or her guilt and showed a desire to repent, the meeting usually required a public confession and plea for forgiveness. This normally settled the matter. But if the accused had indeed violated the Discipline and did not indicate repentance, the monthly meeting could (and often did) disown the person. That Quaker monthly meetings in Indiana disowned their members by the hundreds indicates just how seriously most members of the Society of Friends took their sense of responsibility to uphold their religion.⁴²

⁴⁰See Beeth, especially chapter 2, "The Queries and Discipline."

⁴¹See Rufus Jones, *LPQ*, vol. I, pp. 427-429.

⁴²For a detailed quantitative analysis of Quaker disownments in Indiana during the nineteenth century see Thomas Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907*, pp. 48-63.

On a larger level, the Society of Friends also used the "query system" between various meetings in order to assess the success of the Discipline within each meeting. Queries took the form of lists of questions concerned with the practices of Quakers. A yearly meeting issued the queries down to its subordinate quarterly and monthly meetings. These lower meetings then returned their responses back up the chain to the yearly meeting. Although the yearly meetings were all theoretically independent of one another, they often relied on each other for guidance and continuity of thought. Therefore many of the queries in the various yearly meetings were identical to each other or quite similar. For example, the queries often asked, did Friends:

1. Attend meetings for worship and discipline regularly?
2. Guard against drowsiness and other inappropriate behavior during meetings?
3. Observe Plainness?
4. Avoid gambling and lotteries?
5. Avoid frequenting taverns and places of diversion except when necessary?"
6. Teach their children to read the Scriptures and train them in religion?
7. Avoid excessive use of spirituous liquors?

The list above gives just a few examples of the kinds of questions posed by the query system. While they often reflected the common bonds among Quakers, different yearly meetings did issue particular questions if applicable to particular circumstances. For instance, yearly meetings often posed queries concerned with the treatment, and later the ownership, of slaves if slavery was practiced within the realm of that yearly meeting. The problem of slavery among the Quakers will be discussed in Part Two. The point here is to show how concerned the Society of Friends was over the behavioral and religious practices of its migrating members. And yet in spite of problems involved with maintaining the Quaker Discipline, the

positive opportunities for Quakers in Indiana and, even more importantly, the growing dangers in North Carolina proved to be too much to resist for Quakers considering migration to the Northwest. But the North Carolina Quakers (as well as the migrating Quakers from other areas) who participated in the Great Migration were in no way alone in their desire to move to new homelands.

The Great Migration and the Big Picture

As the previous examples demonstrate, Indiana and Ohio Quakers were reassuring Quakers in North Carolina, and often encouraged them to migrate. And migrate they did -- by the thousands. However, it must be remembered that Quaker migrants acted in much the same way as other Americans moving westward at the same time. The Great Migration of Quakers to the Northwest coincided with a broader more widespread American migratory period described as "one of the great immigrations in the history of the western world." In assessing this period of American migration, geographer D.W. Meinig has explained:

This momentous geographic development was not a broad sweep westward but an uneven advance along several pathways, the direction and volume responding to Indian cessions, land qualities and accessibilities, speculative promotions and popular fervors, resulting in a continuous reshaping of the outer edge of the frontier and of the relative position of every city and subregion within this burgeoning half of the nation. *It was, of course, basically an expansion from the several regional societies of Atlantic America . . . (emphasis mine).*⁴³

The economic incentives stemming from the often violent removal of the Indians become apparent in Meinig's statement. Other factors also played essential

⁴³See Meinig, p. 224. See especially the part entitled *Expansion: The Growth of a Continental Nation*, pp. 220-428.

roles in drawing Americans westward. Besides an overwhelming craving for new land, factors such as restlessness, fecundity, and a desire for adventure describe the general character of this period of migration. The same terms have been used repeatedly to describe the character of Quakers migrating to the Northwest as well as the earlier phases of American Quaker migration. For example, Rufus Jones explained that the Great Migration "was due partly to the spirit of the times, the desire to enlarge the borders, to possess new lands, to engage in adventure and to enjoy the freedom and the opportunities that were possible in new settlements."⁴⁴ Add to all of this the fact that non-Quakers also left North Carolina in droves during the time of the Great Migration and it may appear that Quaker migration was not particularly distinct from the general flow of many other North Carolinians.

In several important ways, patterns of relocation by Americans during the early nineteenth century followed what some scholars call a *value-added process*. This process begins with the experience and recognition of a *structural stress* (reasons to leave) by potential migrants. Recognition of the situation, however, cannot not lead to action until a *migration offer* occurs from a place to go. A migration will still not happen unless individuals are of a *personality type* which is willing to move; and the *social control* of the group is not strong enough to hinder the decision. When these conditions of value are met, there is only a need for a final impulse, or *trigger effect*, to cause individuals to actually leave for a new location.⁴⁵

But the similarities in emigration processes shared by North Carolinians should not cloud some important differences which made the migration of Quakers

⁴⁴Jones, LPQ, Vol. I, p. 389.

⁴⁵J. E. Ellemer's "value-added process" is outlined and diagrammed in Akerman, p. 301.

to Ohio and Indiana distinct in its own right. For one thing, North Carolina Quakers migrated almost exclusively to the Northwest Territory whereas the vast majority (80%) of non-Quaker migrants moved to other Southern regions.⁴⁶ In studying Southern expansionism, historian James Oakes has argued that a basic ideology promoting an overwhelming desire for material success in terms of land and slaves drove many Southerners to start over in new areas. On the other hand, Joan Ellen Cashin contends that planter migrants tended to be young men desiring economic and emotional independence from their fathers.⁴⁷ Whatever the case, most of these emigrants left North Carolina and its worn out tobacco lands for the ever growing cotton kingdom in places like Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas. As one North Carolina planter remarked in dismay, "The Alabama Fever (sic) rages here with great violence and has *carried off* vast numbers of our citizens."⁴⁸ Thus when we consider the social and economic conditions in North Carolina; the multiplier effects of interpersonal exchanges between individuals living among the sending and receiving populations; and then plug those factors into the value-

⁴⁶See Shay, p. 314. See also Gregory S. Rose, "Upland Southerners: The County Origins of Southern Migrants to Indiana by 1850," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 82, (September, 1986), pp. 242-63. Southerners, non-Quaker North Carolinians included, did migrate to Indiana in significant numbers although most Southern migrants moved to other Southern regions. Rose argues that Southerners arriving in Indiana played a crucial role in creating a distinctive culture in that state. See also John C. Hudson, "North American Origins of Middlewestern Frontier Populations," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, (78), 1988, pp. 395-418.

⁴⁷ See Jane Turner Censer, "Southwestern Migration among North Carolina Planter Families: The Disposition to Emigrate," *The Journal of Southern History*, LVII, No. 3, (August, 1991), pp. 407-26. Censer herself concludes that "Although these Carolinians saw material advantages in the Southwest, for many the possibility of a lifestyle inferior to that of one's parents was able to overcome doubts about leaving kin and moving to unhealthful areas (p. 426)."

⁴⁸Quoted in Meinig, p. 232.

added process as a working model, the large numbers of out-migrants from North Carolina during the early to mid-1800s become more readily explainable

But if Quakers acted like their migrating neighbors in so many ways, why were they not generally moving to the same places?

The Lure of the Old Northwest

During the nineteenth century, North Carolina Quakers migrated to the region west of Pennsylvania between the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, particularly the area that became the states of Ohio and Indiana. On July 13, 1787 the Continental Congress officially established this Northwest Territory which comprised lands ceded to the federal government by different states during the 1780s. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 established a process by which territorial and state governments could be formed, mandating that no less than three but no more than five states were to be created from the region. The Old Northwest, as it came to be known, was gradually divided into the states of Ohio and Indiana as well as Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

The Northwest Territory held several incentives for potential immigrants who desired land. The Land Ordinance of 1785 established guidelines for the surveying and selling of land under federal control. Land designated for sale was surveyed and arranged according to what became known as the Township-and-Range System. Under this system, different regions were laid out in townships six miles square then divided into thirty-six sections of 640 acres each. These sections were at first the minimum size of land available to settlers. Pressures from those desiring smaller minimum purchases led to several reductions of the minimum purchase requirement until by 1832 it became possible to buy as little as forty acres. Minimum prices on land fell as well. In 1800 federal land was sold at

two dollars per acre, but by 1820 the price of federal land had dropped to \$1.25 per acre. In some instances an acre of land could be bought for as little as ten cents. Cheap land created a strong incentive to settle in the Northwest, and a growing scarcity of fertile soil in North Carolina made Ohio and Indiana appear all the more attractive to prospective migrants.

But before whites could settle the Northwest in large numbers, the Indians living in the area had to be removed. After 1795 land in Ohio became more available and secure for settlement in the eyes of white Americans. In that year, General Anthony Wayne defeated the Indians of Ohio at Fallen Timbers and forced them to accept the terms of the Treaty of Greenville. Prior to Wayne's taking command of military matters in the Northwest, Ohio Indians had been frequently successful in fighting American soldiers. Military strength for the Indians meant some real leverage when they negotiated with American governmental authorities. But the Battle of Fallen Timbers irreparably broke Indian power in the region. The Treaty of Greenville, signed on August 3, 1795, reduced Indian lands to only a small section of northeastern Ohio.⁴⁹ Once the Indians had been defeated, pioneers moved in quickly. Ohio became a state in 1803.

That large-scale Quaker migrations to Indiana did not commence until after 1815 doubtless had much to do with the fact that the Indian confederations in the area had not been adequately destroyed until the War of 1812. Prior to that war,

⁴⁹For two excellent works on the Indian experience in the Old Northwest see Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and R. David Edmunds, The Shawnee Prophet, (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 1983). For a good account of the relationship between Indians and whites during the colonial era see Wilbur R. Jacobs, Dispossessing the American Indian: Indians and Whites on the Colonial Frontier, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985 (originally published in 1972)).

the Territorial Governor of Indiana, William Henry Harrison, commonly acquired Indian lands by playing neighboring tribes against each other. Tribal lands often overlapped each other. By inducing at least one tribe to sell its lands, Harrison pressured the other tribes to follow suit or risk not receiving anything for their lands.⁵⁰ At other times, whites simply took Indian lands at gunpoint. Harrison noted how one Shawnee chief had lamented to him about white Americans and their attitudes toward private property. The chief explained to Harrison how the French, unlike Americans, had been willing to compromise with the Indians. "They (the French) never took from us our lands, indeed they were in common with us," the chief told Harrison. "But now if a poor Indian attempts to take a little bark from a tree to cover him from the rain, up comes a white man and threatens to shoot him, claiming the tree as his own."⁵¹

As white encroachments became more pronounced after 1800, many Indians desired to reclaim their rapidly vanishing land and culture. A Shawnee chief, Tecumseh, and his brother, Tenskwatawa, known as The Prophet, became the most famous leaders of the Indian revival movement. By calling on Indians to shed white influences and return to traditional ways, Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa attempted to form a confederation of Indian tribes capable of ending white oppression.⁵² Their efforts failed. While Tecumseh was away in the process of forging the confederation, Tenskwatawa led an Indian force against Governor Harrison and a contingent of white soldiers and militia at Tippecanoe on November 7, 1811. The Indian defeat at Tippecanoe severely disrupted efforts to

⁵⁰White, p. 474.

⁵¹Quoted in White, p. 502.

⁵²White and Edmunds point out that efforts at forming an Indian confederation began well before the rise of Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa. See White, p. 512. Edmunds claims that times were such that had Tenskwatawa not stepped forward as a religious motivator, another Indian leader surely would have. See Edmunds, p. 187.

form an intertribal confederacy. Tenskwatawa's influence as an Indian leader shrank due in large part to the failure of his assurances that Shawnee warriors would be protected in battle by spiritual powers. Tecumseh rebuilt an Indian coalition which eventually forged an alliance with the British; himself serving as a brigadier general during the War of 1812. Tecumseh died on October 5, 1813 while fighting the Americans under Harrison at the Battle of the Thames in Canada. Military defeat shattered the Indian coalition. The war's end in 1815 also meant the end of significant Shawnee influence in Indiana.⁵³

Once peace was relatively secure for white people after the War of 1812, Indiana filled up rapidly and became a state in 1816.⁵⁴ For Quakers, a peaceful homeland was absolutely essential to their way of life and their strict observance of non-violence.⁵⁵ As mentioned earlier, this study argues that North Carolina Quakers left that state due largely to their fears of potential slave uprisings. It would have made little sense for large numbers of Quakers to move from one area because of fears of violence only to move to another potentially violent area. This point raises some important questions: How did the Quakers feel about Indian removals in the Northwest? Did they care if their new homelands had been taken from the Indians by use of violence? Quaker indifference to such matters seems hard to imagine considering how their pacifist beliefs forbade profiteering from

⁵³See White, p. 517. See also Edmunds, The Shawnee Prophet. Most accounts of Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa portray Tecumseh as the primary leader of the attempted pan-Indian alliance from the beginning. Tenskwatawa is usually portrayed merely as Tecumseh's mystical sidekick. Edmunds argues convincingly that this portrayal is wrong. He claims that in providing a religious, and very Indian, foundation, "it was Tenskwatawa rather than Tecumseh who provided the basis of Indian resistance in the years before the war (p. 190)."

