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The Dilemma of Quaker Pacifism in a Slaveholding Republic, 1833–1865

RYAN JORDAN

Looking back on the relationship of Quaker meetings to the antebellum abolitionist movement, a Philadelphia associate of Lucretia Mott recounted how the abolitionist “crusade against the slaveocracy” was disliked by most Friends: Quakers in general believed “that the antislavery missionaries were stirring up strife, [and] that the preaching of hate, even of a most hateful thing, was not according to Friends’ principles.” While many members of the religious society admired activists such as Mott, they still remained skeptical regarding her approach to ending slavery. The writer continued, “Certainly Lucretia Mott did not intend to incite John Brown to invade Virginia and shoot half a dozen people, and then be hanged,” but the “mission” of the abolitionists was nonetheless “a mistake, however good their motive,” because the movement seemed to compromise with violence.¹

The unidentified comments of this Philadelphia Friend reveal how many leaders and members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) feared violent revolution around the slavery issue long before Abraham Lincoln, the Union army, and slaves did in fact unleash a second American Revolution in 1863. The proper means and ends of emancipation nagged at the conscience of many Friends for several decades before—as well as during—the Civil War. Many Quakers discovered how supporting African American freedom could

1. “M.J.D.,” undated letter, in Slavery Misc. MSS, Swarthmore Friends Collection, Swarthmore, Pa.

open up serious contradictions in the church's critique of state-sanctioned force. Would efforts to speak up for African American rights draw Friends into violent confrontations with mobs or slaveholders, especially if they lent clandestine support to the Underground Railroad? Was it possible for members of the new American Anti-Slavery society to avoid calling on slaves to use force to free themselves, or to simply defend their freedom once it was achieved? Finally, could pacifism be defended even at the cost of apparent support for "copperhead" Democrats and other anti-emancipation forces during the Civil War? These were some of the issues confronting Quakers who were trying to discern the political meaning of their pacifist and anti-slavery religious beliefs during the period from 1830 to roughly 1870.²

In the mid-nineteenth century, approximately 200,000 American Protestants belonged to various branches of the Society of Friends (Quakers). Although Quakers adhered to a congregational organization of churches, groups of meetinghouses recognized leaders, so-called weighty Friends, who exercised disciplinary and advisory power through the regional Yearly Meetings, that numbered as many as fourteen by 1840. Not surprisingly, the largest Yearly Meetings existed in the traditional Quaker stronghold of Pennsylvania, as well as in the states to which Pennsylvanians migrated, namely Ohio and Indiana. But smaller numbers of members of the church could be found from New England, to North Carolina, to Iowa.³

Although they possessed differing theological views, all Quakers possessed distinctive pacifist and antislavery convictions, convictions that represented a rejection of human government in anticipation of the government of God. These ideas had once brought nothing but trouble to the "peculiar people," largely because of their anarchic implications. But they maintained their pacifism, and they constituted the largest—and arguably the first—church to disallow slaveholding in the late eighteenth century. Even as the Society of Friends was rocked by dissension beginning with the theologically liberal

2. For more on the question of means and ends in antislavery, see James Brewer Stewart, "Peaceful Hopes and Violent Experiences: The Evolution of Radical and Reforming Abolitionism, 1831–1837," *Civil War History* (Dec. 1971): 293–309; Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834–1850* (New York: Pantheon, 1969); and Lewis Perry, "Versions of Anarchism in the Antislavery Movement," *American Quarterly* 20 (Winter 1968): 768–82.

3. The best overview of nineteenth-century Quakerism is Thomas Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800–1907* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1988), esp. xvi–xvii, 1–15.

preaching of Elias Hicks in the 1820s (Hicks and his followers then established separate meetings of Friends called “Hicksite”—their opponents were the self-styled “Orthodox”), all of these “Quakers” continued to claim allegiance to the teachings of the seventeenth-century founder of the church, George Fox. Quakers possessed a common cultural inheritance of struggle against the world: a famous example of this had occurred in the 1750s, when leading Pennsylvania Quakers exchanged political power for pacifist principles during the French and Indian war.⁴ Nineteenth-century arguments over the divinity of Christ, or over the extent of Quaker involvement in the “benevolent Empire” of missionary and Bible societies, could not erase that peculiarly Quaker, dissenting attitude toward human government. Whether they lived on the fringes of traditional Quaker territory (such as upstate New York or North Carolina) or within the city of Philadelphia, all those who adhered to the label “Quaker” struggled to work out the meaning of their basic pacifist commitments.⁵

In large part because of the well-spoken (and well-financed) position of Quakers in the early republic, members of the denomination possessed a certain degree of visibility greater than their actual numbers. Church members distinguished themselves in various mercantile and philanthropic endeavors and took advantage of the religious freedom of the new nation to defend their rights to conscientiously object from military service. They also formed the backbone of a largely middle-Atlantic and Southern manumission effort in the period from 1800 to 1830, since many Southern Quakers still owned slaves into the early decades of the nineteenth century and were required by church leaders to establish freedom for them. Benjamin Lundy, the editor of *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, who personally inspired William Lloyd Garrison in his own campaign against slavery, symbolized the unpopular Quaker working in the wilderness on the slavery issue with groups such as the North Carolina and Tennessee manumission societies. In addition, British Friends in the 1820s and 1830s neared the end of their successful campaign to prod Parliament for the abolition of slavery in the

4. For a good history of Quakerism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Elbert Russell, *The History of Quakerism* (New York: Macmillan, 1942).

5. For the history of the theological separations of nineteenth-century Quakerism, see Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism*; H. Larry Ingle, *Quakers in Conflict: The Hicksite Reformation* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1986); and Bruce Dorsey, “Friends Becoming Enemies: Philadelphia Benevolence and the Neglected Era of American Quaker History,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 18 (Fall 1998): 395–428.

empire from which Americans had revolted just five decades earlier. This fact was not lost on those Friends living across the Atlantic.⁶

At the same time that the church's image inspired reformers such as William Lloyd Garrison or Oliver Johnson in their crusade against slaveholding, representative spokesmen for the various branches of Quakerism felt pressure to reign in the anarchic implications of their theology. The Quakers, as a distinct religious minority in a nation that had recently disestablished church authority, understood better than most the revolutionary potential of religious sentiment mixing with politics to destroy private property or transform the social and political status of African Americans. Although the larger political context in which they lived changed drastically from the 1830s to the 1860s, the desire of church leaders to rescue Quaker religious testimonies from becoming excuses for protracted violence over the slavery issue remained just as strong in the 1830s as it was in the 1860s. The specter of race war and the fears of violent revolution that would get beyond the best intentions of reformers existed quite early among Friends: they witnessed the radicalization of the antislavery campaign from within their own ranks in the 1830s. The perspective of such a church—one already opposed to slavery *before* the radicalization of the movement in the 1830s—is one that adds to historians' understanding of the unpopularity of the movement for immediate emancipation in the mid-nineteenth century.⁷

In addition, the instability of the meaning of Quaker religious testimonies in the nineteenth century has sometimes been forgotten in the better-known stories of heroic antislavery Quaker leaders such as the Motts, the Grimké sisters, or John Greenleaf Whittier. It seems at times as though the words "Quaker" and "abolitionist" are nearly synonymous. Historians, often for

6. Both David Brion Davis and Thomas Drake attest to the dominance of the Quakers in the organized "manumission" efforts of the period 1800–1830: David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975), esp. 215–55; Thomas Drake, *Quakers and Slavery* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1950), esp. 133–99. See also Robert Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), 125–62, for a discussion of Garrisonian reform.

