

FRIENDS AND FAMILIES: A STUDY OF THE QUAKERS
OF THE EARLS COLNE AREA, 1655-1750

By

THERESA MACKLE CLEMONS

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Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

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Thesis Approval:

John Paul Bischoff

Thesis Advisor

Richard J. ...

Paul Hitzgold

Norman N. Durham

Dean of Graduate College

PREFACE

This study examines the economic and demographic characteristics of the 464 adult members of the Earls Colne, Halstead, and Coggeshall meetings of the Society of Friends in north-central Essex for the period 1655- 1750, and is an attempt to discover if this group differed from the general demographic pattern of the English population during the same period. Recent demographic historians have overlooked the non-conformist sects in their studies of population in Britain during these same years, but a search of the microfiche collection of the records of the English village of Earls Colne has yielded the birth and death records and the marriage certificates of the Quarterly and Monthly meetings of the Quakers in this region. These documents allow the examination of demographic and economic patterns among this group of non-conformists for a hundred-year period.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Only by studying local populations can historians formulate generalizations regarding nationwide demographic trends in pre-industrial England. The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure has sponsored such local research by British and American scholars for the past two decades. Based chiefly on Anglican parish records for the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, these studies have failed to examine one important segment of the English population--the nonconformists. Researchers cite the scarcity of records among the radical Protestant congregations as the main cause of the exclusion of these groups from local statistical studies; however, during a recent project, the Cambridge Group has discovered a fairly complete set of documents pertaining to the members of the Society of Friends in a small area of north central Essex. This region was one of the strongholds of the Quakers and also one of the most populous and prosperous regions of England in the seventeenth century.¹ The registers of the Coggeshall Monthly Meeting and of the Earls Colne and Halstead Weekly Meetings, as reported to the Essex Quarterly Meeting, contain information on births, deaths, and marriages for the period from 1655 until 1750. These records permit the demographic study of the members of the Society living within a five-mile radius of the village of Earls Colne. The availability of manorial, ecclesiastical,

and civil records for Earls Colne and the publication of the diary of Ralph Josselin, vicar of the village from 1641 to 1683, facilitate research of the Quaker community.²

Recent demographic studies in England have demonstrated that most local populations adhered closely to long-range national trends in population growth and family formation with slight deviations due to unique parochial circumstances. The population of the county of Essex was no exception to this rule, and a study of the Quakers of the Earls Colne district will show that even this select group within the larger community conformed to national demographic patterns during the second half of the seventeenth century.³ After the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, local economic factors and philosophical changes within the Society of Friends itself precipitated a rapid decline among the Quakers of the region--a phenomenon more closely related to the general decline throughout the Society of Friends at this time rather than to nationwide demographic characteristics during the first half of the eighteenth century.

The methodology employed by demographic historians in reconstructing populations is family reconstitution, a system of compiling family histories perfected in France by Louis Henry.⁴ The application of family reconstitution in English demography has been the subject of several monographs and articles. The most effective of these studies are An Introduction to English Historical Demography, Historical Demography, and Reconstructing Historical Communities.⁵ In the first of these works edited by E. A. Wrigley, the chapter entitled "Family Reconstruction" is especially informative as the author explains the steps necessary in compiling a family reconstitution from parish records of a

sample English village. Other essays deal with alternative methods of reconstructing village populations such as aggregative analysis, study of listings of inhabitants, and use of early census returns. The nature of historical demography is the subject of T. H. Hollingsworth's Historical Demography, in which he also discusses the use of various data to achieve family reconstitution. In Reconstructing Historical Communities, Alan Macfarlane discusses family reconstitution and, using two actual examples, presents other sources that the historian may integrate into reconstruction studies.

The method of family reconstitution from village and parish records has had critics, the most outspoken being M. W. Flinn. In British Population Growth, 1700-1850, Flinn asserts that the use of parish records of baptism and burials is unacceptable and unscholarly due to the many omissions and errors that are common in such registers.⁶ Wrigley has answered this criticism in an article entitled "Births and Baptisms: The Use of Anglican Baptism Registers as a Source of Information about the Number of Births in England before the Beginning of Civil Registration."⁷ This article discusses the registration coverage throughout England and demonstrates that registration was fairly complete for most rural areas, though less so for urban and industrial areas with a high incidence of migration and nonconformity.

