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> *We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fighting with outward weapons for any end or under any pretense whatever; this is our testimony to the whole world.* [1]

George Fox, the founder of the religious sect known as the Quakers, made this declaration in 1660 and in doing so established the foundation for the group's peace testimony. This testimony faced a severe trial during the American Civil War when many Quakers actively engaged in military service in spite of the continued opposition to war by their Meetings. Quaker abhorrence of slavery probably contributed to some individual decisions to engage in war, since the abolition of slavery was deeply rooted in Quaker beliefs. However, the patriotic fervor of the time and a desire to defend their homes provided a no less significant impetus for some Quakers to violate the peace tradition and engage in military activities.

Quaker Meeting reactions to their member's abandonment of the peace testimony during the American Civil War varied from outright condemnation to muted silence. John M. Moore pointed out the lack of consensus within Quaker Meetings. "Quakers were by no means united on how to interpret the peace testimony or on how to put it into practice."[2] Samuel Harper explained part of the reason for this disunity when he stated, "... the war troubled consciences here, as powerful roots of Quaker pacifism tugged one way and patriotism and hatred of slavery pulled another."[3]

Quaker roots ran deep indeed, and the Philadelphia yearly Meeting attempted to enforce the peace testimony by the issuance of a circular published in *The Jeffersonian* newspaper. In this circular, the Society of Friends in Philadelphia restated a rule adopted in 1780 that stated, "That wars, without distinction, are incompatible with the benign religion of the Redeemer... that Friends be

exhorted in no way to unite with any measures, either offensive or defensive."[4] The penalty imposed for violating this decree was unequivocal. "That no person shall remain a member of the Society who pays any fine, penalty, or tax in lieu of personal service for carrying on war, or allowing their children, apprentices, or servants to act therein, ..."[5] Friends Meetings, however, rarely made good on the threat of expulsion. Moore stated, "Many Friends came under disciplinary action during the war for supporting the conflict in one way or another, and there were some disownments in each Yearly Meeting. However, the discipline was nowhere near as severe as it had been during the American Revolution."[6]

In spite of Quaker abhorrence of slavery, which appeared in official Meeting minutes and in member's correspondence to Friends Meetings throughout the Civil War, Friends organizations exhorted members to hold fast to the peace testimony. War for them, constituted an even greater evil than slavery. For example, the following appeal appeared in a Quaker newspaper. "As we have faith in this spiritual appearance and seek out its manifestation in sincerity, we shall be led out of those dispositions which lead into wars and fighting ... "[7] The Yearly Meeting at Longwood reaffirmed its adherence to the peace testimony by adopting testimony that stated in part " ... we feel it our duty to adhere still more closely to our oft-repeated peace testimonies."[8]

In spite of the clarity of messages such as these from the Quaker leadership, other testimony adopted at the same time into the official proceedings reflected the ambivalence toward the peace testimony that many Quakers felt. For example, at the same yearly meeting that adopted the aforementioned testimony, the following testimony regarding the Confederates also appeared. "Of the crimes and barbarities these conspirators have committed since they madly commenced the war ... it is needless to speak at length. They will make such a volume of horrors as can scarcely be paralleled by the most savage warfare in the darkest ages of the world. Scalping, poisoning, and assassinating the living- mangling the bodies of the dead- making the skulls of Northern soldiers into drinking cups ... these are but specimens of the almost numberless deeds of treachery and ferocity that have marked their bloody career."[9]

Peace no longer existed in the United States after Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter in the spring of 1861. In response to the attack, Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion. Lincoln's call to arms engendered displays of patriotism and attracted hordes of men willing to go to war. Patriotic ceremonies occurred throughout both the North and South. Hordes of citizens thronged mustering places to cheer on the newly

enlisted volunteers as the populaces of both sides arose to support their governments in public outpourings of patriot fervor.

The Quaker peace testimony did little to sway the general mood of the country, or even some Quakers, at the onset of hostilities. Harper stated " ... plenty of eager volunteers did enlist from Chester County, even from among the pacifist Quakers."[10] The New York Times reported on a flag raising ceremony at Haverford College, a Quaker institution, in which "A splendid flag was raised here yesterday afternoon, amid an enthusiastic assemblage of the officers and students, the clergy of the vicinity and numerous citizens ... The Professors said they belonged to a peace society, ... and could not rightly advocate war, but they approved the course of the government, *even were bloodshed the consequence*, etc."[11]