⁵⁴Although initially granted clemency from participating in the War of 1812 due to their history of pacifism, war time pressures in Indiana did lead to some degree of persecution. See Jones, LPQ, vol. I, pp. 422-23.

⁵⁵The Quaker Peace Testimony and its importance will be discussed in Part Two.

war. Their history of peaceful and philanthropic relations with Indians also makes a lack of Quaker concern seem even more unlikely.⁵⁶ However, as we shall see in Part Two, Quaker work on behalf of non-whites was not always motivated by a strict sense of altruism, and their actions often appeared hypocritical. These problems concerning former Indian lands deserve far more attention than can be offered in this study. At any rate, the demise of the Indians in Indiana by 1815 meant that a genuine haven at once existed for peace minded Quakers wishing to flee North Carolina.

Relative peace and cheap abundant land provided Quakers with incentives to migrate to Ohio and Indiana. But beyond the problems and opportunities involved with land was the problem of slavery in North Carolina. Part Two will examine in more detail the problem of Quakers and slavery in North Carolina, and how the fear of slave insurrections fueled Quaker desires to move to the Northwest. For now it is enough to know that Quakers eventually opposed slavery on moral and religious grounds and made efforts to manumit their own slaves. These actions made Quakers rather unpopular with other white North Carolinians. Added to this was the fact that opposition to slavery, for many Quakers, made for tremendous difficulties in competing with non-Quakers operating within an economy based, too a large extent, on slave labor. The growth of Quaker antislavery beliefs and practices, and above all, the fear of slave revolts, became key elements in influencing North Carolina Quakers to migrate to the Northwest.

⁵⁶For an often conflicting discussion of Quaker benevolence and philanthropy see Sydney V. James, A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); Jack D. Marietta, The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984); and Richard Bauman, For the Reputation of Truth: Politics, Religion, and Conflict Among Pennsylvania Quakers 1750-1800, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971).

That region appeared particularly attractive to Quakers because the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 prohibited slavery in the region.⁵⁷

For the most part, the Northwest provided a genuine solution for Quakers wishing to flee the effects of slavery in North Carolina. A good example of this can be found in a letter written in 1802 by Border Stanton, a prosperous North Carolina Quaker who migrated to Ohio. Stanton wrote to some Friends in Georgia in order to tell them about his decision to emigrate to the Northwest. Sections of Stanton's letter provide something of an introduction to the relationship between Quaker feelings about slavery and the Great Migration:

I may begin thus, and say that for several years Friends had some distant view of moving out of that oppressive part of the land, but did not know where until 1799; when we had an acceptable visit from some traveling Friends of the western part of Pennsylvania. They thought proper to propose to Friends for consideration, whether it would not be agreeable to remove to northwest of the Ohio river -- *to a place where there were no slaves held, being a free country*. This proposal made a deep impression on our minds: and it seemed as if they were messengers sent to call us out,

⁵⁷See Paul Finkelman, "Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 6, (Winter, 1986), pp. 343-370; and "Evading the Ordinance: The Persistence of Bondage in Indiana and Illinois," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 9, (Spring, 1989), pp. 21-49. Finkelman points out, correctly, that Article VI of the Ordinance of 1787 did not act as an emancipation proclamation for the slaves already living in the Northwest Territory. As he states, "Many of the settlers living in the territory before the adoption of the ordinance were slaveowners and of course did not want to give up the institution ("Evading the Ordinance", p. 1.)." Slaveholders in Indiana and Illinois legally kept slaves owned prior to the Ordinance until after their respective state constitutions banned slavery outright. Even then, however, different methods of keeping blacks in bondage persisted as in Illinois where "apprenticeships" and "indentures" for blacks sometimes lasted lifetimes. Finkelman estimates that between two to three thousand blacks remained in at least a *de facto* state of slavery in the Northwest between 1787 and 1848. Census records of 1810 for Indiana listed 237 slaves and 393 free blacks, many of whom, Finkelman asserts, were still legally held under some form of indenture system. To what extent Indiana Quakers knew of this persistence of bondage is uncertain. See also Buys, *Quakers in Indiana in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 13.

as it were from the Egyptian darkness . . . into the marvelous light of the glory of God (emphasis mine)

Stanton went on to admit to feelings of apprehension over moving so far away from home. But after coming to the realization that the slave society in which he lived would most likely prevent the growth of the Society of Friends in the South, he determined that God had provided a clear path of escape for Southern Quakers opposed to slavery.⁵⁸

Conclusion

In Part One we have seen how and, to a more limited extent, why Quakers left North Carolina to live in Ohio and Indiana. The Great Migration was the product of a number of factors operating simultaneously. Economic problems and opportunities; land hunger and the spirit of adventure; overall patterns of American migration; and ideological opposition to slavery, all played important roles in influencing the move to the Northwest. But as Part Two will show, the primary reason Quakers desired to emigrate lay in the problems involved with the potential dangers of slave revolts in North Carolina.

⁵⁸Reprinted in Jones, LPQ, vol. I, pp. 406-08.

Part Two

SLAVE REVOLTS AND NORTH CAROLINA QUAKER MIGRATION

Introduction

Border Stanton's letter in Part One illustrates how the structural stress which existed between the Society of Friends and the slave society of North Carolina served as an important factor in the decisions of many Quakers to leave that state and migrate to the Northwest. Although other motives played important roles, most scholars have agreed that slavery acted as a primary ingredient in influencing the Great Migration. Quaker leader Addison Coffin, himself a participant in the Great Migration, emphasized this point: "If the question is asked, Why did Friends emigrate from North Carolina? It can be answered in one dark, fearful word SLAVERY . . ." ⁵⁹ Indeed, a crucial aspect of slavery and the migration of North Carolina Quakers was the aspect of fear. For many Quakers living in North Carolina during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the fear of slave revolts acted as the primary motivation for moving to the Northwest.

It would be wrong to assume that fear of slave revolts acted one-dimensionally within the Society of Friends. That is to say, fear among Quakers as an inducement to migrate sprang not only from the possibility of physical danger to themselves but also from the possibility that slave revolts would cause Quakers to violate their testimony against violence if forced to help put down such

⁵⁹Quoted in Charles Fitzgerald McKiever, Slavery and the Emigration of North Carolina Friends, (Murfreesboro, NC: Johnson Publishing Company, 1970), p.66.

uprisings. Moreover, even if neither one of the above problems were to occur during a slave uprising, the inevitable violence and social chaos would have led to an unfavorable living environment surrounding the Quakers. Addison Coffin stated this sentiment when he explained that "though (the Quakers) did not fear that they would be in danger, in case of a revolt among slaves, yet they shrank from the thought of living amid such possible scenes. *This can be marked as one of the deep seated causes of Friends leaving the south* (emphasis mine)."60

Coffin may have been justified in his remarks about the lack of fear among Quakers concerning the physical dangers of slave insurrections. For example, in 1800 testimony taken following Gabriel Prosser's aborted slave rebellion in Richmond, Virginia indicated "that Quakers, the Methodists, and all Frenchmen . . . were to be spared" because of "their being friendly to liberty."⁶¹ Gabriel's Rebellion will be discussed in more detail later in this study. For now, it is enough to consider that with such a precedent in mind, Coffin doubtless believed that the reputation of the Society of Friends among the black population of North Carolina would protect faithful Quakers from violence in the event of a slave uprising. However, as we shall see, not all Quakers were as confident as Coffin concerning their immunity from violence.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 59. McKiever's study mostly covered the general ideological opposition of Quakers to slavery as a component of the Great Migration. Like other scholars who have written on the Great Migration, McKiever briefly mentions slave insurrections as a motivational factor but fails to describe or analyze the problem and its importance in detail.

⁶¹See Douglas R. Egerton, Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), p.49. See also Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1968), p. 394 for a brief discussion on some of the other groups to have been spared during the rebellion.

Coffin's statements provide evidence of the role of fear in the Great Migration. Unfortunately, they are exceptional. Understanding the motivations of the Quakers who migrated to the Northwest is seriously inhibited due to the relatively small amount of written evidence available to historians. Although journals of several leading Quaker antislavery agitators contain references to slavery and migration, there is very little in meeting minutes, or personal letters, that refer to non-economic motivations for migrating to the Northwest. Thomas Hamm, Director of Archives at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, has remarked that Quaker meeting minutes usually only state that Quakers did migrate — not why they migrated. For example, when Quaker antislavery leader Levi Coffin sought permission from his monthly meeting to move to Indiana, the meeting's minutes noted the request and the decision but mentioned nothing as to why such a prominent member of the Society of Friends desired to leave.⁶² Rufus Jones commented on this problem by stating how meeting minutes "present for the most part only dry bones to one looking for the real life of these communities."⁶³ Historian Larry Dale Gragg pointed to these problems as well in his study Migration in Early America: The Virginia Quaker Experience. "Unfortunately for the historian, few Quakers committed to paper their reasons for moving," Gragg lamented. "The surviving fragments of their writings usually provide only tantalizing clues . . . The important question of motivation can in part be answered, however, by examining the timing of their movements and their choice of destination in relation to specific developments."⁶⁴

⁶²See McKiever, p. 65. See also Levi Coffin, Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, (Cincinnati, 1876).

⁶³Jones, LPQ, vol. I, p. 395.

⁶⁴See Gragg, p. 57.

Gragg is, to a large extent, correct in describing the problems involved with analyzing Quaker motivations for migrating. Other scholars studying general patterns of human migration have also commented on the problems involved with determining motivations among migrants; and the importance of analyzing and understanding migrations within different contexts. As Sune Akerman has written, "Essential categories of information about migration include *who* the migrants were, *when* they left, *whence* they departed and *where* they arrived, *under what circumstances* the migration took place, and *from which social and economic context* the migrants were uprooted."⁶⁵

Several of the categories mentioned by Akerman have been discussed in Part One. The remainder of this study will describe and analyze crucial elements of the social and personal contexts which influenced the Great Migration of Quakers from North Carolina to the Northwest. Slavery formed much of the basis for those contexts. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries North Carolina, like the rest of the South, became a slave society: a society in which slavery influenced or effected virtually every aspect of life. Central to North Carolina's slave society were problems generated by the threat of slave revolts.

The fear of slave revolts acted as the primary motivation for North Carolina Quaker migration to the Northwest. An understanding of the relationship between slave revolts and the Quaker migration will be established by considering some of the important aspects of the legal and social history of slavery in North Carolina; the North Carolina Quaker antislavery movement; the growing fear among North Carolinians, slaveholders and non-slaveholders, over slave uprisings; and the racial prejudices held by many Quakers. All of these elements combined to create an atmosphere of fear within the Society of Friends in North Carolina.

⁶⁵ Akerman, "Towards an Understanding of Emigrational Processes," p.287.

Furthermore, although the Great Migration lasted until the outbreak of the Civil War, the movement of North Carolina Quakers to Ohio and Indiana reached its greatest intensity between the years 1800 and 1835 (see Part One). These years encapsulated the three most famous attempted slave insurrections in the United States during the post-Revolutionary era. It will become clear that the timing of those attempts and the high-point of the Great Migration were not merely coincidental. Moreover, although no slave insurrections actually occurred in North Carolina, rumors of slave conspiracies in that state abounded. This was especially so in the northeastern counties where the majority of North Carolina's slaveholders and slaves lived. Not surprisingly then is the fact that many of the Quakers who migrated to the Northwest originally came from the northeastern part of the state.

Recalling the value-added process of migration discussed in Part One, the threat of slave insurrections in North Carolina existed as a *structural stress* and acted as a *trigger effect* for setting off Quaker movements. Yet as discussed in Part One, the process of human migration involves much more than just having a reason to leave and a place to go. The motivations to be discussed in Part Two must be seen as an essential *part* of an overall working process of migration. In many instances that process involved the interpersonal relations between migrants and potential migrants as much as -- and in some cases perhaps more than -- the stress factors and trigger effects which motivated Quakers to leave North Carolina. However, the Great Migration cannot be understood without exploring and analyzing the underlying motivational factors forming the base of the migration process. Part Two will demonstrate how problems related to slave revolts combined to serve as the primary motivational factor for North Carolina Quaker participation in the Great Migration.