7. Few, if any, historians have focused on the problematic relationship of antislavery churches to the abolitionist movement, although several have mentioned the role individual Quakers played in such movements as abolitionism, women's rights, and the Underground Railroad. See Peter Brock, *Radical Pacifists in Antebellum America* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968); John McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830–1865* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1984); Nancy Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, NY, 1822–72* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1984).

important reasons, focus on Quakers in relation to principled support for the American Anti-Slavery Society, the Underground Railroad, or women's rights. In many ways groups like the Quakers epitomize the sort of modernizing Protestant reformers who formed the principled core of the Republican party.⁸ And, when they entered the polls, Quakers did vote overwhelmingly Republican.⁹ Yet the more complicated truth that many in this religious denomination often advanced skepticism for the abolitionists and radical Republicans offers an important reminder of the cautious nature of even many antislavery Christians on race both before and after the war. Quaker uncertainty toward abolitionism and radical Republicanism—sometimes caused by fears that Quakerism might be a religion of servile insurrection and popular violence—is another example of just what those radical movements within the party of Lincoln were up against from a staunchly antislavery, Republican constituency.

For many, uncertainty surrounded the political implications of Quaker antislavery in the early and mid-nineteenth century, and at the founding of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833 reformers such as William Lloyd Garrison could only hope that the Friends would adopt a supportive stance toward their movement. Garrison viewed the campaign of the Anti-Slavery Society as a continuation of the Quaker theological traditions of “Barclay, Penn, and Fox,” which taught the “practical righteousness” of moral and political dissent from unjust human institutions. In the early 1830s Garrison told Friends that “the example of their ancient predecessors” should “not be lost upon them” by turning away from efforts to divorce slavery from the laws of the U.S. government.¹⁰ Other reformers, such as Oliver Johnson,

8. Some of the works that discuss the role of the Quakers include Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975); Edward Magdol, *The Antislavery Rank and File: A Social Profile of the Abolitionists' Constituency* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986); Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998). On the Underground Railroad, see Lara Gara, *Liberty Line: The Myth of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1961); for a more recent account, see Ann Hagedorn, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

9. According to Thomas Drake, this was the opinion of most Quaker leaders concerning the elections of 1856 and 1860. See Drake, *Quakers and Slavery, 197–98*.

10. Letter to Henry C. Wright, Apr. 16, 1837, in Walter Merrill, ed., *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), 2:258; Letter to Joseph Dugdale, May 19, 1853, in Louis Ruchames, ed., *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1981), 4:235–36.

remembered adopting for themselves the image of the lone Quaker “shaking the earth for twenty miles around” when they defiantly left churches that had criticized the politics of abolition. Johnson counterpoised the true Quaker spirit against “parish popes . . . who would have stopped the mouth of any person whose humanity impelled him to remember those in bonds as bound with him.” For Johnson, “nothing was too holy for public examination”; a man’s own conviction must remain “paramount to all human authority” when combating racial injustice.¹¹ This image of the Quaker as principled dissenter against unjust human laws, however, represented an uncomplicated view of the role of Quakers in society as it in fact existed in the world around abolitionists like Johnson. The idealized image of the “good Friend” would later receive its most famous literary expression in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, published in 1852.

In that novel, Beecher depicted two saintly Quaker characters, Simeon and Rachel Halliday, who were operatives on the “Underground Railroad.” Through the Hallidays, Beecher communicated a vision of Quaker dissent from conventional society, as well as from the American racial order, flawed by the author’s sentimental style. When the self-liberated slaves Eliza and George Harris made their way “to the Quaker settlement,” they are assured of their safety by their white protectors, who, in Beecher’s words, exude “peace on earth, good will to men.” “For everyone in the settlement is a Friend, and all are watching [out for you],” asserted Simeon Halliday.¹² Political strife and the heated arguments over the Underground Railroad in those Quaker settlements retreat from view in Beecher’s story.

Other Protestant clerical leaders disagreed with Beecher’s portrayal of Quaker dissent as perennially innocent. According to many, the Friends’ protests against the state needed to be contained within the private world of the individual conscience because illegal acts of defiance, like that depicted through Halliday by Beecher, had the potential to destroy the peace and harmony of the union. The Episcopal minister and Whig spokesman Calvin Colton, for example, explained that Friends must reject abolitionism since the church had never tried “to overthrow a fabric [of governance] which they cannot conscientiously support.” Colton further extolled the virtues of “peace-loving” Quakerism, a counter-revolutionary movement that did not

11. Oliver Johnson, *William Lloyd Garrison and His Times; or, Sketches of the Anti-Slavery Movement in America, and of the Man Who Was Its Founder and Moral Leader* (Boston, 1882), 263.

12. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (New York, 1852), 141, 188.

look to change the world by “sowing the seeds of servile insurrection and popular violence.”¹³

Whigs such as Colton expressed concern about the relationship of Friends to the controversial abolitionist movement precisely because Quakers had previously defended their right to conscientiously object to the American government’s instruments of war. For example, an 1810 petition of Virginia Quakers against militia conscription read: “liberty of conscience . . . cannot be restricted to the mere liberty of thinking, or to the silent and unseen modifications of religious opinion. Religion has duties to be performed.”¹⁴ Yet at the same time, many Friends sought to prevent religious sentiments from being used to undermine temporal authority. Exhorting his fellow church members to support the American government with an appeal to anti-Catholic sentiments, the Friend Benjamin Hallowell warned against acting as one who adheres to the “dictates of Rome” by placing the “obligations of a religious society above his obligations to his country.”¹⁵ Many early national political leaders appreciated the thinking of Quakers such as Hallowell. None other than George Washington himself praised the “moderation” of Quakers in their application of pacifist principles. Notwithstanding their “peculiar” religious beliefs, Washington found in Friends “one of the best supporters of the new government.”¹⁶

By the mid-1830s many Friends began to gravitate toward the new “immediatist” movement against slavery, a movement emboldened by the end of slavery within the British Empire. In 1834, long before he achieved fame as a poet, the young John Greenleaf Whittier took note of the success of immediatism in Britain, and wrote to fellow Quakers in the United States: God “has smiled upon the cause of Emancipation. . . . Shall we not . . . rebuke our brother in his sin” and answer the “cries of the oppressed and suffering brethren in bondage?” God, continued Whittier, “hath opened our understanding . . . concerning our duty to this people; and it *is not a time for delay* . . . for God “may answer us . . . by terrible things in righteousness.”¹⁷ Whittier angrily

13. Calvin Colton, *Abolition: A Seditious* (Philadelphia, 1839), 170–71.

14. “A Quaker Petition against Militia Conscription, 1810,” quoted in Peter Brock, ed., *Liberty and Conscience: A Documentary History of the Experiences of Conscientious Objectors in America Through the Civil War* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 85.