The consequence of bloodshed did not deter some Quaker members of the Birmingham Meeting from enlisting in military service in response to Lincoln's call. A number of volunteer units established recruiting stations in West Chester. The 30th PA Regiment (a.k.a. First PA Reserves), the 97th Regiment, the 72nd Regiment, the 192nd Regiment, and several cavalry brigades, along with others, recruited companies from the local population. Five members of the Birmingham meeting volunteered for military service, with three members, Abner, Pierce, and Passmore Hoopes enlisting in the 30th PA Regiment (First PA Reserves).[12] The army formed Reserve units such as the 30th PA from the large excesses of volunteers that responded to Lincoln's call to arms. The army very quickly incorporated these units into the regular army as the number of casualties due to the war necessitated reinforcements. These units were comprised of volunteers; the government did not declare a draft until 1862, so therefore, government compulsion played no part in their decisions to enlist. These Quakers may well have responded to the outpouring of patriotism and appeals to duty to the country which characterized the time.

Patriotism fueled by the impending conflict was at a fever pitch and exhortations for men to do their duty to their country appeared in local newspapers. One such call issued by the Executive Committee of the Union Party of Chester County on September 17, 1861 stated, "The people of Chester County cannot forget their obligation. Allegiance demands both courage and sacrifice; we must evince the one and submit to the other."[13] During the summer and fall of 1861, *The Village Record* contained many advertisements seeking volunteers for the war as new regiments formed. These ads contained patriotic phrases such as "Duty and honor point to the field"[14], and "Magnificent army of Volunteers"[15] Although recruiting

occurred in West Chester throughout the war, by November 1861, the number of ads diminished and units recalled their recruitment officers as quotas were satisfied.

The words of the Quakers themselves provide us with telling insight into their attitudes toward their service in the military. Letters from the field written by Quaker soldiers reflected the resonance of calls to patriotic sentiments and duty echoing from the festive atmosphere of the recruiting stations. Abner Hoopes wrote, "I do not believe there is a man in our army but what is willing to shed the last drop of blood in defense of his country."[16] Edward Ketcham, a New England Quaker, expressed similar sentiments in a letter to his brother when he wrote, " ... and am willing, if necessary, to die for the cause of the Unity entire of this government, and do not wish to live to see its overthrow ... "[17] Jesse Taylor wrote " ... I do feel that my life would be willingly given up for my country."[18] These men, prior to expressing these sentiments, had seen battle. These were not the words of idealistic dreamers, but the words of men who saw the death and destruction of war. They expressed grim determination to fight for their country. Although many Quakers Meetings opposed slavery, sentiments of patriotism rather than hatred of slavery were foremost in these soldiers thoughts as well as in their letters.

Paradoxically, some Quakers concluded that making war was the only way to end war. A Quaker minister, in a eulogy delivered at the funeral of a fallen Quaker soldier, pointed to war as an all- consuming evil created by slavery that caused men to engage in evil in order to destroy evil. "To make war in his country forever impossible, by eradicating human slavery, its permanent cause, he took up arms. There seemed no other way of doing it. He would thankfully have used other means, had other means been permitted... You need not be afraid of shocking your principles by receiving him here from battle... Do we hate war less in these days than formerly? Nay, Friends, we hate it, if possible, a thousand times more, when we see them, father and son, doing such deeds as this."[19]

Longwood Yearly Meeting displayed the relationship between war, patriotism, and anti-slavery sentiments, while emphasizing a Quaker tradition of consensus and harmony and remaining true to the peace testimony in a petition to President Lincoln. " ... the nation, in its official organization, should lose no time in proclaiming immediate and universal emancipation, so that ... effusion of blood may cease, liberty be established, and a permanent reconciliation effected by the removal of the sole cause of these divisions."[20]Although consensus on the evils of slavery appeared throughout

Quaker Meetings, no record of any Meeting actually sanctioning military service in order to fight slavery appeared in Meeting minutes of this period.

The general attitudes between the races apparently did not assist in the creation of an outcry among white society to free their black brothers. According to Harper, "In spite of the Quaker commitment to abolition, black and white lived in mutual animosity in pre-war Chester County."[21] The Quakers who volunteered for military service against the teachings of their religion did not likely include animosity among their reasons for enlistment.