North Carolina Quakers and Slavery

Before examining the problem of slave revolts and their influence on the Great Migration, it is first necessary to sketch the history of slavery in North Carolina and its relationship to the Quakers. Slavery existed in North Carolina in some way since the establishment of the colony of Carolina in 1663.⁶⁶ Although various and usually unsuccessful attempts were made at enslaving Indians living in the area, colonial North Carolinians seeking unfree labor relied primarily on the importation of African slaves as well as European indentured servants. The earliest legal recognition of slavery in North Carolina can be found in Section 110 of the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* of 1669 which states that "Every freeman shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slaves." Earlier, in 1665, several of the Lords Proprietors of Carolina took measures to encourage the importation of slaves by offering settlers seventy-five acres of land for every slave over the age of fourteen brought to the colony.⁶⁷

Although North Carolina eventually developed a substantial slave population, several scholars have noted a marked dissimilarity between slavery in

⁶⁶North Carolina was not made a separate colony until 1712, and the boundary not officially established until 1735. By the late seventeenth century most Carolinians were making a social as well as a geographical distinction between the southern and northern parts of the colony.

See Marvin L. Michael Kay and Lorin Lee Cary, Slavery in North Carolina, 1748-1775, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Jeffrey J. Crow, A History of African-Americans in North Carolina, (Raleigh: North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Resources, 1992). See also John Spencer Bassett, Slavery and Servitude in the Colony of North Carolina, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1896) and Slavery in the State of North Carolina, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1898). Bassett's accounts are valuable historiographical sources for understanding slavery in North Carolina.

⁶⁷ The colony also offered one hundred and fifty acres for every male servant brought to Carolina. However, while servitude was generally temporary, slavery was perpetual and also hereditary. Thus bringing slaves instead of servants meant, in the long run, a more permanent labor force unable to compete later with established landowners as servants could theoretically do at the end of their indentures.

colonial North Carolina and that of Virginia and South Carolina.⁶⁸ For example, colonial North Carolinians did not produce an agricultural economy based on the large plantation nearly to the same degree that colonial Virginians and South Carolinians did. Slaveholdings in North Carolina tended to be comparatively small and widely dispersed. It has also been argued that German and Scots-Irish immigrants living in North Carolina never became fully convinced that their way of life depended on slavery. Moreover, that colonial North Carolina had no major port on its coast meant that many of its imported products came predominantly from contacts with Virginia and South Carolina. This reliance on Virginia and South Carolina extended as well to the development of North Carolina's laws and social customs concerning, among other things, slavery. Even North Carolinian fears of slave uprisings resulted primarily from attempted or planned uprisings in South Carolina and Virginia.⁶⁹ Historian Winthrop Jordan has commented on the differences between the upper and lower South during the late eighteenth century by stating that "North Carolina served (as it had since the days of William Byrd) as a nebulous, anomalous borderland, characterized by diversified agriculture, a relatively low proportion of Negroes, and a culture which belonged, everyone

⁶⁸By 1790, for example, North Carolina had about 100,572 slaves making up 26% of the state's population. By 1860 the numbers had increased to 331,059 slaves or about 33% of the population. In comparison, Virginia in 1790 had 293, 427 slaves (around 39% of its population). In 1860 Virginia slave population had increased to 490, 865 (31 % of the state's population). In 1790 the slave population in South Carolina amounted to 107, 094 (43% of the overall population). By the time of the Civil War that number had risen to 402, 406 slaves or about 57% of the population. Population data from Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), p.242.

⁶⁹See Lindley S. Butler and Alan D. Watson, eds., *The North Carolina Experience: An Interpretive and Documentary History*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 194-95.

agreed, almost in a class by itself. *There was not one South but two and a half* (emphasis mine)."⁷⁰

In spite of what may have been an anomalous situation, slavery in colonial North Carolina did become increasingly entrenched as many whites took advantage of their "absolute power and authority" over their slaves. Among those North Carolinians who exercised that power and authority were many members of the Society of Friends. Like virtually all transplanted Europeans living in the British colonies during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, most Quakers did not regard slavery as either wrong or sinful. In fact, just like slaveholding members of other Christian denominations, many Quaker slaveholders during that time used excerpts from the Bible as a justification for owning African slaves. And though most Quakers may have recognized black Africans as objects of God's love and therefore capable of receiving His grace, civil freedom and religion did not necessarily go hand in hand. As one historian has explained, many slaveholding Quakers attempted to justify slavery by pointing to the potential of providing Christian tutelage for Africans.⁷¹ Furthermore, the influence of Quakers who had migrated from Barbados and the West Indies (two places where slavery was widely practiced and especially harsh) to the mainland colonies, ensured that a strong pro-slavery element would remain rooted in the Society of Friends for a long time.⁷² To be sure, many prominent American Quakers, including William Penn, owned slaves.

⁷⁰ Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 316.

⁷¹ Sydney V. James, *A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 104.

⁷² See J. William Frost, editor, *The Quaker Origins of Antislavery* (hence cited as Frost, QOA), (Norwood, Pa, 1980), p. 11 (introduction).

As is well known, however, the Quakers gradually began to have second thoughts about slavery as an acceptable practice, and eventually came to be opposed to it outright. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide an in-depth analysis of the rise of Quaker antislavery thought and practice in America. That story has already been told many times. But a basic outline of those developments is necessary in order to illustrate how opposition to slavery in general, and the fear of slave revolts in particular, influenced the North Carolina Quakers who eventually participated in the Great Migration.

Even during the early years of the Society of Friends some influential Quakers had misgivings concerning the practice of slavery. For example, although he was not opposed outright to slavery as an institution, George Fox, the principle founder of the Society of Friends, became disturbed by the harsh treatment received by slaves. While visiting the islanders of Barbados in 1671, including several slaveholding Quakers, Fox expressed concern for the various disruptions of slave families, particularly the abuses against slave women and children.⁷³ Fox's comments on the harsh treatment of slaves brought down the wrath of Barbadian planters who accused him of inciting their slaves to rebel. Fox vehemently denied these charges against him, yet continued to remark on the treatment of slaves during a visit to the mainland British colonies, including North Carolina in 1672.

⁷³ See George Fox, Gospel Family Order, being a short discourse concerning the ordering of families both of whites and Indians, 1676, reprinted in Frost, QOA, pp. 35-55. See Frost's book The Quaker Family in Colonial America: A Portrait of the Society of Friends, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973). For a more recent study on the influence of Quaker domesticity in America see Barry Levy, Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Levy contends that the Quakers played a more significant role than the Puritans in providing a model for nineteenth century American domesticity.

While George Fox was a most notable early Quaker critic of slavery in terms of treatment and living conditions, William Edmundson is generally credited as the first prominent Quaker to denounce slavery publicly as an institution. Edmundson had visited Barbados with George Fox. During a return trip to the island, Edmundson stood accused of inciting slaves against the white islanders due to his religious teachings to slaves. He avoided prosecution by convincing the Barbadian governor that slaves taught to be good Christians would be far less a threat than slaves held in ignorance.⁷⁴ Although this line of reasoning worked with the higher civil authorities on Barbados, Edmundson failed to win over the general population. Beginning in 1676 Barbados passed a series of laws at first intended to prevent blacks from attending Quaker run schools, but eventually geared toward preventing Quakers from meeting at all. In spite of Barbadian Quaker opposition to these laws, the rapid decline of Quakerism on the island became inevitable.

Soon after his eventful second visit to Barbados, Edmundson began to question further the problems of slavery – problems beyond those of treatment and living conditions. Beginning with what he considered the negative effects of slavery upon the slaveholders as well as the slaves, Edmundson came upon his outright opposition to slavery rather suddenly in 1676 when he asked why slaveholding Quakers considered it unlawful to enslave Indians but not to enslave

⁷⁴ See William Edmundson, *Journal of the Life of William Edmundson*, 1715, especially section IX, reprinted in Frost, *QOA*, pp. 56-63. See also Herbert Aptheker, "The Quakers and Negro Slavery," *The Journal of Negro History*, XXV, (1940), pp. 331-362. Aptheker was critical of the praise rendered to the Quakers for their antislavery work. Concerning William Edmundson, Aptheker pointed out that in essence Edmundson's defense against his accusers was that "Ignorance and brutal treatment would cause slave revolt, religious teaching would prevent it, i.e., this Quaker was saying that his teaching would help maintain slavery (p. 333)."

Africans? Edmundson then referred to the Golden Rule and asked of the Quakers, "which of you all would have the blacks or others to make you their Slaves without hope or expectation of freedom or liberty?" The implication was clear: Slavery of any kind was wrong and therefore sinful. "So make their (the slaves) conditions your own," Edmundson concluded, "for a good Conscience Void of offense is more worth than all the World."⁷⁵

Unfortunately, William Edmundson's opposition to slavery as early as 1676 placed him in a very small minority among the Society of Friends at that time. In general, Quaker opposition to slavery began and grew slowly until the mid-eighteenth century. Quaker protests until then generally came from radical individuals. There were, however, important exceptions to that rule. For example, the first formal protest against slavery by a group of Quakers occurred at Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1688. In putting their concerns about slavery down on paper, these German Quakers, like William Edmundson, pointed to the Golden Rule as an important reason for opposing slavery. "Is there any among us," they asked, "that would be done or handled at this manner? viz., to be sold or made a slave for all the time of his life."⁷⁶ At its heart, slavery existed as a direct contradiction to the freedom that these German Quakers had hoped to find by migrating to America. The Germantown Quakers also attacked slavery on grounds that it constituted the biblically denounced practice of manstealing. Furthermore, while many Christian denominations, including the Puritans, regarded captives

⁷⁵See William Edmundson, *For Friends in Maryland, Virginia and other Parts of America*, reprinted in Frost, *QQA*, pp.66-67. See also Thomas E. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), pp. 9-10. Although some of his interpretations are considered dated, Drake's study is still considered by many scholars to be the best book to read in order to begin studying the problem of Quaker's and slavery.

⁷⁶*Germantown Friends' Protest Against Slavery, 1688*, reprinted in Frost, *QQA*, p.69.

taken in a "just" war as fit for enslavement, the Germantown Quakers expressed concern that buying captives as slaves constituted profiteering from war -- a violation of the Quaker Peace Testimony.

The fear of violent slave insurrections also led the Germantown Quakers to point to the Peace Testimony as an argument against slavery. They astutely observed that blacks did not like slavery, and were capable of rebelling. As with Quakers migrating to the Northwest during the nineteenth century, the Germantown Quakers in 1688 recognized the physical and theological dangers involved with slave uprisings. They pointed to the potential dangers by asking other Quakers what would happen if the slaves were to

Joint (sic) themselves, fight for freedom, and handle their masters and mistresses as they did handle them (the Negroes) before. Will these masters and mistresses take the sword at hand and war against the poor slaves, like, we are able to believe, some will not refuse to do? Or have these Negroes not as much right to fight for their freedom as you have to keep them as slaves?⁷⁷

The Germantown Quakers's concerns over slave revolts were due largely to problems related to two central tenets of Quakerism: the Quaker Peace Testimony; and its effects on each individual's "Inner Light." In rejecting as unnecessary the doctrinal authority of organized religions (as well as their clergy and rituals), George Fox explained that "every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ . . . and they that believed in it came out of condemnation to the light of life, and became children of it." Thus to Quakers, the Inner Light was a gift from God to mankind; "a still small voice" in the soul "of every man" that if listened to was capable of guiding an individual to salvation.

⁷⁷Ibid., p.69.

Quaker adherence to the Inner Light and the belief in spiritual equality usually involved "quietism." Quietism required complete passivity in order to allow God through the Inner Light to operate unopposed. Quietism in the form of group worship involved first gathering in a plain meeting house free of stained glass, ornamentation, or organ music. Quakers silently entered the meeting house and sat on benches. Men and women sat separately. With the exception of Elders, who sat in a frontal gallery, no distinction was made as to seating arrangements. The meeting sat in silence until the Inner Light moved someone, man or woman, to offer a message, a sermon, or a prayer. Speaking out was a serious matter. Yet to do so was not regarded as something which required intellectual preparation since Quakers held that the Holy Spirit guided speakers. Speakers took anywhere from several minutes to an hour, sometimes longer. Meetings normally lasted about two hours, ending when an Elder or clerk shook hands with the person next to him.⁷⁸

The power of the Inner Light acted as the central belief of the Society of Friends. Therefore, according to Quakers, war and all other forms of violence (including the use of force to protect one's self from an immediate physical attack by another) came from evil human desires that in turn interfered with one's ability to follow their Inner Light and, ultimately, their salvation.⁷⁹ Violence resulting from slave insurrections would presumably have had such a negative effect. The

⁷⁸For a basic overview of quietism see Barbour and Frost, The Quakers, pp. 97-101. For a more in depth discussion of quietism see Jones, LPQ, vol. I, pp.32-103.

⁷⁹ George Fox quoted in Thomas D. Hamm, The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907, pp.2-3. Hamm gives a good concise explanation of the "Inner Light." For an excellent history of Quakerism and the development of Quaker theology for the general reader see Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, The Quakers, especially chapter 4, "Quaker Worship and Ethics." See also Peter Brock, The Quaker Peace Testimony, 1660-1914, (York, England: Sessions Book Trusts, 1990).