15. Quoted in Brock, *Liberty and Conscience*, 8.

16. Quoted in [Anonymous], *A Dialogue between Telemachus and Mentor on the Rights of Conscience and Military Requisitions* (Boston, 1818), 8.

17. “To the Members of the Society of Friends, April 16, 1834,” John B. Pickard, ed., *The Letters of John G. Whittier* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1975), 1:147–48.

termed Quaker support for the colonization of slaves a “testimony in favor of slavery.”¹⁸ He also demanded “no compromise with the iniquity—no scheme for re-acting the horrors of the ‘middle-passage’ . . . by offering the slave the miserable alternative of *transportation*.”¹⁹

In his aptly named pamphlet “Justice, Not Expediency,” Whittier, in typical immediatist fashion, laid out the superiority of divinely inspired moral suasion to human wisdom when confronting sin. To those, like Quaker gradualists, who asked what was propitious or politic, Whittier demanded a faith in the ultimate justice of emancipation as a weapon against slavery ten times more powerful than gradualist schemes. Quite simply, “immediate abolition of slavery” represented the “only just scheme” available to politicians.²⁰ Epitomizing the tactical shift being taken by immediatists, Whittier demanded that Christians stop “palliating the evil” of slavery by “voting for [the] Evil.” Because all Americans were “bound by the U.S. Constitution to protect the slave-holder in his sins,” all Americans must, therefore, demand that the constitution reject the legality of slavery and “establish now and forever this great and fundamental truth of human liberty—that man cannot hold property in his brother.” By mobilizing the public to acknowledge the illegality of slavery, the “overthrow” of the “great national evil” of slavery was possible.²¹

In response to the views of reformers such as Whittier, Quaker leaders demanded that reformers respect the diversity of opinion that existed among Quakers over the slavery issue, and not propose controversial tactics to abolish slavery. Beginning in the mid-1830s, in response to abolitionist efforts to make Yearly Meetings address Congress directly in support of antislavery measures, nearly all of the fourteen Yearly Meetings made some sort of statement rejecting overtly political action on behalf of the controversial Anti-Slavery Society. Many of the clerks of these Yearly Meetings, such as Elijah Coffin (Orthodox Indiana Yearly Meeting), Mahlon Day (Orthodox New York Yearly Meeting), and Clement Biddle (Hicksite Yearly Meeting), made their distaste for the abolitionist movement known. Joined in this opposition to varying degrees were the two most respected newspapers for Quakers, both based in Philadelphia, the Orthodox *Friend* and the Hicksite

18. “To Elizur Wright,” *ibid.*, 153.

19. “To Members of the Society of Friends,” *ibid.*, 147.

20. John Greenleaf Whittier, *Prose Works of John Greenleaf Whittier* (Boston, 1866), 25.

21. John Greenleaf Whittier, *Justice, Not Expediency; or, Slavery Considered with a View to Rightful and Effectual Remedy, Abolition* (New York, 1833), 1, 10.

Friends Intelligencer.²² In addition, the Hicksite/Orthodox split among Friends did not significantly determine support of or opposition to the abolitionist campaign. Although the Hicksites have been portrayed as theologically “liberal,” such liberalism coexisted with a distaste for worldly efforts to reform people based on human effort and therefore did not always translate into political activism.²³ Regardless of theological orientation—and there were many among nineteenth-century Friends—there was a pervasive sense of alarm in Quaker circles concerning the radical means of the abolitionists. As a typical editorial in *The Friend* put it, the “discussions between the abolitionist and colonizationist . . . might . . . endanger the existence of that Christian fellowship which is the great bond of religious communion” and “destroy that brotherly freedom and confidence” most conducive to the “promotion of truth and righteousness.”²⁴ In the years ahead abolitionist reformers within the Society of Friends, to the extent that they offered innovative interpretations of the gradualist implications of Quaker antislavery, would be the ones who felt the most frustrated by the lack of support for their cause from leading Friends.

The American Anti-Slavery Society therefore faced an uphill battle in its attempt to enlist the active support of Quaker meetings. Some Quakers clearly sought a “third way” between immediatists and colonizationists and criticized zealots in both camps. In 1839 *The Friend* believed that at its worst the colonization society had succumbed to “the most vulgar of all prejudices—the prejudice of colour.” “What it proposes to do is indirect and indefinite,” bearing no “proportion to the pressure and extent of the evil with which it professes to deal.” But if the colonization society was far behind enlightened opinion, the Anti-Slavery Society had “shot just as much in advance of the public” on the issue of abolition. Allowing nothing “to prejudice . . . to interest, or to time,” the society chose “defiance” and “personal invective” against both slavery and the slaveholder. As a result, “those who would have been its best friends” are now “afraid of it.” For a solution, the editorial offered that colonizationists drop their pretensions “to emancipation” and concentrate on “missionary work” in Africa and join with the “wisest and best men in the Anti-Slavery society in the cause of

22. Examples of such opposition can be found in Drake, *Quakers and Slavery*, 139–60; and Ryan Jordan, “Quakers, ‘Comeouters,’ and the Meaning of Abolitionism in the Antebellum Free States,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 24 (Winter 2004): 587–608.

23. On this point, see Dorsey, “Friends Becoming Enemies,” 424–28.

24. *The Friend*, May 16, 1835, 255.

abolition.” If such a union transpired, the “religious and generous energies of the nation would find a focus.”²⁵ As it currently existed, however, Friends were to be skeptical of the movement for immediate emancipation.