Utilizing the method of family reconstruction and integrating other source materials, a number of historians have completed the reconstruction of several English communities during the past twenty-five years. The earliest of these studies was The Midland Peasant: The Economic and Social History of a Leicestershire Village in which W. G. Hoskins examines the social structure of Wigston Magna for a

period of nine centuries.⁸ D. E. C. Eversley wrote "A Survey of Population in an Area of Worcestershire from 1600 to 1850, on the Basis of Parish Records" in 1957.⁹ Eversley attempts in this article to reconstruct the total population of a community over a two hundred year period. In "An Elementary Exercise in Parish Register Demography," M. Drake also covers a two hundred year span, but examines the annual trends in baptisms, burials, and marriages in three sixteenth and seventeenth century Yorkshire communities.¹⁰ Rural Cambridgeshire has been the subject of two studies conducted by Margaret Spufford. The first was her unpublished M.A. thesis entitled "Rural Cambridgeshire, 1520-1680" and the second appeared in 1974 as Contrasting Communities utilizes family reconstruction and other methods to compare and contrast the development of three Cambridgeshire communities.

Other historians have also used the technique of comparing two or more communities in their studies of historical demography. D. J. Loschky and D. F. Krier examine the effects of income on family size in three communities in their article "Income and Family Size in Three Eighteenth Century Lancastershire Parishes: A Reconstitution Study."¹² To establish a total population for the Coalbrookdale area of the Midlands, S. Sogner examined seventeen parishes in "Aspects of the Demographic Situation in Seventeen Parishes in Shropshire, 1711-60: An Exercise Based on Parish Registers."¹³ Peter Laslett and J. Harrison compare the social structure of two villages in "Clayworth and Cogenhoe" which appeared in a collection of essays in 1963.¹⁴

The most recent of the comparative demographic studies concerns four communities in three counties. David Levine in Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism has conducted reconstitution studies

in three of the villages and has utilized data compiled by E. A. Wrigley on the population of the fourth village in an effort to examine the effects of proletarianization on the rural English family during the pre-industrial period.¹⁵ Shepshed and Bottesford are both located in Leicestershire. The former was a freehold village in which many citizens found employment in the stocking industry. Bottesford was an agricultural community dominated by its landlord. Terling in Essex was also an agricultural village dominated by a local landlord; however, the close proximity of London exerted a great influence on Terling population and economy. Colyton, the community studied by Wrigley, was experiencing deindustrialization during the seventeenth century. The comparison of statistics on family formation for each of these different villages during the seventeenth century allows the historian to examine the effects of protoindustrialization in the English countryside.

The village of Terling is also the subject of Poverty and Piety in an English Village by Keith Wrightson and David Levine.¹⁶ This study examines the social structure of a pre-industrial English village from 1525 to 1700. It also looks at the influence of the London market on the inhabitants of a rural community. Like Levine, J. D. Chambers examines the response of population trends to industrial development in "The Vale of Trent, 1670-1800: A Regional Study of Economic Change."¹⁷ Alan Macfarlane supplements the use of family reconstitution methods with a personal diary in The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, A Seventeenth Century Clergyman: An Essay in Historical Anthropology.¹⁸

The proliferation of local studies during the past two decades or more has enabled historical demographers to make generalizations con-

cerning British population history.¹⁹ The most recent and the most ambitious of these attempts is The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction by E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield.²⁰ Studies of 404 parishes form the basis of general population description and analysis in this study sponsored by the Cambridge Group. The first half of this book examines the problems involved in both local and national demographic research and how the authors tried to overcome them. The second part of the book deals with the relationship between demographic changes and economic circumstances. The authors developed a new technique of analysis to measure demographic characteristics for the period before the census. Back projection operates on the principle that, given the demographic characteristics of a population for a time period, historians can invert the model. They can then calculate information on the size and age structure of the population and, therefore, extract data from estimated birth and death totals for the mid-sixteenth century in England.²¹ Although the greater portion of the text involves critical evaluation of evidence and the description of methods of analysis, Population History also presents the main trends of fertility and mortality in England from 1541 until 1871.