Germantown Quakers recognized that a slave rebellion would most likely mean force and violence. Rather than risk the dangers involved in such actions, they saw ending slavery as the only sure way of avoiding the problem altogether. To the Germantown Quakers, slavery led to far too many spiritual as well as physical dangers.⁸⁰

Although eventually received by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the Germantown Protest was set aside due to the fact that it was "not to be so proper for this meeting to give a positive judgment in the case, it having so general a relation *to many in other parts*; and so at present they forbear it (emphasis mine)."⁸¹ It should be pointed out that the protest was filed away and not rediscovered until 1844. It is therefore doubtful that the Germantown Protest had a direct influence upon migrating Quakers during the early nineteenth century. On the other hand, it does indicate that Quaker recognition of the problems concerning slave revolts was actually long-standing. The "many other parts" mentioned in the Yearly Meeting's response apparently referred to Quakers who owned slaves in other colonies besides Pennsylvania -- especially the Southern colonies. The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting seems to have deemed the problem of slavery as less important than unity among the Society of Friends at large.

⁸⁰See Hilty, pp. 9-10. The possibility of violence in America between whites and non-whites was a major concern for Quakers. When George Fox visited America in 1672 he attempted to demonstrate to others that Indians responded to a spiritual conscience, or "Inner Light." Quakers such as William Penn often used Fox's example when justifying fair dealings with Indians in Pennsylvania as a means of maintaining peaceful relations. Similarly, North Carolina Quakers tended to hold that peace with native peoples was to be had from proper treatment, not military force. Concerning relations between Quakers and African slaves, good treatment was often considered a key to preventing insurrections. See James, p. 103-105 for a discussion of why many Quakers held that it was all right to own Africans as slaves but not Indians.

⁸¹Minutes of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Vol. A2, p. 18, Burlington, 5 September, 1688 cited in Drake, p 13.

In spite of what may appear as general indifference or tacit acceptance of slavery among Pennsylvania Quakers, in 1696 the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting did issue an *advice* to their lower meetings that Quakers should avoid importing more slaves and treat well any slaves that they already owned. This statement was merely an advice and did not in any way make the importation of slaves at that time a disownable offense. The reasons for the discouragement of the slave trade often referred to the potential of slave uprisings. As Pennsylvania Quaker Robert Pyle remarked, enslaved blacks "might rise in rebellion and doe us much mischief."⁸²

The examples given above indicate that although slavery existed within the Society of Friends, it was not without its critics. And already at an early stage, some Quakers came to see the physical and theological problems involved with slave revolts. In addition to the problems associated with violence and war, many Quakers began to recognize that slavery as a condition made it impossible for the slaves themselves to experience their own Inner Lights. Quaker critics argued that slavery denied persons the ultimate responsibility for their own lives and therefore their ability to follow the Inner Light. Although Quakers did not necessarily believe in *complete* secular human equality, most did hold that the Inner Light could be found in all human beings, even African slaves. For a Quaker to take part in slavery, so this argument went, was to prevent another human being from experiencing the Inner Light.⁸³

⁸²Robert Pyle quoted in Manning Marable, "The Death of the Quaker Slave Trade," *Quaker History*, (Spring, 1974), p. 30.

See also Davis, especially the chapter entitled "The Quaker Ethic and the Antislavery International," pp. 213-254.

⁸³ See Davis, p. 254 for an interesting interpretation of this problem involving individual responsibility and the Inner Light. .

The process of ending slavery among the Quakers was a relatively slow one until the middle of the eighteenth century, when Quaker attitudes toward slavery turned from mostly concern over the treatment of slaves to ending the practice itself within the Society of Friends. As mentioned earlier, Quaker protests against slavery during the first half of the eighteenth century generally came from radical individuals. Many of these protesters came to be disowned by their monthly meetings for opposing the unity of the larger Quaker body. Yet gradually, dissenting voices came to have more credence. Quaker theology made this possible due to what can be described as its progressive nature. A major problem with transforming the Society of Friends (and other Christian denominations) had to do with the fact that the Bible itself did not condemn slavery. Even Jesus Christ had made no protest against slavery's existence. How then could the Quakers arrive at the conclusion that slavery was sinful?

Quakers acknowledged the authority of scripture. They referred to the Bible in order to validate individual and group testimonies of the Inner Light. However, because of its emphasis on the Inner Light, Quakerism did not adhere to a strict literal biblicism. Unlike the Puritans, the Quakers in many cases understood biblical revelation not as a finished act, but as part of a gradual process toward understanding and unity with God. Even on the individual level, Quakers considered their justification to God as part of an ongoing process rather than as a singular turning point in one's life. To those Quakers becoming concerned about the potential sinfulness of slavery, that the Bible did not condemn the practice merely indicated that God had not chosen to reveal everything concerning the sinfulness of slavery during biblical times.⁸⁴

⁸⁴See Hamm, pp.1-11. See also Frost, The Quaker Family in Colonial America, pp. 51-53.

While misgivings about slavery within the Society of Friends grew slowly but steadily among the mass of Quakers in America during the early to mid-eighteenth century, certain individuals gained special prominence among antislavery voices. Without a doubt the most famous, if not the most influential, Quaker opponent of slavery during eighteenth century was John Woolman. Born in Mount Holly, New Jersey in 1720, Woolman made his living as a tailor and also acted as a notary public. The story goes that on one occasion Woolman was asked to draw up a will for a man wishing to pass ownership of his slaves to his son. Woolman became deeply disturbed at the thought of another human being held in slavery. He declined to draw up the will and explained his dilemma to the slaveholder. So powerful was Woolman's explanation that the slaveholder himself became troubled and agreed to emancipate his slaves upon his death.

Woolman eventually began a career of protesting against slavery by urging fellow Quakers to emancipate their slaves. He traveled widely throughout the countryside. In 1757 Woolman began a journey through the Southern colonies, including North Carolina, in order to address the problems of slavery. Interestingly, most of Woolman's critique of slavery involved the negative effects of slavery upon the slaveholders. For example, in addressing some Quakers in western North Carolina, Woolman stated:

When slaves are purchased to do our labor numerous difficulties attend it. To rational creatures bondage is uneasy and frequently occasions sourness and discontent among them; which affects the family and such claim of mastery over them. Thus people and their children are many times encompassed with vexations, which arise from their applying wrong methods to get a living . . . I beseech you that you keep clear of purchasing any slaves . . . so that you may be preserved from those dangers which attend such as are aiming at outward ease and greatness.⁸⁵

⁸⁵See John Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, Philip P.

Or, in a more summarized form, Woolman concluded that "while the life of one is made grievous by the rigour of another, it entails misery for both."⁸⁶ Woolman went on to describe the inhumanity involved in slavery and the slave trade. He also pointed to a number of scriptural passages commanding kind treatment to slaves and eventual manumission. Moreover, Woolman understood that racial prejudice formed the basis of slavery in America. "This is owing chiefly to the idea that of slavery with the black colour, and liberty with the white," Woolman observed. "And where false ideas are twisted in our minds it is with difficulty we get fairly disentangled."⁸⁷ Woolman's insights concerning race and slavery will help later in this study to understand Quaker attitudes toward blacks and how those attitudes affected Quaker fears of slave revolts. For now, it is important to understand the significance of John Woolman in articulating a convincing and moving antislavery ideology that did not overtly condemn or challenge the religious views and practices of the Society of Friends. Indeed, it is the humility and sense of inner struggle contained in Woolman's writings that may have made his criticisms of slavery palatable to many Quakers.

While recognizing the contributions of John Woolman to Quaker antislavery, it is important not to forget that his voice was actually one among many less well-known antislavery Quakers during the early to mid-eighteenth century. For example, two years before Woolman's mission to North Carolina, antislavery Quakers Samuel Fothergill and Israel Pemberton had traveled to the

Moulton, ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 69.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 206.

⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 224-25. See also Jordan, *White Over Black*, pp.274-75. Jordan makes good use of Woolman in supporting his main argument in *White Over Black* that racial prejudice among whites and slavery among blacks had a reciprocating relationship. In short, according to Jordan, prejudice led to slavery at the same time slavery led to prejudice.

same areas that Woolman later visited. Fothergill and Pemberton spent a great deal of effort preaching against slavery. Thus when Woolman arrived in North Carolina, he found many receptive listeners quite familiar with antislavery language.⁸⁸ If John Woolman brought the ideology of antislavery among Quakers to its fruition, he had by no means planted the first seeds.

In discussing the actions taken by Quakers toward antislavery, we need to take a moment to sketch briefly some of reasons offered by historians as to why individual Quakers and later the entire Society of Friends began the process at all. To trace and analyze the historiography of Quakers and slavery would require a separate study of its own. For this study, a few historiographical examples will serve to demonstrate that the motives behind Quaker opposition to slavery had many possible faces.⁸⁹

In 1950 Thomas Drake argued in his classic work Quakers and Slavery in America that antislavery sentiment and action among Quakers progressed rapidly after 1755 due primarily to leaders such as John Woolman stepping forth at the right time and pricking the consciences of slave-owning Quakers. With this in mind, antislavery leaders attacked slavery as morally wrong in the eyes of God; a denial of natural rights to the slaves; and a corrupting influence upon the slaveholders. "The Quaker testimony against slavery, as it flowered in the late

⁸⁸See James, p. 128-40.

⁸⁹For an excellent review of the post-World War II literature on Quakers and slavery see J. William Frost, "The Origins of the Quaker Crusade Against Slavery: A Review of the Recent Literature," Quaker History, (Spring, 1978), pp. 42-58.

eighteenth century," Drake maintained, "came as a product of moral and religious idealism."⁹⁰

Most historians studying Quakers and slavery following Drake have not settled for such a simple explanation. For example, in 1967 Sydney V. James insisted in his book A People Among Peoples that antislavery among eighteenth century Quakers -- especially among the members of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting -- could not have been divorced from an overall Quaker program of internal reform which began in earnest after the outbreak of the French and Indian War. The terrible violence of that war led Quakers to ask why God had allowed such horrible things to occur? The answer for many Quakers held that God was punishing the Quakers for their involvement in sinful worldly practices, especially slavery. Forced out of government due to their pacifist beliefs, James argued, Pennsylvania Quakers ostensibly devoted themselves to a variety of philanthropic activities such as antislavery and aid to Indians in order to reclaim influence in society at large.

In 1984 historian Jack Marietta attacked James's thesis by arguing that Quaker programs involving antislavery and assistance to Indians were actually unpopular with the general population and therefore could not have been helpful in regaining lost influence. He argued that Pennsylvania Quakers did not lose political influence to any significant extent until the Revolutionary War. Marietta claimed that antislavery increased among Quakers after 1755 as part of a program of internal religious reform aimed at setting the Society of Friends apart from mainstream society.⁹¹

⁹⁰Drake, p. 77.

⁹¹See Jack D. Marietta, The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984.)

The historiographical examples just offered are meant only to demonstrate that historians have argued and continue to argue over why the Quakers turned toward antislavery. What they tell us in general is that Quaker antislavery was a complicated development due to a variety of religious, political, economic, and social reasons. While we may question and argue about their motives – and become frustrated at the slowness of the process – the bottom line remains that the Quakers as an organization did move toward ending slavery during a time when most white people living in British America considered slavery to be a part of the natural order.

The Steps Toward Freedom

When reading about colonial Quaker antislavery activities, it might seem as if Quakers everywhere in America acted simultaneously. In fact, different yearly meetings of the Society of Friends moved at different speeds through different stages from at first ameliorating slavery to finally ending it among the themselves. For example, with regards to buying slaves imported from Africa, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting advised against it as early as 1696 and made the practice subject to discipline in 1719.⁹² New England Yearly Meeting advised against the African slave trade in 1717 and 1744 but did not make it a disciplinary offense until 1760. Despite the fact that these two Northern meetings had at least addressed this issue relatively early in the eighteenth century, North Carolina Yearly Meeting did not begin to discuss officially the buying and selling of Africans until after 1768 and did not advise against it for four more years.

Following the problem of importing slaves from Africa came the question of buying and selling slaves already living in America. Many Quakers regarded

⁹²See Part One for a discussion of the Quaker Discipline.

trading in slaves as detrimental to slave families and therefore sinful. Sectional differences in pace and procedure affecting this issue were obvious once again. From 1730 to 1758 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting often advised against buying and selling slaves. That Meeting finally made such acts disownable offenses in 1774. In contrast, though the North Carolina Yearly Meeting in 1772 advised Quakers not to deal in slaves, the Meeting continued to allow the buying and selling of slaves exclusively between Quakers. The Yearly Meeting reasoned that by limiting slave trading between Quakers, slaves would be assured of having less harsh masters as well as greater assurances that slave families would not be disrupted.⁹³

Finally, when Quaker yearly meetings began to make the practice of slavery a disownable offense, the Northern meetings moved at a much quicker pace than the Southern meetings. For example, New England and Philadelphia Yearly Meetings banned slavery in 1771 and 1776 respectively. North Carolina Yearly Meeting did not make ownership of slaves a disownable offense until 1781. That the timing for abolishing slavery among Quakers progressed more slowly the further south one went is, of course, not surprising. As historian David Brion Davis has stated: "Although Quakers in general shared a similar heritage and subculture, they lived in very different environments that inevitably affected the outcome of their antislavery views. In the southern states there were severe obstacles that delayed implementation of the sect's emerging policy of self-purification."⁹⁴

It is wrong to assume, however, that Northern Quakers gave up slavery without a struggle. Many slaveholding Quakers living in the Philadelphia area

⁹³See James, pp. 130-32.