These discussions did not represent mere theoretical formulations but rather occurred in the midst of disruptive and deadly urban riots that followed the new abolitionist movement in the 1830s. Quaker schoolteacher Prudence Crandall, who attempted to open a biracial school in Canterbury, Connecticut, endured the destruction of her school from a mob. She and her students fortunately escaped unharmed. The most infamous violence directed at Quakers took place in Philadelphia in 1838 with the burning of the abolitionist meetinghouse, Pennsylvania Hall, as well as an attack on an orphanage for children of color. The destruction of Pennsylvania Hall occurred with the tacit acceptance of Philadelphia’s mayor.²⁶ When influential Friends warned of the destruction potentially “caused” by the abolitionist movement, they were not speaking solely of Southern, human private property. Given the fact that many Friends lived in or near cities with large African American populations (such as Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cincinnati, and New York), rubbing elbows with white violence against people of color was often unavoidable. Abolitionism offered plenty of unwanted revolutionary change for whites in the free states.

Further pressure for Quaker moderation continued to come from national political leaders in the late 1830s and 1840s. Such political figures felt obligated to voice their thoughts regarding the implications of Quaker anti-slavery within a nation long tolerant of human bondage. Henry Clay echoed President Washington’s earlier sentiments regarding Friends’ patriotism on the floor of the House during a debate over the Gag Rule against abolitionist petitions in 1839. Clay congratulated the church for remaining “opposed to any disturbance of the peace and tranquility of the Union,” since they abhorred “war in all its forms.” Clay later stated that the Society of Friends were “unambitious . . . [having] no political objects or purposes to subserve.” Abolitionists, however, would do well to follow the Quakers’ example and “limit [their] exertions to [their] own neighborhood.”²⁷ When facing a

25. *The Friend*, Dec. 7, 1839, 82–83.

26. On the urban rioting and Quakers in the 1830s, see Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1998), 243–46; and, more generally, Leonard L. Richards, “Gentlemen of Property and Standing”: *Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970).

27. “Henry Clay,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Nov. 3, 1842, 85.

disruptive, radical movement against slavery that seemed to leave nothing but urban riots wherever it went, many Friends concurred with politicians like Clay by stating that the abolitionist movement had more “connection with politics and fanaticism than with morality and religion.” Influential Friends in Baltimore warned their co-religionists that the abolitionists had “improperly . . . invade[ed] the privileges of their neighbors” and that therefore Friends must “study to be quiet” in the face of a movement that could potentially “be the means of bringing destruction upon others” by either increasing Northern violence in the streets or Southern calls for secession.²⁸ As a result, Yearly Meetings increasingly adopted the policy of closing many Quaker meetinghouses to abolitionist lectures.²⁹

In the two decades before the Civil War, leaders of the Society of Friends strove to delineate limits around which their followers might search for the kingdom of God, a state of existence—free from man-made instruments and institutions of coercion—that underpinned the Quaker testimony against war. Their church’s critique of state power always possessed the implication of an outright rejection of all human authority; the antinomian search for a community guided only by the Holy Spirit could spell the destruction of man-made entities such as the government of the United States. Seeking to prevent the pacifism of their church from being linked to a political movement, the Friend Elisha Bates wrote that the Quaker peace testimony was a private affair that always left “the rest of the world in the quiet possession of their own principles.”³⁰ When confronting the reality of abolitionists flouting laws regarding fugitive slaves, or demanding that the American government be superseded by an ambiguous, otherworldly kingdom of God, leading Friends made it clear that Quakers had at that time and had always owed “submission to the mandates of the law.”³¹ Other leaders of the church, such as Jesse Kersey, rejected the idea that civil disobedience in the name of Quaker pacifism could in fact be implemented without violent consequences; in the 1830s Kersey believed that the abolitionists’ agitation would be likely to advance a “state of warfare,” regardless of the intentions

28. Casual Correspondence of the London Yearly Meeting, “Epistle from Baltimore Yearly Meeting—1834,” 286; “Address of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of Friends,” published in *The Palladium* (Richmond, Ind.), Nov. 19, 1842, 1.

29. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery*, 146–49.

30. Quoted in Brock, *Radical Pacifists in Antebellum America*, 279.

31. *Friends Review*, Sept. 27, 1851, 24.

of the avowedly peaceful reformers.³² Using much stronger language in 1842, New York Quaker George Fox White accused abolitionists of “mustering under the crimson banner of treason.”³³

Even as many individual Friends sympathized with the attempts of African Americans to illegally free themselves from slavery, those who spoke for various groups of the Society of Friends warned that Quaker pacifism was not synonymous with civil disobedience. The so-called president of the Underground Railroad, Levi Coffin, was disheartened by the widespread comments of Friends that members of their church should not “interfere in the relation between Master and Slave” since to do so would cause Friends to neglect their duties as “law-abiding people.”³⁴ According to Walter Edgerton, entire meetings of Indiana Friends remained “decidedly and earnestly opposed” to the practice of assisting slaves to freedom.³⁵

The decade of the 1850s brought a return of Quaker fears of popular violence or other acts presaging civil war, fears that Friends nonetheless had expressed for nearly two decades (or more). The 1850s also marked an important turning point in antislavery politics, since the Free Soil and later Republican parties brought antislavery agitation further to the heart of American politics. Even with the growing respectability of antislavery politics, however, “abolitionism” remained an unpopular term with many Quakers because of that movement’s increasingly radical civil disobedience. Events continued to polarize various types of antislavery Americans. For example, in response to African American civil disobedience, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) maintained that moral suasion could still transform the thinking of slave owners, and warned slaves and free African Americans on the dangers of active resistance to slave owners. Slaves must “serve with patience and fidelity while in bondage” and commit their cause “to the hands of a merciful and omnipotent Father in heaven,” declared a meeting of Philadelphia Friends.³⁶

For many Quakers the steady escalation of confrontations between abolitionists and slave catchers revealed nothing less than a civil war in

32. Jesse Kersey, “On the Slave System,” n.d., Kersey Papers, Haverford Collection, Haverford, Pa.

33. George Fox White to Moses Pierce, May 4, 1842, in George F. White Letters, Swarthmore Friends Library, Swarthmore, Pa.