Quakers avoided animosity and controversy within their society and provided a good deal of latitude regarding differences of opinion in most matters. Moore pointed this out by saying " ... within the Hicksite body, a belief had evolved that each individual should be governed by his or her conscience, and not by some external authority."[22] This may explain why meeting minutes of the period reflect little controversy on the matter. At Birmingham Meeting, the only mention made of members who violated Quaker peace testimony appeared muted. "Friends mostly maintain our testimony against oaths, an hireling ministry and the other particulars of the query except bearing arms, training and other military services, which testimony (?) Some of our members have violated, but who have not yet been treated with."[23] Beside a request for forgiveness at the close of the war by some members for their military service, no other mention of members who violated the peace testimony appeared in Birmingham Meeting minutes. In fact, the issue of members falling asleep during meetings received equal attention. Baltimore Yearly Meeting expressed an understanding of the reasons for some of their member's enlistment "... it is not surprising that they should be carried away by the current of popular enthusiasm."[24] Longwood Meeting went even further, "As a Yearly Meeting, we disclaim all disciplinary authority, whether over individual members or local associations."[25] Although not an outright sanction, this proclamation did remove one potential obstacle to military service by young Quakers fired up with patriotism.

In order to maintain peace and tranquility within their own ranks, Quakers tended to avoid recording controversies in their official proceedings. Perhaps the most potentially controversial issue that Friends faced occurred in 1827 with little comment in the official record. In that year, the Society of Friends split into two separate factions, Orthodox and Hicksite. This separation could not have occurred in the absence of controversy. However, Birmingham Meeting minutes from 1827 did not refer to any controversy except to note Meeting schedule changes and create a list of Orthodox and Friends (Hicksite) members.[26] This Quaker tradition of avoiding divisiveness

appeared to continue through the Civil War period. Wright notes, "In numerous instances practically no mention was made of the war or of the attitude which Friends took in relation to it."[27]

The patriotic atmosphere of 1861 in Chester County reignited in 1862 when Robert E. Lee, at the head of Confederate forces, threatened to invade Pennsylvania and again in 1863 when he actually did. Chester County residents faced a real and imminent threat due to the presence of the rebel army. For local residents, Lee's invasion made real the necessity of rising to the defense of their homes. *The Village Record* noted the changed mood of the county during the 1863 crisis. "But since Lee's army has been massed in Pennsylvania, a change has come over our people, all seem to realize that, at last the magnitude of the threatening danger, and every one expresses his willingness to help drive the invader from the soil."[28] The rebel invasion created alarm throughout Chester County. "The sack of Oxford was announced in Kennet, perhaps by the same terrified rider who had come through Unionville. Panic gripped the Quaker town, and people thought they saw rebel patrols roaming the woods near the edge of town."[29] Other newspaper stories reported actual enemy activity in the area, "Rebel scouts are supposed to be passing through Chester County on horseback. ... they were overhauled and disarmed of swords and pistols."[30]

These threatened and real invasions resulted in state militia call-ups as well as draft proclamations by the Federal government. Six members of Birmingham Meeting arose to the call and joined the Pennsylvania Volunteer Militia. The direct threat that their homes and families faced by the presence of the rebel army overwhelmed any scruples they might have had about engaging in military activities. Lee's defeat at Gettysburg marked the end of the rebel invasion, so the army, no longer required the services of the militia and disbanded these units after only a week or two of service.

Quakers had the opportunity apply for status as conscientious objectors under Pennsylvania state law and several members of Birmingham Meeting applied for these exemptions.[31] One Quaker wrote, "A law of the state provides for the exemption of members of our society ... and has removed a weight from many hearts."[32] The relief however, did not last. In 1863, the government federalized the draft process, and while not allowing specific exemptions for religious beliefs, the government created a $300.00 commutation fee in lieu of service. However, many Meetings considered the payment of this fee by its members tantamount to nonobservance of the testimony against military service; therefore, no legal means existed for drafted Quakers to avoid violating the peace testimony in most Meetings. At Birmingham Meeting, the

names of five members who sought forgiveness for their violations of the peace testimony did not appear on enlistment records for the army or militia, although it is not clear whether they paid the commutation fee or contributed to the military in some other capacity. Partly because of Quaker aversion to controversy, accurate records of individual Friend's status on this issue do not exist.

Because of their beliefs, individual Quakers struggled with their consciences in ways not fully understood by others. During the Civil War, many people considered the possibility of their avoidance of military service unfair. A writer in New York asked, "Why should they be exempted any more than the Catholic, the Methodist, the Presbyterian, or the Mormon?"[33] Another writer felt that "The able-bodied Quakers, like the rest of their fellow citizens between twenty and forty-five years of age, if called upon, must pocket their conscientious scruples and go forth to fight, or fork out three hundred dollars each for a substitute."[34] Both of these choices constituted violations of the peace testimony to some Quakers, people not accustomed to pocketing scruples. Others found ways in their hearts to make peace with their decision to make war.

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Notes

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