⁹⁴Davis, p. 221.

were quite slow to give up their ties to slavery. Historian Jean Soderlund has argued that a great deal of attitudinal variation concerning slavery existed among members of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting during the eighteenth century. Several prominent members of that meeting were heavily involved in endeavors that utilized slavery. Rural Quakers who owned large farms often used slave labor, especially during periods when free labor or indentured servants were in short supply. And, as was the case for many Southern Quakers, slaves often represented social status to slaveholding Quakers in the North. According to Soderlund, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting became progressively opposed to slavery as its conservative slaveholding leaders came to be replaced by leaders with increasingly negative attitudes toward slavery. Antislavery Quaker leaders collided with slaveholding leaders until the antislavery group dominated the Yearly Meeting. Even then, Soderlund explained, many Quakers did not concede the sinfulness of slavery, yet upheld the Yearly Meeting's decisions out of a need to conform.⁹⁵ In sum, Soderlund demonstrated that the end of slavery among Pennsylvania Quakers was neither quick nor painless.

Studies like Soderlund's shed considerable light on the difficulties of Northern Quakers emancipating their slaves. But the fact remains (as Soderlund readily acknowledged) that during and after the American Revolution, Northern Quakers attempted to ameliorate or ban slavery amongst themselves while living within a larger society moving, albeit slowly at times, toward ending the institution

⁹⁵See Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers & Slavery: A Divided Spirit*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). Soderlund mostly concurred with historian J. William Frost's thesis that Quaker antislavery tended to be divided between sectarian reformers seeking to purify the Society of Friends of its worldly corruption, and humanitarian reformers, like John Woolman, who thought that slavery was morally wrong and needed to end. See J. William Frost's article "The Origins of the Quaker Crusade Against Slavery: A Review of the Recent Literature," pp. 56-57.

as well.⁹⁶ Southern Quakers, on the other hand, lived in a society in which slavery as an institution became increasingly strengthened and protected legally, socially, and politically. North Carolina Quakers (as well as Quakers living in the other Southern states) who owned slaves had to make a difficult choice between their religion and their means of livelihood as well as their place in society at large. "It is difficult for us at this long distance to realize what this fidelity to principle and obedience to conscience cost the Friends of the South," commented Rufus Jones. "The slaves constituted in these regions a large element of wealth. Friends had formed the habit of living by slave-labour, and furthermore, they exposed themselves to the stern disapproval of their neighbors when they manumitted their negroes . . ." Southern Quakers "soon found themselves living in a social world into which they did not fit."⁹⁷ The stern disapproval experienced by Quakers in North Carolina often reflected itself in colonial and state laws affecting slavery.

The Law of Slavery and North Carolina Quakers

Quakers living in North Carolina during the eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries who desired to emancipate their slaves faced a myriad of challenges.⁹⁸ North Carolina Quaker antislavery thought and practice had a

⁹⁶See Arthur Zilversmit, The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1967).

⁹⁷Jones, LPQ, vol. I, p. 385.

⁹⁸For an excellent discussion of the law of slavery in colonial North Carolina as an expression of the paternalistic ideology of the master class see Marvin L. Michael Kay and Lorin Lee Cary, Slavery in North Carolina, 1748-1775, particularly chapter 2, "Power and the Law of Slavery." See also Hiram H. Hilty, Toward Freedom for All: North Carolina Quakers and Slavery, especially the chapters entitled "Quakers and Slavery in Colonial North Carolina" and "Slaves Given Freedom;" and Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery. For a brief discussion on the importance of slavery in American legal history see Paul Finkelman, "The Centrality of the Peculiar Institution in American Legal Development," Chicago Kent Law Review, (College of Law, Illinois Institute of Technology, Summer 1993), Vol. 68, pp.1009-33.

reciprocating relationship with the strengthening of legal barriers against manumissions. In other words, the increasingly severe legislative restrictions were in large part due to Quakers finding loopholes in the various anti-manumission laws; or their ignoring those laws altogether.

North Carolina established its first slave code in 1715. Many of its provisions were designed to prevent or punish insurrections by slaves. "There are several Laws made against them (slaves) in this Province to keep them in Subjection," a contemporary historian remarked. The harsh penalties contained in the code were deemed necessary because slaves "sometimes rise and Rebel against their masters. . . and do a great deal of mischief, being both treacherous and cruel in their natures *so that mild Laws would be of no use against them* when any favourable Opportunity offered if executing their barbarities (emphasis mine)."⁹⁹

In 1741 the North Carolina Legislature passed a law allowing for the emancipation of a slave only as the result of meritorious service performed by the slave as judged by the courts. Slaves emancipated illegally were to leave the colony within six months or be re-enslaved and sold at public auction.¹⁰⁰ The law came soon after an attempted, but aborted, slave uprising in New York earlier that same year, and only two years after the ill fated Stono Rebellion in South Carolina.¹⁰¹ This law eventually created serious problems for North Carolina Quakers desiring to emancipate their slaves even before the Yearly Meeting made slavery a disownable offense in 1781. Among those problems was the question

⁹⁹John Bricknell, The Natural History of North Carolina, (Dublin: the Author, 1737), pp. 272-76. Excerpt reprinted in Butler, pp. 204-5.

¹⁰⁰See *State Records of North Carolina* (hence cited as *State Records*), Walter Clark, ed., (Goldsboro, NC: Book and Job Printers, 1904), Vol. XXIII, pp. 191-204.

¹⁰¹For an interesting account of slavery in colonial South Carolina see Peter H. Wood, Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1974).

concerning the status and well-being of freed slaves in the face of such a restrictive law since many slaves freed by the Quakers were later arrested and sold again into slavery.

The American Revolution created an added dilemma for Quakers who desired to free their slaves. Although publicly expressing their neutrality during the war, many, if not most, Quakers in North Carolina tended to recognize the British governmental authorities as legitimate during the early years of the conflict.¹⁰² This did not exactly sit well with American colonists fighting for independence from Great Britain. Add to this the fact that the British offered freedom to slaves willing to fight against the American rebels.¹⁰³ Thus while already regarding most Quakers as *de facto* Loyalists, the North Carolina Assembly charged Quakers manumitting their slaves as guilty of fomenting slave insurrections.¹⁰⁴

Some Quakers took advantage of revolutionary times in order to interpret the slave law of 1741 in a rather imaginative way. These Quakers pointed out that that law had been established by a colonial government technically empowered by Great Britain. Since North Carolina had asserted its independence from the British, Quakers argued that the law had lost its legitimacy and therefore did not require obedience.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²See Barbour, p. 143. Eventually, however, North Carolina Quakers began working with the Revolutionary government in North Carolina once it became clear that that government was in control of the colony (state).

¹⁰³See Jeffrey Crow, *The Black Experience in Revolutionary North Carolina*, (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1977).

¹⁰⁴See Howard Beeth, *Outside Agitators in Southern History: The Society of Friends, 1656-1800*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Houston, 1984.

¹⁰⁵See Linda Adams Bland, *Guilford County Quakers and Slavery in North Carolina*, M.A. thesis, Wake Forest University, 1968, pp. 35. See particularly chapter 2.

In response to Quaker manumission efforts, the North Carolina Assembly took steps in 1777 to strengthen further the slave law of 1741. Entitled as *A Bill to Prevent Domestic Servile Insurrection*, the new law began by pointing out that "the evil and pernicious Practice of freeing Slaves in this State, ought at this alarming and critical time to be guarded against by every friend and Wellwisher to his Country."¹⁰⁶ The law of 1777 still required meritorious service as the condition for manumission. However, the new law stated that slaves freed illegally would not be allowed six months to leave the state -- they were to be re-enslaved and sold immediately. Several former slaves then living in eastern North Carolina, who had been manumitted prior to the law of 1777, were arrested and sold. Quaker legal counsel argued that such actions made the law an *ex post facto* law. Although the Quakers convinced a superior court that it was actually an *ex post facto* law, in 1779 the North Carolina Legislature ultimately upheld the law and the re-enslavement of many free blacks as legitimate.¹⁰⁷ With the problems of manumissions and slave uprisings in mind, the Legislature singled out the Quakers on January 26, 1779: "The act of said Quakers in setting their slaves free when our open and declared enemies were endeavoring to bring about an insurrection of the Slaves, was highly criminal and reprehensible . . ."¹⁰⁸

This last statement leads us to some of the most important reasons as to why many white North Carolinians desired restrictions concerning manumissions. Most Southern whites regarded free blacks as equally dangerous as--and perhaps more dangerous than -- enslaved blacks. From a purely practical standpoint, the mobility and communications of free blacks were more difficult to control than

¹⁰⁶*State Records*, Vol. XXIII, p.14.

¹⁰⁷*State Records*, Vol. XXIV, p. 205. See also Weeks, p. 210; Hilty, p. 26.

¹⁰⁸Quoted in Hilty, p. 26.

those of slaves. Beyond that, free blacks undermined the basic socio-racial assumptions of most whites who generally held that whites were assumed to be free while blacks were assumed to be slaves. Moreover, the presence of a free black population directly and indirectly affected the consciousness of enslaved blacks and their attitudes toward their status. Knowing that freedom was possible provided slaves with at least some measure of hope that they too might someday be free. Most importantly, free blacks could directly influence the minds of slaves to think about freedom by escaping or rebelling. Thus white North Carolinians regarded all blacks, free and slave, as potential insurgents. North Carolina law reflected that understanding.¹⁰⁹

The increasingly forbidding slave laws created a quandary for North Carolina Quakers. How were they to obey the law and still emancipate their slaves? Christ's command to render to Caesar what belonged to Caesar, as well as other biblical commands to obey secular authority, operated as an important part of Quaker practices. When and how could God's higher laws be implemented if necessary? The Society of Friends in North Carolina continued to encourage emancipation during the American Revolution even though the Yearly Meeting did not make slave-owning itself a disownable act until 1781. After 1781, disownments tended to occur only when a Quaker slaveholder indicated no desire to emancipate his slaves. Quakers who wanted to free their slaves but felt that

¹⁰⁹See Ira Berlin, Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South, (New York: The New Press, 1974). See especially the chapter entitled "The Failure of Freedom," pp. 79-107, for a discussion on the status of free blacks in Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary America. Prior to the American Revolution 5% of blacks living in North Carolina were free. The free black population in North Carolina in 1790 numbered around 5,000, again around 5% of the black population. Most of free blacks were mulattos or of some type of mixed ancestry. See Crow, A History of African-Americans in North Carolina, p. 7.

they could not due to the law were often allowed to remain within the Society of Friends.¹¹⁰

In response to the increasing legal restrictions, beginning in 1779 members of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting petitioned the Legislature as an admonishment against slavery. "That your remonstrants feel their minds impressed with sorrow," the petition stated, "that such injustice and cruelty should be perpetrated under sanction of law, in any christian community . . . " The petitioners also cited the incompatibility between slavery and Christian ideals of republican government noting that

We believe such proceedings (slavery) to be contrary to the laws of nature . . . For a legislative body of men , professing christianity, to be so partial, as to thus refuse any particular people the enjoyment of their liberty, under the laws of the government in which they live, even when the owners of such slaves are desirous, from religious motives, that they might enjoy their personal freedom, as a natural right of all mankind, is so incompatible with the nature of a free republican government . . .¹¹¹

The Quaker petitioners had little positive effect in swaying the Legislature as a fear of free blacks and slaves caused many white North Carolinians to take further steps at limiting manumissions -- particularly the slaves of Quakers. Due to their antislavery activities, Quakers living in the northeastern counties of North Carolina came to be known as "authors of the common mischief."¹¹²

¹¹⁰Bland, p. 46. It needs to be stressed that during the late eighteenth century many disownments occurred over practices having nothing to do with slavery. Involvement in the Revolution, and marrying outside of the Society of Friends, were among the acts prompting disownment. Quakers were once again attempting to purify their organization of worldly contamination. Disownments became so common that more than one opponent of Quaker antislavery activities pointed out that the Quakers themselves were doing the most to eliminate Quakerism in America. See Gragg, pp.73-76.

¹¹¹Quoted in Weeks, p. 221.

¹¹²Ibid., p.