34. Hiram Hilty, “North Carolina Quakers and Slavery” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1968), 201.

35. Walter Edgerton, *History of the Separation in Indiana Yearly Meeting* (Cincinnati, 1856), 239–41.

36. Quoted in Drake, *Quakers and Slavery*, 194.

their midst. It was not long before frontier warfare erupted in Kansas, but Quaker leaders first had to address the outcome of civil disobedience in the Midwest and the Northeast. In the wake of the so-called Christiana Riot of September 11, 1851, during which freed slaves killed their former master after he had tried to re-enslave them, the Society of Friends demanded that Quakers and their African American associates “guard their minds against being improperly influenced by the excitement occasioned by the event,” exhorting them to maintain the “peaceable spirit of Jesus.”³⁷ The Society of Friends felt particularly compelled to reject violent resistance to slavery because one individual involved in the Christiana incident was Castner Hanway, a sometime Progressive Friend (Progressive referring to a “disowned” meeting of Friends in Pennsylvania) who was often called a Quaker in the local press. Hanway had been accused of treason by the federal government for supposedly having incited the slaves to violence, but no evidence existed to back up the claims, and he was acquitted of treason.³⁸ Although possessing distaste for the government’s prosecution of Hanway, leading members of the Society of Friends nonetheless objected to any compromise with, or incitement of black violence against, slave masters. It was the responsibility of Friends to guard “their minds against being improperly influenced by the excitement occasioned by the event.” It was also “highly important” that Friends of abolition “be on their guard as to the manner in which they attempt to counteract the effects of the excitement.” Friends everywhere, “while steadfastly maintaining our well-known views upon the subject of slavery,” must “be careful to do it in the peaceable spirit of Jesus.” Furthermore, the editor of *The Friend* continued, church members must personally ask African Americans to “give up all idea of attempting to resist by force and violence the laws made against them, however oppressive and unrighteous these laws are, or may continue to be.”³⁹ The Hicksite Philadelphia Yearly Meeting echoed these sentiments when it desired that Friends “imbue” their associates of color with the “christian spirit of meekness and suffering which becomes the followers of the Lamb,” so that African Americans might avoid resisting “injustice or oppression” by “carnal weapons.”⁴⁰

37. *The Friend*, Sept. 27, 1851, 16.

38. See Thomas P. Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), 67.

39. *The Friend*, Sept. 27, 1851, 16.

40. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, “At a Meeting of the Representative Committee, or Meeting for Sufferings, held 1st month, 31st, 1851,” p. 1, Haverford College, Haverford, Pa.

For abolitionists, however, the Christiana affair encouraged greater sympathy for the plight of freed blacks. African Americans, in the words of the *New York Independent*, “however abject . . . have tasted liberty . . . and are ready to defend it.” Those politicians who strengthened fugitive slave legislation had “counted upon the utter degradation of the negro race—their want of manliness and heroism—to render feasible its execution.”⁴¹ In its coverage of “Pennsylvania Abolitionism” during the Christiana affair, *The Liberator* published many sentiments that demonstrated a growing belief among abolitionists that pacific principles would not be sufficient in the battle with the slavepower. At a meeting of Congregational Friends in Green Plain, Ohio, in 1851, Henry C. Wright offered his support for a resolution claiming “RESISTANCE TO TYRANTS IS OBEDIENCE TO GOD” and called on African Americans to resist all “malignant” and “brutal” laws.⁴² Speaking before the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, Samuel Aaron told his fellow abolitionists that he “would not hesitate to strike down any ruffian who should attempt to enslave him or his family” and believed that “those colored men” at Christiana “were only following the example of Washington and the American heroes of ’76.”⁴³

In spite of these sentiments, the official view espoused by prominent Friends in relation to the fugitive slave law was that “righteous ends should always be sought by righteous means.” Only those measures that were “regular and constitutional” should be used to combat slavery.⁴⁴ Yet the tension facing antislavery Americans who desired liberty for slaves without violence simply became more pronounced through the 1850s. Events soon overshadowed the efforts of those who tried to articulate an uncompromised commitment to slavery’s peaceful abolition. This fact became particularly evident to Quaker settlers in the Kansas territory. In the 1850s these Friends experienced firsthand the failure of “popular sovereignty” to create free soil out of the western territory. Due to the fact that Quakers were publicly seen by Southerners as antislavery, proslavery fighters destroyed one of the Friends’ missionary schools operated for Shawnee children in Kansas in 1856. Those Quakers who had run the institution “thought it best to return to their homes” so as to avoid being drawn into guerrilla warfare.⁴⁵ In 1857 an

41. In Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn*, 67.

42. “Death to Slavehunters—Treason to the U.S. Government a Duty to God and Man,” *The Liberator*, Nov. 28, 1851, 92.

43. “Pennsylvania Abolitionism,” *The Liberator*, Oct. 24, 1851, 170.

44. *Friends Review*, Sept. 27, 1851, 24.

45. *The Friend*, Sept. 20, 1856, 16.

unnamed Quaker settler in Kansas reported his trials in the western territory to a local paper: “On the one hand our neighbors were arming and preparing for defense, and urging us to do the same, whilst on the other the country was invaded by a set of lawless and unprincipled beings.” Although many “thefts and robberies” occurred, “not a hair on any of our heads was harmed, or a hand laid upon anything of ours. Oh! How we desired that we might be enabled to stand firm in the faith of our religious profession, through any and every trial.” This Quaker’s “life had been repeatedly threatened, and by persons whom [he] had never seen . . . who reported to the enemy the name of every true anti-slavery man.”⁴⁶

Richard Mendenhall, a Quaker resident in Kansas, hoped that members of his church in the territory would “offer another salutary example of the power and efficacy of passive resistance to evil—the martyr’s unresistable might of meekness.” Yet in seeming contradiction, Mendenhall had to acknowledge the fact that “if defensive warfare could be justified in any case, it would seem to be so in the present one.”⁴⁷ The bifurcated nature of the Quaker peace testimony affected all members of the church; arguments and recriminations regarding the meaning, uses, and abuses of the Society of Friends’ critique of force in American society only continued in the years ahead. Increasingly, abolitionist Friends began to believe that events had turned Quaker pacifism into a kind of conservative Unionism inimical to the cause of freedom. At a Quaker meeting in Virginia in 1859, when a male minister preached against the “fanaticism” of abolitionists, Susan B. Anthony sprung to her feet crying, “‘Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites that devour wives houses!’ Read the New Testament and see if Christ was not an agitator. Who is this among us crying ‘peace, peace when there is no peace!’”⁴⁸

For many abolitionists, then, the rejection of pacifism was almost natural and could often be excused because of the actions of slave owners and the American state that, abolitionists believed, wholeheartedly backed them. The continued unfolding of violence surrounding the slavery issue in Kansas presented Friends with the almost superhuman challenge of maintaining their pacifism. Besides the fact that Quaker abolitionist support for emigrant aid

46. Unspecified newspaper article from 1857, Samuel Allinson Scrapbook, p. 14, Haverford College, Haverford, Pa.

47. “Friends in Kansas,” *The National Era*, Sept. 4, 1856, 2.

48. Quoted in Mary D. Pellauer, *Toward a Tradition of Feminist Theology: The Religious Social Thought of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Anna Howard Shaw* (New York: Carlson, 1991), 200.

societies indirectly backed those settlers' use of force to defend themselves, there were an untold number of Friends, such as Susan B. Anthony's brother Daniel, who took an active part in the guerrilla warfare in Kansas.⁴⁹ Similarly, an unknown number of Quakers supported John Brown, who had butchered five unarmed settlers in their beds at Pottawatomie Creek, Kansas. After this bloodletting, Brown was not satisfied, and he began to plot a slave revolution in the late 1850s. In these efforts, Brown was not an isolated lunatic but rather someone who received a fair amount of support from members of the American Anti-Slavery Society.⁵⁰

Brown's attempt to lead a slave revolt failed, however; the slaves refused to take part, and Robert E. Lee routed Brown's men who had taken over the federal arsenal. Brown and his fellow fighters were tried and sentenced to death. Yet many Quaker abolitionists supported Brown in the days surrounding his execution. Rebecca Buffum Spring, a relative of the Anti-Slavery Friend Arnold Buffum, upon hearing of the raid on Harpers Ferry, decided to visit the aged revolutionary in Virginia. As a woman who, in her own words, had "talked against slavery all these years," she possessed fascination for a leader who had finally "done something" by attempting to lead a slave revolution in the South. After traveling some time from Massachusetts to Virginia, and only after receiving a court order, Spring was allowed to meet with John Brown. Spring recalled how the abolitionist revolutionary was a "commanding figure" with a "white halo about his head, on his face a look of peace. . . . The slave power seemed stronger than ever . . . but his faith never flinched." A few months later, after Brown's execution, Spring called on Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson to "make a determined effort" to rescue the other of Brown's men who were yet to die, and Higginson did indeed make an unsuccessful attempt to attack the prison holding the men. In a final statement in support for the Harpers Ferry raid, Spring had two of Brown's party buried in her backyard.⁵¹

Quite likely these two men were Edwin and Barclay Coppoc, brothers from Iowa who had been raised in the Quaker faith but who were in the

49. For evidence of support for emigrant aid societies, see *Friends Review*, Dec. 13, 1856, 222–23; for Daniel Anthony, see Jennifer L. Weber, "If Ever War Was Holy": Quaker Soldiers and the Union Army," *North and South* (April 2002): 68–69.

50. For a good account of Brown's activities, see Stephen Oates, *To Purge This Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

51. Eve Lewis Perera and Lucille Salitan, eds., *Virtuous Lives: Four Quaker Sisters Remember Family Life, Abolitionism, and Women's Suffrage* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 122–24.

process of abandoning it along with their pacifism. Although Barclay died during the siege of Harpers Ferry, his brother Edwin was taken prisoner before being executed with Brown in December 1859. In a letter to his uncle from prison, Edwin remained unapologetic: “I had hoped to live to see the principle of the Declaration of Independence fully realized. I had hoped to see the dark train of slavery blotted out from our land. I honestly believe I am innocent of any crime justifying such punishment.” In a not-far-off time, stated Coppoc confidently, the “voice of truth will echo through the great army who will follow its banner.”⁵² Edwin’s Quaker aunt, Ann Coppoc Raley, also seemed supportive of her nephew’s actions. Ann was pleased that her kin did not “surrender to the slave power . . . ‘Slane, not conquered, they died free.’” “Who knows,” continued Raley, “but that under the present peculiar crisis that some of the best of our flock may be required as a sacrifice for our country and our cause.”⁵³ By emphasizing how the rejection of pacifism represented a “sacrifice,” Raley demonstrated another loophole in the logic of abolitionist pacifism—somehow young Quakers were not really to be held accountable for rejecting pacifism when events supposedly forced them to lay down their lives.

In the days and months following John Brown’s raid, many Quaker abolitionists exuded little regret that carnal weapons had been used to combat the sin of slaveholding. The leading *Anti-Slavery Friend*, Levi Coffin, rather than unequivocally condemning Brown’s violent actions, believed that Brown may have been “an instrument in the hands of the Almighty to commence the great work of deliverance of the oppressed.”⁵⁴ By claiming that God sanctioned the murderous actions of Brown, Coffin’s statements revealed how a belief in a “higher law” than those enacted on earth could be used to condone violence. In words stronger than Coffin’s, Susan B. Anthony spoke of John Brown as a man being “crucified for doing what he believed God commanded him to do, ‘break the yoke and let the oppressed go free.’”⁵⁵

And as the nation descended into civil war in April 1861, it was not simply Quaker abolitionists or their Free Soil counterparts in Kansas who took part in armed warfare. Individual Quakers from New England to the Midwest set

52. Edwin Coppoc to his uncle, Harpers Ferry, Dec. 13, 1859, in Errol Elliot file, Haverford College.

53. Ann Coppoc Raley to Mary Ball, 1859, in Errol Elliot file, Haverford College.

54. Levi Coffin to Daniel Huff, Dec. 1, 1859, Huff Family Papers, Earlham College, Richmond, Ind.

55. Quoted in Pellauer, *Toward a Tradition of Feminist Theology*, 197.

aside their pacifism in defense of the Union by joining the military. As the free states banded together to fight secession, the term "Fighting Quaker" began to be applied to young male Quakers with increasing frequency, and in response to this fact *The Friend* reprimanded those in the church who applied the term "Fighting Quakers" to themselves. "If a man is a fighting one," declared the editor, "he has not the remotest claim to be a Quaker in principle." *The Friend* demanded that Quakers "present an unbroken, unyielding front to the world's mighty errors, and with God's armor on" suffer "all things for conscience sake."⁵⁶ This editorial was likely a direct response to sentiments such as those expressed by the author of the pamphlet published during the Civil War in which the claim was made that the "'people called Quakers' have done loyal service heretofore in battles that forever consecrated the soil of our land to freedom." The pamphlet forwarded the idea that "Fighting Quakers" needed to relinquish their pacifism in order to be patriotic Americans. Although the cause of peace was an honorable one, the pamphlet continued, "there may come occasions to its followers, when the voice of duty will thrill them as with a trumpet blast, and their souls must leap responsive to the mandate: 'Arise, Go Up To The Battle!'"⁵⁷ The popularity of this pamphlet reveals how in the context of war, Americans outside the church seemed far more sympathetic to the abolitionist compromise with violence than they had been before the war.

By the start of the Civil War, before abolition became a war aim, many Friends placed their commitment to American nationalism above pacifist principles in a manner favorable to the idea of the "Fighting Quaker." In Philadelphia Sarah M. Palmer noted how "Quakers are drilling, contrary to all the peace principles of the sect; indeed from all appearances we may suppose their hopes [to end slavery] are based on war."⁵⁸ Daniel Wooton, an Indiana Quaker in the army, wrote his girlfriend that those who "rebell against the law of our country" must be stopped by "any means." Although he acknowledged the traditional Quaker injunction against physical force, Wooton believed that just as God expelled Lucifer from heaven, so must Union soldiers fight to "extinguish" the cause of the Confederacy.⁵⁹ A Quaker

56. "Fighting Quakers," *The Friend*, Nov. 18, 1862, 52–53.