Tensions relaxed somewhat after the Revolution, and manumissions became slightly more frequent. Yet the North Carolina Legislature continued to enact laws designed to impede the freeing of slaves. The American Convention of Abolition Societies noted this in 1804: "At present, the inhabitants of that state, consider the preservation of their lives, and all they hold dear on earth, as depending on the continuance of slavery; and are even now riveting more firmly the fetters of oppression."¹¹³ As one example, beginning in 1791 the Legislature passed laws requiring slaveholders who desired to emancipate their slaves to put up a bond ranging from two hundred pounds to (after 1801) one thousand dollars. In order for the emancipator to recoup the bond, the freed slave had to leave the state within ninety days.

In response to the new manumission laws, the Society of Friends in North Carolina eventually took steps that seemed contradictory, if not hypocritical: The North Carolina Yearly Meeting itself became a slaveholder. Based on a law passed in 1796 which allowed private property to be turned over as gifts to religious organizations, the North Carolina Yearly Meeting accepted slaves from individuals desiring to free their slaves.¹¹⁴ From 1809 until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the North Carolina Yearly Meeting held slaves with the intent of transporting them northward to free territory; colonizing them in western Africa or Haiti; or providing them with places to live and work in North Carolina with at least a semblance of freedom.

Many of the colonization attempts in Africa and Haiti failed. But several blacks who moved to the Northern states or Canada remarked on the improvements in their lives, in spite of racial prejudice present in the North. For

¹¹³Cited in Davis, p. 199

¹¹⁴*State Records*, Vol. 26., p.276.

example, Hannah Elliot, a former slave, wrote to a Quaker friend in North Carolina stating that she and her family "are well contented, better satisfied than in Carolina."¹¹⁵ Quaker efforts with this program suffered a setback in 1833 when the Indiana Legislature forbade the introduction of blacks into the state. Interestingly, several Indiana Quakers were among those expressing alarm and resentment over the influx of blacks into the region. But North Carolina Quaker efforts continued, especially since the race laws in Indiana were not strictly enforced.¹¹⁶

In spite of the presumably good intentions behind having the Yearly Meeting holding slaves, a serious problem developed due to the large numbers of Quakers from that state emigrating to the Northwest. Many migrating Quakers, especially those from the northeastern counties, left their slaves in the care of the Yearly Meeting. Often this was done without making provisions for the well-being of the slaves left behind. These quasi-free slaves became an ever increasing burden on the rapidly shrinking number of Quakers who chose to remain in North Carolina. Apparently many Quakers migrating to the Northwest moved for reasons more pressing and important to them than the welfare of their former slaves.¹¹⁷

Quakers who did become involved with helping slaves and free blacks leave North Carolina may have been motivated by fear of slave revolts. Historian John

¹¹⁵Hannah Elliot, Wayne County Indiana to Martha Parker. September 21, 1829. *Josiah Parker Family Papers*, Richmond, Indiana: Earlham College Archives.

¹¹⁶See Hilty, pp. 74-88 for an account of the attempts to relocate former slaves in the North.

¹¹⁷Concerning the North Carolina Yearly Meeting as a slaveholder see Weeks, pp. 224-26; Bland, pp. 55-61; Hilty, pp. 36-39; and pp. 41-68 for an account of the attempts by the North Carolina Manumission Society to relocate former slaves in the Northern states, the Caribbean, and Liberia.

Michael Shay has suggested that while altruism surely played a role in Quaker efforts to move blacks to free territory, in many instances Quakers choosing to remain in North Carolina wished to be rid of the burden of the blacks in their care. Beyond this, Shay suggests that many Quakers feared that the continued presence of blacks in North Carolina increased the threat of a slave insurrection.¹¹⁸ As we shall see, Quaker racial attitudes and prejudices played a large part in generating those fears.

Quakers and Racism

Given the antislavery efforts of North Carolina Quakers, it might seem as if they should have been immune from the fears and prejudices present among other American whites concerning blacks. They were not. It is important at this point to understand that even though Quakers in many ways defied the prevalent ideologies concerning blacks, they were still bound in other ways by racial prejudice. As was mentioned earlier, during the mid-eighteenth century John Woolman recognized the problems of race and slavery resulting in the debasement of blacks in the eyes of whites, including Quakers. Unlike Woolman, some Quakers even denied that blacks had an Inner Light. Quaker Herman Husband, a contemporary of Woolman's, held that blacks were inferior to Indians by "one half both in nature, shapes, and colour." Husband opposed slavery, but out of racism. He disliked the idea that money which could have been used to pay a white person for labor often went instead toward buying blacks. Husband further contended that "as lands being capable of maintaining but such a number of inhabitants, for each of those

¹¹⁸See John Michael Shay, *The Antislavery Movement in North Carolina*, pp. 237-41. With regards to Quaker altruism, Shay points out that Quakers never actually forced blacks to leave.

Negroes the publik is denied of a white person." Finally, Husband expressed fear that the continuation of slavery would lead to a large, uncontrollable black population.¹¹⁹

Although most Quakers considered slavery morally wrong, and worked to help emancipated slaves adjust to their freedom, as a group, the Quakers did not consider blacks as socially equal to whites. This is most apparent when examining black membership in the Society of Friends before the Civil War. Quaker leaders had usually encouraged the organization of meetings for blacks. For example, earlier it was noted that during the seventeenth century George Fox and William Edmundson preached to blacks. In 1758 the North Carolina Yearly Meeting took steps for "making provision for Negroes' meetings and it was agreed that meetings should be appointed for them . . . A sufficient number of friends were to attend these meetings to see that good order was observed."¹²⁰ Another example can be found in 1791 when Burlington Monthly Meeting reported "that religious meetings have been held monthly since last year for the benefit of the Black People."¹²¹

The examples above, at first glance, seem to contradict the idea that Quakers held racist views toward blacks. However, organizing meetings for blacks and actually accepting blacks into full membership of the Society of Friends were two very different things. "By some strange quirk of psychology," according to historian Hiram Hilty, "the anti-slavery Quakers never did receive blacks into membership before the Civil War, although Moravians did so to a

¹¹⁹Quotations from Gragg, p. 64.

¹²⁰See Henry J. Cadbury, "Negro Membership in the Society of Friends," *The Journal of Negro History*, XXI, (January, 1936), pp. 151-213. Citation on p.156 from *A Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of North Carolina Yearly Meeting on the Subject of Slavery within Its Limits*, (Greensboro, NC, 1848).

¹²¹*Ibid.*, p. 157.

limited extent, and the Baptists and others evangelized them actively."¹²² The irony of the situation was not lost on many Quakers. In 1795 Quaker leader Joseph Drinker chastised the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for its inconsistency: "There is no People in the world . . . who hold forth such Liberal Universal Principles as the People called Quakers, and yet to my astonishment they are the only People I know who make any objections to the Blacks or People of Color joining them in Church Fellowship."¹²³

Some blacks did desire and attempt to become members of the Society of Friends. It was not an easy thing to do. For example, in 1798 the New Garden Quarterly Meeting petitioned the North Carolina Yearly Meeting to allow for black membership. At first it appeared that membership to blacks would be granted. A special committee noted that the Discipline recognized racial equality and that membership should not be denied on the basis of color. Unfortunately, the larger portion of the Yearly Meeting hesitated from accepting this position and postponed the decision for two years when they finally denied permission to accept blacks as full members.¹²⁴ Membership to blacks was rarely denied explicitly due to color. In language that would later sound familiar to blacks in the days of Jim Crow, membership was usually denied due to their "insufficient knowledge of Friends' principles."¹²⁵

One argument used for supposing that blacks would not make good Quakers, or that blacks would have no natural inclination to join, came from the observation that the quietism practiced in Quaker meetings was incompatible with

¹²²Hilty, p. 40.

¹²³Thomas E. Drake, ed., "Joseph Drinker's Plea for Admission of the Colored People to the Society of Friends, 1795," *Journal of Negro History*, 32, (1947), pp. 110-12.

¹²⁴See Hilty, p. 40.

¹²⁵See Weeks, p. 222 note.

the more exuberant brand of Christianity presumably favored by blacks. While many blacks (as well as many whites) did choose to worship God in a way that was less than quiet, this argument obviously suffered from a drastic over generalization (as racism always does) that did not take into account individual preferences or temperaments.¹²⁶

Besides denying official membership to blacks, Quakers also generally required separate burials places for blacks associated with them. Some commentators have regarded this as more of a kindness to blacks. After all, according to their argument, the Quakers were making special provisions for people who would have otherwise had no specified burial site. On the other hand, other commentators have seen separate burials as a statement of racial prejudice.¹²⁷

The examples offered above indicate that many Quakers preferred a racially segregated society. The idea among Quakers concerning the value of a racially segregated society in America can be traced back to the Germantown Protest in 1688. The Germantown Quakers opposed slavery not merely due to their fears of the physical and theological dangers involved with slavery as an institution. They sought to end slavery among themselves also because of fears generated by racism. Racial antipathy is evident in portions of the Germantown Protest that mention a propensity for violence among black slaves. Moreover, as historian Hugh Barbour has noted, "Quakers did not wish to build a multiracial society in the Delaware Valley and feared that having large numbers of blacks who would not be integrated into the religious and political systems would destroy liberty."¹²⁸

¹²⁶See Cadbury, p. 168.

¹²⁷Ibid., pp. 160-62.

¹²⁸Barbour, *The Quakers*, p. 120.

One hundred years after the Germantown Protest, a critic pointed out how "the Quakers asserted that nature had made all men equal, and that the difference of color should not place negroes on a worse footing in society than the whites; but had any of them ever married a negro, or would any of them suffer their children to mix their blood with that of a black? They would view with abhorrence such an alliance." ¹²⁹

Much of the racial prejudice among Quakers was due to the stigma of inferiority generated by slavery. Though the Quakers opposed slavery, they tended to regard their relationship with blacks, slave and free, in a paternalistic manner. That is to say, Quakers tended to regard blacks as a special people who needed guidance, and for whom Quakers felt a sense of humanity and spiritual responsibility for, if not a sense of social and religious equality in terms of actual membership within the Society of Friends.¹³⁰ But that many Quakers leaving North Carolina for the Northwest left their former slaves behind indicates that not all Quakers saw their responsibility to blacks in the same way.¹³¹

Racial prejudice added fuel to the fears of many North Carolina Quakers. Yet it must be said, and said strongly, that certainly not all Quakers harbored deep racial prejudice.¹³² The fact that North Carolina Quakers debated black

¹²⁹ William Loughton Smith quoted in Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 421.

¹³⁰ See James, p. 103 for a discussion of why Quakers treated Indians differently than blacks. James reasons that initial encounters between Quakers and Indians were generally on terms of *de facto* equality. Blacks, on the other hand, were generally received initially by Quakers as slaves with their inferiority presumably established by their servile condition.

¹³¹ While this is certainly true, it needs to be noted that many Quakers settling in Ohio and Indiana did bring former slaves with them; or eventually sent for blacks in order to settle them in the Northwest. A few of the letters in the Josiah Parker Family Papers make references to "the time to send for the black people." See Hilty's chapter "Relocation in the West and North," pp. 74-87.

¹³² See Jeffrey Brooke Allen, "The Racial Thought of White North Carolina Opponents of Slavery, 1789-1876," *North Carolina Historical Review*, LIX, (January, 1982), pp. 49-66.

membership for as long as they did indicates that many desired to make blacks full members. But as a whole, the Society of Friends in North Carolina (or in any other state) never made a wholesale effort to recruit black members. This may be an unfair criticism of the Quakers in that they did not actually actively recruit much at all from other segments of society either.¹³³ However, if the Quakers were trying to create a separate and "pure" society, their exclusion of blacks acted as a rather conspicuous mark of organizational racism.

Racism existed as one more dimension to Quaker fears related to slavery. Racial prejudice fueled Quaker fears that the slaves whom they and others had freed, along with those still held in bondage in North Carolina, would one day revolt. To be sure, by the beginning of the nineteenth century the fear of slave revolts was growing steadily and strongly among virtually all white North Carolinians.

A Climate of Fear

The most famous attempts at slave insurrection in post-Revolutionary and antebellum America were the aborted attempts led by Gabriel Prosser in 1800 and Denmark Vesey in 1822, and the somewhat more successful and bloody Nat Turner rebellion in Virginia in 1831. North Carolina Quaker migration to the Northwest began in earnest soon after "Gabriel's Rebellion" and surged during the years immediately following the Vesey and Turner plots. The purpose of this

Allen claims that racism among antislavery North Carolinians, including the Quakers, has been exaggerated by scholars. As an example of a lack of racism among Quakers, he points to the North Carolina Yearly Meeting's assertion in 1796 that all people are equal in God's eyes. Allen's article is largely unconvincing with respect to the Quakers due to the fact that he fails to appreciate the distinction between spiritual equality and secular equality.

¹³³See Cadbury, p. 168.

section is not to analyze the nature of American slave rebellions, but a brief discussion of this topic along with a few short sketches of the Prosser, Vesey, and Turner revolts are necessary to understand the climate of fear which they created in North Carolina.

The history of slavery in North Carolina demonstrates that the fear of slave revolts was hardly isolated to the time of the Great Migration or exclusively among the Quakers. Ironically, the fear of slave uprisings did reflect important ideological contradictions among slaveholders concerning the nature of slavery as well as the slaves themselves. In 1943 Herbert Aptheker summed up the problem of fear and American slavery in his controversial study American Negro Slave Revolts. Aptheker sought to dispel the often accepted notion that slaves living in North America had been generally docile and even content with their condition. Aptheker, in contrast, argued for a warrior tradition among the slaves, and the fear among whites generated by that tradition. "While there is a difference of opinion as to the prevalence of discontent amongst slaves," Aptheker acknowledged, "one finds very nearly unanimous agreement concerning the widespread fear of servile rebellion."¹³⁴ This fear, Aptheker insisted, began early in the colonial period and continued until the end of the Civil War. The contradiction was clear: American slaveholders feared presumably docile and contented slaves.

Aptheker particularly noted the importance of the massive slave revolution in Haiti during the 1790s as a major cause of fear in the United States. "American slaveholders trembled for their own security as they followed the tremendous revolutionary activity of the French West Indian slaves in the 1790s," Aptheker claimed.¹³⁵ More recently, Eugene Genovese, in his book From Rebellion to

¹³⁴Herbert Aptheker, American Negro Slave Revolts, (New York, 1943), p. 18.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 41.

Revolution, concurred with Aptheker concerning the prevalence of the fear of slave insurrections among North American whites. Genovese held that "the interlocking French and Haitian revolutions shattered the tranquillity, such as it was, of the slaveholding regions everywhere in the hemisphere and generated fear among rational slaveholders."¹³⁶

The slave revolutions in Haiti provided a fresh sense of urgency among white North Carolinians concerned that blacks in that state might be influenced by events in the Caribbean. Rumors of violent slave conspiracies circulated throughout North Carolina during the 1790s. In 1794, for instance, court testimony taken from blacks in Granville County spoke of a plan among North Carolina slaves to raise an army of black insurgents and then "force their way where ever they choosed, and to murder all who stood in their way."¹³⁷ While the alleged uprising never occurred, North Carolina responded to such rumors with a variety of legislative measures aimed at preventing conspiracies among slaves as well as among free blacks. For example, in 1795 the Legislature barred West Indian slaves above the age of fifteen from entering the state.¹³⁸

The fear of slave insurrections played a large role in forming the Southern mindset.¹³⁹ However, as many scholars of American slavery have demonstrated, most American fears of large scale insurrections like those in Haiti, were unrealistic. For one thing, with the exception of South Carolina and Mississippi, most of the American South was predominantly white whereas in Haiti blacks

¹³⁶Eugene Genovese, From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979, p. 93.

¹³⁷See Beeth, p. 442.

¹³⁸Jordan, White Over Black, p. 383.

¹³⁹See Jordan, Tumult and Silence at Second Creek for several excellent discussions concerning the ideology of slavery in the South.

outnumbered whites and mulattos by approximately seven to one.¹⁴⁰ Also, though many of the slaves in Haiti tended to have been concentrated in large numbers on Haitian plantations, most slaveholdings in North America were relatively small and dispersed. Moreover, the strict vigilance observed among white Southerners by means of slave legislation and legal enforcement made large-scale slave rebellions in America virtually impossible. Indeed, as Genovese put it, "The wonder, then, is not that the United States had fewer and smaller slave revolts than some other countries did, but that they had any at all."¹⁴¹

But slave revolts in America did happen -- or at least tried to happen. In 1800 Gabriel Prosser, a blacksmith in Richmond, Virginia, and his brother, a slave preacher named Martin, planned to organize slaves in order to march on Richmond and kill all the white residents except for the Quakers, Methodists, and the French (Prosser was counting on French aid due to the undeclared naval war between the United States and France in 1800) living in and around the city. In hoping that his rebellion would lead to a larger slave revolution in America, Prosser looked to the Bible; the slave revolution in Haiti; and the American and French Revolutions for ideological inspiration.¹⁴² The uprising ended before it began on the planned night of the march due to a storm which washed out many of the roads leading to Richmond. This set-back caused most of the participants to scatter. The plot was

¹⁴⁰See Genovese, pp. 14-15; Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 385.

¹⁴¹Genovese, pp. 49-50. See also R. H. Taylor, "Slave Conspiracies in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 5, (1928), pp. 20-34.

¹⁴²See Jeffrey Crow, "Slave Rebelliousness and Social Conflict in North Carolina, 1775 to 1802," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXXVII, (January, 1980), pp. 79-102. Crow contends that the American Revolution provided social and ideological conditions necessary for uniting blacks in collective resistance. He cites one contemporary observer who noted how at the beginning of the Revolution slaves had "fought for freedom merely as a good; now they also claim it as a right (p. 102)."

eventually discovered. Both Gabriel and Martin were tried and executed along with several other alleged conspirators.

In 1821 and 1822 Denmark Vesey, a free black carpenter living in Charleston, along with an Angolan born mystic called Gullah Jack , recruited and organized urban and rural slaves to arm themselves and attack Charleston. Vesey, like Prosser, looked to the Bible for inspiration as well as to the revolution in Haiti. He also became aware of the growing antislavery climate in the North during the Missouri debates over the expansion of slavery. Vesey and his followers were betrayed before their plans could unfold. Many of the plot's leaders, including Vesey himself, were tried and executed.

In 1831 a slave preacher named Nat Turner led the most famous American slave uprising. Convinced that he had been selected by God to lead his people to freedom, Turner led a twelve hour rebellion during which he and about eighty of his followers moved throughout the countryside of Southampton County, Virginia killing any and all white people they encountered – primarily women and children. By the time the rebellion was finally suppressed, about sixty white people had been killed. Turner's insurrection led to an immediate panic throughout the South. Dozens of innocent blacks were killed upon suspicion of conspiracy. After managing to escape his pursuers for almost seven weeks, Turner was captured, tried, and executed. While awaiting his execution, someone asked Turner if he regretted his actions. Turner responded by asking, "Was not Christ crucified?"

Although none of these attempts at insurrection even came close to the racial violence in Haiti where thousands died, they were enough to remind white Americans that the image of the docile contented slave described by the proponents of slavery was just that, an image without basis in reality. Still, the

fear of major slave uprisings, while itself not usually ground in reality, remained an ever present reality in and of itself. "We can never count with certainty" on the slaves's "tranquil submission," admitted one commentator soon after Gabriel's Rebellion. Upon viewing the condemned conspirators, another observer stated grimly that "The accused have exhibited a spirit, which, if it becomes general, must deluge the Southern country in blood." ¹⁴³

Whites in North Carolina had always been concerned over the possibility of slave insurrections in their state. Gabriel's Rebellion and its alleged off-shoot in northeastern North Carolina and southern Virginia, the so-called "Easter Conspiracy" of 1802, turned that concern into genuine paranoia.¹⁴⁴ Patrols and vigilante activity directed violence toward a number of blacks thought to be involved in conspiring against whites. The North Carolina Legislature amended the 1741 slave code by denying condemned conspirators the right to clergy.¹⁴⁵ Horrible executions awaited those convicted of conspiracy. Hangings, mutilations, whippings, and even burning persons alive were among the punishments for convicted or even suspected conspirators.

The news of Denmark Vesey's failed attempt at insurrection in South Carolina sent shockwaves of fear into North Carolina. That Vesey had been freed many white North Carolinians to view "free persons of color" with a greater animosity and suspicion than ever before.¹⁴⁶ Vesey's plot evoked loud outcries of

¹⁴³Quotations from Jordan, White Over Black, p. 395 and Stephen B. Oates, The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion, (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 19.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p.397. See Douglas R. Egerton, Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 1993. See Egerton's article entitled " 'Fly across the River': The Easter Slave Conspiracy of 1802," North Carolina Historical Review, (April, 1991), pp. 87-109.

¹⁴⁵Taylor, p. 22.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 27.

racial hatred among Southern whites. As one example, the sharp warning of Edwin C. Holland, a South Carolina planter, echoed into North Carolina and the rest of the South:

Let it never be forgotten, that our NEGROES are truly the *Jacobins* of the country; that they are the *anarchists* and the *domestic enemy*; the *common enemy of civilized society*, and the barbarians who would, IF THEY COULD, become the DESTROYERS of our race."¹⁴⁷

In spite of the fact that no slave insurrections actually occurred in North Carolina, rumors of slave conspiracies abounded throughout the state during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially in the eastern counties where the largest numbers of slaves and slave-owners lived.¹⁴⁸ According to one

¹⁴⁷Edwin C. Holland quoted in William W. Freehling, Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina 1816- 1836, (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 59. Freehling points to the Vesey plot as a major factor in the development of the political showdown between South Carolina and the federal government headed by Andrew Jackson.

¹⁴⁸See Bland, p.44. A good example of the disparity in slavery between eastern and western North Carolina can be discovered by comparing the slave populations of Perquimans County in eastern North Carolina to that of Guilford County in the western part of the state. U.S. Census Reports in 1790 for the two counties show a striking contrast. Of the 1,096 families living in Guilford County in 1790, only 176 families (16% of Guilford County families) owned slaves. The slave population in Guilford county was 516 out of a total population of 7,291 (7%). By contrast, in Perquimans County 322 (45% of Perquimans County families) out of 709 families owned slaves. The slave population in that county numbered 1,878 out of a total population of 5,440 (35%). See Hugh Talmage Lefler, North Carolina History Told by Contemporaries (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934), p.262 for summary of 1790 census figures for North Carolina. In 1790 the total North Carolina slave population numbered 102,726 slaves out of a total population of 395,005 (25.5%). The numbers of slave owning families came to a total of 16,310 or about 31% of North Carolina families in 1790. The most common, and the most plausible, explanation for this disparity is that eastern North Carolina was populated primarily by families with a much longer history in North Carolina and therefore a longer history of owning slaves. In contrast, many of the whites living in western North Carolina in 1790 were descendants of migrants who had moved to North Carolina during the mid-eighteenth century (see Part One of this study). Many of these settlers, including Quaker settlers, had come from Pennsylvania and other northern regions

scholar, "As to insurrections in North Carolina there were none; as to conspiracies, there were a few; but, as to rumors of conspiracies and insurrections, there were a multitude."¹⁴⁹ Among the rumors provoking white fears were numerous reports of escaped slaves hiding and conspiring in the Dismal Swamp region along the North Carolina/Virginia border.¹⁵⁰ Most of these rumors had little basis in fact, but the fear which they inspired was quite real.

Besides fearing death itself, white Southerners intensely dreaded the possibility of black sexual transgressions directed toward white women during a slave insurrection. A persistent ingredient of most rumored slave uprisings was the belief that rebelling slaves planned to kill the white men and older white women while reserving the young white women for themselves. When we take into account the previous section's discussion of Quaker racial segregation, North Carolina Quakers undoubtedly feared the prospect of their women being raped by rebellious blacks as the worst possible scenario of racial amalgamation. In many ways, Quaker attitudes on the subject of race and sex reflected the fear and anxiety felt by Southern whites in general.¹⁵¹

to western North Carolina in part because slavery was not widely practiced in that area at that time. These migrants then did not have strong ties with slavery. It is also important to note that much of the Quaker antislavery movement came from the Western Quarterly Meeting in that state. See Gragg, pp. 57-66; and Hilty, p. 22.

Fear of slave revolts in western North Carolina was still widespread. For an understanding of slavery in that part of the state see John C. Inscoe, "Mountain Masters: Slaveholding in Western North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XCI, (April, 1984), pp. 143-73.

See also Charles Edward Morris, "Panic and Reprisal: Reaction in North Carolina to the Nat Turner Insurrection, 1831," *North Carolina Historical Review*, LXII, (January 1986), p. 51.

¹⁴⁹Taylor, p. 29.

¹⁵⁰Genovese, p. 68.

¹⁵¹See Jordan, *White Over Black*, pp. 150-54. On the topic on sexuality and slave revolts, Jordan claims that fears of presumed black sexual aggressiveness played an important part in white anxiety generated by the fear of slave uprisings. He notes, however, that there

The anxiety and fear born of conspiracy rumors led the Southern states to intensify their laws governing manumissions; the movement of blacks within their borders; and communications between free and enslaved blacks. In 1830, for example, just one year prior to the Nat Turner Rebellion, the North Carolina Legislature passed *A Bill to Prevent All Persons from Teaching Slaves to Read or Write, the Use of Figures Excepted*. The law stated that teaching slaves to read and write had "a tendency to excite dissatisfaction in their minds and to produce insurrections and rebellion . . ." ¹⁵² In 1830 North Carolina slaveholders -- actually, all American slaveholders -- had good reason to interfere with slave literacy. In that year, a free black living in Boston named David Walker began distributing an *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*. Walker's *Appeal* called on all blacks to rebel and overthrow the established order. "When God Almighty commences his battle on the continent of America, for the oppression of his people," Walker declared, "tyrants will wish they never were born." ¹⁵³ What made matters worse in the minds of pro-slavery North Carolinians was that Walker had been born in Wilmington, North Carolina. Besides enacting an anti-literacy law in order to prevent the dissemination of Walker's *Appeal* and the ideas it espoused, the Legislature made the smuggling of such inflammatory literature into North Carolina punishable ultimately by death. ¹⁵⁴

were in fact no reported incidents of rape committed by slaves during colonial uprisings. For a more detailed discussion of this problem see Jordan's *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek: An Inquiry into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993). See especially the chapter entitled "Of Women White and Black," pp. 149-80.