57. A. J. H. Duganne, *The Fighting Quakers: A True Story of the War for Our Nation* (New York, 1866), 28.

58. Quoted in Weber, "If Ever War Was Holy," 66.

59. Quoted in Jacquelyn S. Nelson, "Civil War Letters of Daniel Wooton: The Metamorphosis of a Quaker Soldier," *Indiana Magazine of History and Biography* (Mar. 1989): 50–52, 57; see also the letter from Ethan Foster to William H. S. Wood, Feb. 22, 1881, William H. S. Wood Collection, Haverford College.

major in the army from Maine, James Parnell Jones, wrote his family and friends: "Now is the time for the country to be thoroughly aroused and strike the final blow for the destruction of the confederacy."⁶⁰ These sentiments symbolized a larger trend within Quaker communities. As Jacquelyn Nelson discovered in her study of Indiana Quakers, at least 25 percent of eligible Quaker men in Indiana fought for the Union, and because of difficulties ascertaining the faith of any person in nineteenth-century Indiana, Nelson believed that 25 percent represented a significant understatement of service. It is possible that Quaker participation in the military was not much less than the 62 percent of all eligible Indianans who fought in the Civil War.⁶¹ Quaker women also lent considerable support for the war effort, whether as members of aid organizations under the United States Sanitary Commission or as nurses in the army.⁶²

With the coming of the Civil War for abolitionists, the transformation from moral suasion to state power as the means of slavery's abolition became nearly complete. Many Quaker abolitionists supported using the Union army as one of liberation and later viewed the federal government as an instrument for transforming race relations in the South. Quaker Norwood P. Hallowell took an officer position with a regiment of black troops and wrote afterward that "there was nothing quite so magnificent and, let me add, quite so reliable as the colored volunteer."⁶³ The young Quaker orator Anna Dickinson told an audience of abolitionists that if the liberation of slaves did not become a war aim, "We have no war-cry, no noble motive. . . . While the flag of freedom waves merely for the white man, God will be against us."⁶⁴ Susan B. Anthony wrote Wendell Phillips that although supporting war was "strange," it was "glorious" nonetheless, and along with other female abolitionists Anthony

60. Quoted in Weber, "If Ever War Was Holy," 65.

61. Jacquelyn S. Nelson, *Indiana Quakers Confront the Civil War* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1991), 20–23, 96.

62. See Henrietta Stratton Jaquette, ed., *South after Gettysburg: Letters of Cornelia Hancock from the Army of the Potomac, 1863–1865* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1937); Katherine Smedley, *Martha Schofield and the Re-Education of the South, 1839–1916* (Lewistown, N.Y.: Edward Mellen Press, 1987); Jacquelyn S. Nelson, "Military and Civilian Support for the Civil War by the Society of Friends in Indiana," *Quaker History* (Spring 1987): 58.

63. Norwood P. Hallowell, *The Negro as a Soldier in the War of the Rebellion* (Boston, 1897), 9–10, 16.

64. Wendy Hamand Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets: Women Abolitionists and the Civil War* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1991), 39; for the biography of Anna Dickinson, see Giraud Chester, *Embattled Maiden: The Life of Anna Dickinson* (New York: Putnam, 1951).

took part in the Women's National Loyal League's petition to Congress in 1863 demanding that Congress make abolition the law of the land.⁶⁵

Participating in the growing movement among abolitionists to demand that the Union military cause be wedded to emancipation, the Progressive Friends of Longwood, Pennsylvania, wrote to Abraham Lincoln that the only way to end the civil war was "TO ABOLISH SLAVERY WITHOUT DELAY." This act was "demanded by a due regard for the unity of the country, the safety and happiness of the people, the preservation of free institutions, and by every consideration of justice, mercy, and peace." Rejecting their earlier pronouncements in favor of passive nonresistance, the Progressive Friends encouraged the commander-in-chief to "suppress this treasonable outbreak by all the means and forces at [the army's] disposal," and, if not, he would "betray the sacred trusts" of the American people. With the backing of William Lloyd Garrison, who had actually written the memorial, Oliver Johnson led a delegation of Progressive Friends to the White House on June 20, 1862, to present Lincoln with the memorial for emancipation. While Lincoln respectfully received the petitioners, he responded to Johnson that an emancipation proclamation would have no effect on the Confederacy since the Constitution was not in force there.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, eventually abolitionists would find encouragement in the proclamation of January 1, 1863, which proclaimed freedom to all slaves in states or parts of states in rebellion. Although emancipation had not yet been made final, this act sent a clear signal to abolitionists that the Civil War was evolving into a revolutionary struggle to change the status of African Americans within the United States. This move toward faith in the state to effect social change continued through the 1860s among Quaker abolitionists, as many would later send petitions to the U.S. Congress demanding African American suffrage and would also support the confiscation of land in the former Confederacy to be redistributed among freed slaves.⁶⁷ Quakers who worked for the federal government on behalf of former slaves often acknowledged their dependence on federal military support for the success of their efforts. One such Quaker, Cornelia Hancock, had to concede that she and her fellow Friends "shall all

65. Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 34, 39, 109.

66. "Memorial to the President," *Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends held at Longwood, Chester County, PA, 1862*, 11, 13, 16.

67. See Richard L. Morton, "'Contrabands' and Quakers in the Virginia Peninsula, 1862-69," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (Oct. 1953): 425; and "The Negro Question," *Friends Intelligencer*, Apr. 9, 1864, 77.

leave when the military does,” thus revealing the often precarious nature of Union efforts at advancing racial progress.⁶⁸

In contrast with the abolitionists, meetings of the Society of Friends frequently were skeptical of the revolutionary efforts being unleashed by the Union government and its military. In January 1863, after the Union army began enlisting former slaves, *The Friend* let it be known how Quakers regretted the “invitation to them [former slaves] to enter the army and navy, as they have almost uniformly shown themselves to be a peaceable people and unwilling to engage in war.”⁶⁹ When an army recruiting station for potential African American soldiers was established in Philadelphia in 1863, George Stearns told his wife how the “Quakers wince” at the prospect of a military camp, and that he had attempted to assure Friends that the camp was in fact founded “on peace principles; that is to conquer a lasting peace.”⁷⁰ Many leading Friends remained unconvinced. The Hicksite *Friends Intelligencer*, after having published Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation with the comments of the Prairie Grove Monthly Meeting in Iowa (which called on the president to enforce the proclamation “uncompromisedly”) the paper nonetheless warned Friends “to take no part” in the “existing war measures” even if the end of slavery could be served by these means.⁷¹