¹⁵²Reprinted in Lindley, p. 209-10.

¹⁵³Quotation from David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, (New York: Arnor Press & N.Y. Times, 1969 (originally published in Boston, 1829), p.58.

¹⁵⁴See Shay, pp. 379-380.

Fear of slave uprisings in North Carolina in 1831 turned to outright panic in 1831 when Nat Turner and his ill fated rebels struck. As soon as news about Turner reached North Carolina, the northeastern counties went into a frenzy. White citizens immediately gathered weapons to put down the rebellion in case it spread to their area. "In North Carolina the terror and fear inspired were not less than at the site of the disturbance," wrote historian Stephen Weeks. "The state militia was called out. In the more eastern counties drafts were made to go into the Dismal Swamp to hunt the fugitives, and by the end of the week there were enough men under arms . . . to have killed every negro in Southampton in an hour."¹⁵⁵

Rumors spread rapidly throughout North Carolina that numerous other plots were in the making. "Confessions" from suspected conspirators were usually extracted with torture. For example, in September 1831, soon after the Turner Revolt, rumors spread of a slave plot to burn Wilmington, North Carolina and then march on the state capitol at Raleigh "spreading destruction and murder on their way."¹⁵⁶ Although the rumored plot never materialized, the fear created by the rumors caused hysteria among whites anticipating horrible events. One witness reported in his diary that when he arrived at a white garrison, "there were 120 women packed in a small dwelling half dead with fear . . . A few men too I noticed with tremulous voices, & solemn visages, pacing back and forth in fearful

¹⁵⁵Stephen Weeks, "The Slave Insurrection in Virginia, 1831," originally printed in The American Magazine of American History (June, 1891), pp.448-458. Reprinted in Henry Irving Tragle, ed., The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831: A Compilation of Source Material, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1971), pp. 358-368. Quotation on p.366. See also Herbert Aptheker, Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion, (New York: Humanities Press, 1966).

¹⁵⁶*National Intelligencer*, September 19, 1831. Reprinted article in Eric Foner, ed., Nat Turner, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1971), pp. 62-3.

anxiety." The residents of the area seemed genuinely surprised that their throats had not been cut during the night. Several blacks were ultimately arrested and charged with conspiracy then beaten into "confessing" their involvement. Those convicted were summarily slain, "their heads . . . sticking on poles in different parts of town." Many North Carolinians believed that there had been as many executions of "intended insurrectionists in N.C. as were destroyed for their violence in Va."¹⁵⁷

That plots like the one just described were largely the products of North Carolinian panic instead of facts becomes clear when one reads portions of a letter written from Montfort Stokes, the Governor of North Carolina, to the Governor of South Carolina, James Hamilton. Stokes wrote the letter a few months after another "plot" had been discovered:

In the South Eastern counties . . . about ten or twelve negroes have been convicted for conspiracy to raise an insurrection, and most of them have been executed. I have no doubt, but the news of the Virginia insurrection prompted the restless and unruly among the slaves, in a few instances, to make similar attempts in this state (North Carolina); *but nothing like a concerted or extensive plan has been discovered*; and I am afraid, that among the negroes condemned and executed, some, who were innocent, have suffered (emphasis mine).¹⁵⁸

Stokes, however, did not hold that North Carolina was free of danger.

On the contrary, he insisted that the state increase its military strength in order to "guard against these evils, which in all probability will continue."¹⁵⁹ Eventually, the panic created in the wake of Nat Turner's Revolt subsided, but the sense of fear

¹⁵⁷Moses Ashley Curtis, *Personal Diary, 1830-36*, (Moses Ashley Curtis Papers: Southern Historical Collection). Portions reprinted in Butler, pp. 208-9.

¹⁵⁸Governor Montfort Stokes to Governor James Hamilton. Reprinted in Foner, pp. 64-65.

¹⁵⁹See Stephen B. Oates, *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion*, p.123.

it created among white North Carolinians toward blacks, slave and free, did not. Legislation governing activities of free blacks as well as slaves increased along with an increased sense of militancy among the white population.¹⁶⁰ Many whites agreed that blacks needed to be "convinced that they must and will be soon destroyed if their conduct makes it the least necessary."¹⁶¹ North Carolinians, white and black, lived in a climate of violence, militancy, and fear.

Slave Revolts and Quaker Migration

Based on what we have seen already, there can be little doubt that the fear of slave revolts in North Carolina created a powerful structural stress *capable* of motivating to Quakers to emigrate. The question remains, of course, as to whether or not fears of slave insurrections *did* motivate Quakers to leave North Carolina. As mentioned earlier, due to the small number of explicit statements of motivation, it is usually necessary to search for clues based on the context and timing of Quaker movements. Up to this point we have had to rely mostly on circumstantial evidence in order to draw conclusions concerning the relationship between slave revolts and the Great Migration. Yet beyond circumstantial evidence, Quaker writings occasionally do provide important clues as to what motivated participation in the Great Migration. Some examples of these clues can be found in a letter written on February 16, 1808 by a North Carolina Quaker named Joel Judkins to another Quaker, Isaac Parker:

¹⁶⁰For example, besides placing severe restrictions on slave preachers and the teaching of slaves to read, in 1835 the state legislature formally removed the right of any and all free blacks to vote.

¹⁶¹Quotation in Oates, p. 121.

freined (sic) Isaac,

I received thy letter some time past which informed me of thy continuance of mind to see the Ohio once more . . . My intention is to go this spring & and I expect that Carolus will go with us. I wants thee to take his money along with thee so he may get it when we meet to buy land in the new country. *The Indiana seems to bear the greatest name amongst us at present.* Jonathon Lindley has been out there and has left money in the hands of the governor who has purchased a large body of land for his who is going as soon as he can settle his busyness. *Zachariah Dicks is going to move there this spring and friends are flocking there fast* at which the governor is much pleased with a prospect of friends settling about him --- they say that it is the most convenient for trade of any part of the western world as the Wasbash on which these lands are situate runs into the Ohio quite below the falls and produce fish in great abundance, & is not so intensley cold as higher up and I think it would do us no harm to day it at least. Carolus and I are both warm for it. I want thee to come by and we will explore the country . . . (emphasis mine)¹⁶²

At first glance, the letter above appears to mention only non-slavery related issues concerning Judkins's desire to live in Indiana. Due to the lack of any mention of slavery, one might find it impossible to draw the conclusion that fear of slave revolts in North Carolina -- or for that matter, slavery in general -- was a motivation to migrate for Judkins or others like him. However, that Judkins specifically referred to Zachariah Dicks in connection with Quakers flocking to Indiana is an important clue for recognizing the presence of fear as a strong motivation for Quaker migration.

Zachariah Dicks spent much of his life working as a Quaker antislavery leader in North Carolina. He eventually became concerned about the bloody slave insurrections in Haiti (San Domingo) during the 1790s. Fearful that the violence

¹⁶²Joel Judkins to Isaac Parker, 16th day Second month, 1808, *Josiah Parker Family Papers*, (Richmond, Indiana: Earlham College Archives).

of those insurrections would extend to the United States, Dicks traveled widely throughout the Carolinas and Georgia, warning Quakers of the potential dangers. Dicks "was thought to have the gift of prophecy," claimed one observer. "The massacres of San Domingo were then fresh. He warned them (Quakers) to come out of slavery. He told them that if they did not their fate would be that of the slaughtered islanders. This produced a sort of panic and removals to Ohio commenced."¹⁶³

Dicks's most famous warning to Southern Quakers came in 1803 at Bush River Monthly Meeting in South Carolina.¹⁶⁴ "O Bush River! Bush River!" Dicks reportedly cried. "How hath thy beauty faded. Gloom and darkness have eclipsed the day." The effects of Dick's warning on Bush River were dramatic indeed. Following the warnings given by Dicks, Quakerism in Bush River virtually ceased to exist due to a rapid widespread migration to the Northwest. According to Rufus Jones, "The Friends in many instances sold their farms for half their value, loaded their indispensable goods on wagons, and started for the Canaan beyond the mountains."¹⁶⁵

The experience described above offers an excellent example of how the fear of slave insurrections motivated Quakers to move to the Northwest. Bush River was admittedly an exceptional case in that entire Quaker communities did not normally move all at once, but the incident does demonstrate the potential power which fear had in motivating Quakers to emigrate. Fear surrounded the Quakers in North Carolina and acted upon them. While some Quakers may have felt

¹⁶³Quotation in Weeks, p. 266.

¹⁶⁴Bush River Monthly Meeting operated under the authority of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting.

¹⁶⁵See Jones, *LPQ*, vol. I, p.409.

assured that they would be protected in the event of a large-scale slave uprising, many others believed that they too were potential victims -- in physical, social, and religious ways. Rather than risk those dangers, many Quakers left North Carolina to begin life again the Northwest.

CONCLUSION

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Society of Friends in North Carolina was confronted with a number of problems antithetical to Quakerism. Many, if not most, of those problems extended from the effects of slavery, particularly from the dangers involved with slave revolts. It is difficult — impossible, really — for those of us living in the United States at the end of the twentieth century to comprehend life within a slave society like the one which operated in North Carolina. For this reason, it is tempting for the historian to view the motivations for the Great Migration in concepts and terms more readily comprehensible to his or her contemporary modes of thinking. This is, of course, one of the great dangers of doing history: robbing the past of its pastness.

If we succumb to that temptation, the Great Migration of Quakers from North Carolina to the Northwest might be seen simply as an economic mechanism pushing and pulling people from one place to another. There were admittedly strong economic reasons for leaving the South and moving to Ohio and Indiana. To this way of thinking, slavery acted upon the Quaker migrants as but one more component of a larger economic order. The problems related to slavery, while possibly influential, would be seen as ancillary to broader economic motives for Quaker migration.

Economic explanations of the Quaker migration from North Carolina can be, and often are, made. However, a primarily economic approach fails to take into account the nature of North Carolinian society preceding and during the time of the Great Migration. North Carolina, like the rest of the South, was not

a society that just happened to have slaves as part of its labor force. North Carolina was a *slave society*. Slavery in North Carolina influenced or effected virtually every aspect of life for whites and blacks. From an economic standpoint, the slave system did not merely operate as an outgrowth of the economic system but was instead the basis for and, in many ways, the point of the economic system. To argue that economic issues took precedent over slavery related issues in motivating Quakers to migrate is to demonstrate a serious misunderstanding of the larger context surrounding the Society of Friends in North Carolina.

But while slavery formed the structural basis for life in North Carolina, we need to remember that slavery as an institution had a structure. As Part Two of this study demonstrated, slavery in North Carolina was held together, protected, and encouraged by a system of militancy and violence which developed largely out of the fear of slave revolts. Furthermore, Quaker racial prejudices intensified the fear and anxiety felt by individual members of the Society of Friends. Along with the individual, social, and institutional contexts related to slavery in general, there is much to support the argument for a direct relationship between Quaker fears of slave revolts and the migration, especially given the fact that the largest numbers of Quakers left North Carolina soon after the slave revolts in Haiti and during the same period of time as the Prosser, Vesey, and Turner rebellions. Consequently, slavery as a motivation for North Carolina Quaker emigration cannot be understood without recognizing fear as its primary component.

When migration opportunities in Ohio and Indiana offered realistic and beneficial solutions to problems related to slave insurrections, Quakers left North Carolina. It needs to be emphasized again that the Great Migration involved additional elements of an actual migratory process. The stresses which created a desire to leave, along with the offerings of a place to go, were important *parts* of a

larger chain migration process. A shift in Quaker social control along with the strong influence of interpersonal relationships and communications between people at the places of origin and destination also operated as necessary parts of the overall process as well. The Great Migration was the culmination of all of these elements working simultaneously.

Quaker fears stemming from problems related to slave revolts reflected many problems particular to the Society of Friends, but they also reflected larger problems in American society concerning race, slavery, and the meaning of freedom. Those problems were addressed in different ways. The United States at large took a route that culminated in a terrible civil war. The vast majority of Quakers in North Carolina sought a peaceful solution to their problems related to slavery. Analyzing the effects of slave revolts on the emigration of North Carolina Quakers can help us to gain a better understanding of how at least some Americans chose to respond to those problems which divided and, unfortunately, in many ways continue to divide America.

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