However, Northern Quakers did try to distance themselves from so-called Peace Democrats, men whom the Quakers believed to be “unscrupulous” and whose real uses for “peace” were nothing more than continued slavery and destruction of the general government.⁷² Pacifism, in the minds of many Quakers, must not be abused to serve the ends of slaveholding. This demonstration of adherence to the Lincoln administration did, however, also help win Quaker conscientious objectors concessions from the government. Edwin Stanton appreciated the dilemma of young Quaker consciences and at least tried to offer exemption to those Friends who appealed directly to the Secretary of War’s office, though this process often involved taking an oath—another problem for scrupulous Friends. For his part, President Lincoln supposedly devised a strategy that often allowed drafted Quakers to return home, only to be called up “if the government needed them.” Often enough, the call never

68. Letter from Cornelia to her mother, Mar. 18, 1866, in Jaquette, ed., *South after Gettysburg*, 223.

69. *The Friend*, Jan. 10, 1863, 151.

70. Quoted in James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), 192.

71. *The Friends Intelligencer*, Mar. 14, 1863, 6, 8.

72. *The Friend*, June 22, 1861, 334–35.

came.⁷³ Although there were incidents of young Quaker men being fined or briefly imprisoned for refusing to fight, some meetings of Friends even found ways to have commutation fees paid for by non-Friends. The Society seemed to take a generally pragmatic approach toward the problems raised both by the draft and by the incidence of young Quakers deciding to fight for the Union. But this pragmatism often went hand in hand with caution regarding efforts to extend the spirit of war south, particularly after the war was over.

Through the end of the war and into Reconstruction, leading Philadelphia Friends continued to remind their readers that Quakers entertained “no allegiance [*sic*] to [either] political party,” and wanted little to do with the controversies surrounding radical Reconstruction.⁷⁴ The Society of Friends also resisted efforts to bring about lasting social change at the point of a bayonet. *The Friend* stated that even though the “rebellion may be finally crushed, and all the insurgent States be again brought under the jurisdiction of the legitimate government, that cannot restore what has already been lost; it cannot heal the wounds rankling in the hearts of the disloyal or ruined southerner.”⁷⁵ In a later edition of the paper, the editor reiterated this view, writing, “Even as superior strength and wealth enabled the government to defeat the insurgents . . . and force them into a sullen submission,” the numerous “points of controversy between the North and the South are still undecided.” Taking an indirect swipe at the Republicans in charge of the government at the time, the editor of the paper feared that things would remain unsettled in the South until “enlightened reason, justice, and moderation” were able to subdue “vile passions” of politicians interested in protracted “unsettlement and discontent,” which the paper feared would only lead to “renewed rebellion and loss of life.”⁷⁶ According to some Quaker historians, there were several influential Friends in Indiana who seemed to support President Johnson’s Presidential Reconstruction because it was lenient to Southerners. For those Quakers, the war was punishment enough for the sin of slavery; reconstruction should not proceed if it meant the prospect of more armed violence from the hands of Northerners.⁷⁷

Perhaps not unlike thousands of other Northerners sympathetic with the Republicans yet skeptical of bloody social disorder, the Friends felt that they

73. Weber, “If Ever War Was Holy,” 67.

74. *The Friend*, Nov. 21, 1868, 103.

75. *The Friend*, Apr. 9, 1864, 255.

76. *The Friend*, Feb. 23, 1867, 207.

77. See Drake, *Quakers and Slavery*, 199; and Mary Coffin Johnson and Percival Brooks Coffin, *Charles F. Coffin: A Quaker Pioneer* (Richmond, Ind.: Nicholson Printing Co., 1923), 149–53.

had seen enough carnage brought on by the “second American Revolution.” The social dislocations brought on by the war and the fact that the war was fought almost entirely on Southern soil were only additional proof for the Quaker notion that human weapons were inferior to God’s when combating sin. Quaker leaders continued to insist that the peaceable kingdom could not be achieved by the revolutions of men. Both before and during the unfolding of the “second American Revolution,” the Society of Friends, like many other Northerners, could not avoid coexisting with intransigent slaveholders and prejudiced Northerners. For many Friends there were limits to the possible when seeking to rectify the crimes of a slaveholding state because of the social and racial views of the national polity. Friends had never been ignorant of the reality of American racism. The interconnectedness among violence, slavery, and racial prejudice had long been recognized by the leaders of the Society of Friends. On many occasions, meetings of Quakers, as well as individual members of the church, published comments that foretold disaster for the United States because of its slaveholding crimes. “Wickedness and oppression are, sooner or later, followed by [God’s] just judgements,” warned one document from Friends in Philadelphia. “The annals of those that have preceded us furnish abundant evidence that national sins have ever incurred national calamities; and that a course of iniquity and violence . . . has eventually terminated in disgrace and ruin.”⁷⁸ That recognition, however, possessed myriad implications when applied to American civil society in the antebellum period, few of which led to support for the abolitionist movement.

For historians, the story of how Quaker consciences grappled with the nature of the violent failures of the American state accents the tragic side of the era of the sectional crisis and Civil War. In the mindset of many influential Quakers, all Americans, including themselves, had failed to peacefully transform the hearts of slaveholders and their Northern allies in order to erase the legacies of two centuries of racial oppression. Violence, even if it did free slaves, took a distant second to the kind of individual conversion many Quaker leaders demanded, a conversion that they hoped would produce long-lasting social

78. “The Appeal of the Religious Society of Friends, to their Fellow-Citizens of the United States, on behalf of the Colored Race” (1859), *Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends (Orthodox)*, 2, 13. For earlier examples of similar comments, see “Testimony of the Religious Society of Friends Against Slavery,” *New England Yearly Meeting (Boston, 1847)*, 6–7; and “Address of the Representatives of the Religious Society of Friends, Commonly Called Quakers . . . to the Citizens of the United States” (1837), *Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Orthodox)*, 4, Haverford College, Haverford, Pa.

change. On the one hand, this viewpoint can easily be dismissed as conservative—even reactionary—especially when one notes how Quaker leaders many times advocated inaction in the face of an expanding slavepower. On the other hand, the failure of moral suasion made the process of racial reconstruction that much more difficult for Americans, as demonstrated by the quickness of the Republican party to abandon Reconstruction in the 1870s and by the vicious reaction to black freedom by groups like the Ku Klux Klan in the former Confederacy. The moral dilemma of Northern Quakers regarding race and revolution from the 1830s to 1870, and what it says about the political climate in which it took place, serves as a reminder of how much nineteenth-century white Americans left undone for future generations.