From the vast amount of local data, Wrigley and Schofield have concluded in Population History that productivity during the sixteenth century was unable to keep pace with the rapid growth in the population in England. This in turn resulted in a decrease in the rate of population growth from the mid-seventeenth until the mid-eighteenth century. These conclusions confirm the findings of H. J. Habakkuk and G. S. L. Tucker that the rapid rise in English population did not occur

until the middle of the eighteenth century.²² Tucker disagrees with the findings of Wrigley and Schofield in regard to population growth during the period from 1650 to 1700. Tucker views this era as a time of rapid growth, and claims that the years from 1700 until 1750 were years of abnormally low growth. Jonathan Chambers also disagrees with the findings in Population History. In Population, Economy, and Society in Pre-Industrial England, he argues that the period from 1690 to 1720 was one of rapid growth due to a lower death rate which resulted from a reduction in epidemic mortality.²³ W. L. Langer also attributes a rise in population to the lower death rate resulting, in his opinion, from an improved diet.²⁴ Habakkuk and T. McKeown hold the opposite view on the reason for a rise in population.²⁵ They assert that the population increase which occurred after 1750 is attributable to a rising birth rate rather than to a decreasing death rate. The increase in the number of births was due to advances in medicine during the eighteenth century.²⁶

Despite the increasing interest in demographic research in England, there are no recent studies of population patterns among the Quakers of Britain. Richard Vann's dissertation and book, "Quakerism in English Society, 1655-1740: A Local Study" and The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755, published in 1960 and 1969 respectively, contain general information without statistical substantiation.²⁷ Vann is more concerned with the economic background of early Quakers in Buckinghamshire, Norfolk, and Norwich than with family formation. The members of the Society of Friends in North America have elicited more demographic interest than those in Great Britain. Jerry Frost has studied Quaker ideas concerning childhood, courtship, and

the impact of religious values on family behavior in his dissertation, which was subsequently published as The Quaker Family in Colonial America: A Portrait of the Society of Friends.²⁸ Frost relies mainly upon literary sources, however, and it was not until 1969 that the first statistical study of American Quakers appeared. Robert Wells undertakes a reconstruction of a Quaker community in his dissertation entitled "A Demographic Analysis of Some Middle Colony Quaker Families of the Eighteenth Century."²⁹ Wells has followed this study with articles concerning marriage patterns, family formation, and fertility control among American Quakers.³⁰ Similar studies of English Quaker groups are non-existent at present.

One nineteenth century study of English Quakers made an attempt at estimating the total Quaker population in England in 1680 and 1800. These totals, presented by John Rowntree in Quakerism Past and Present, Being an Inquiry into the Causes of its Decline in Great Britain and Ireland (1859) appear to be fairly accurate.³¹ Rowntree estimated the number of Quakers to be 60,000 in 1680, the time of their greatest strength in England. By 1800 the number had declined to 19,800.³²

Although there is a lack of demographic research on English Quakers, many general works on the Society of Friends are available, including many primary sources. The most important of these is naturally the Journal of George Fox.³³ Other primary sources of Quaker history include A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers, from 1650 to 1689, Taken from Original Records and Other Authentic Accounts, compiled by Joseph Besse in 1753, and The First Publishers of Truth, Being Early Records of the Introduction of Quakerism into England and Wales edited by Norman Penney in 1907.³⁴ Both

of these works deal with the early members of the Society of Friends as does the Original Records of Early Nonconformity Under Persecution and Indulgence edited by George Lyon Turner.³⁵

W. C. Braithwaite wrote the most authoritative history of the Society of Friends in England. His two volumes entitled The Beginnings of Quakerism and The Second Period of Quakerism trace the development of the Quakers through the seventeenth century.³⁶ Elbert Russell's History of Quakerism is also valuable as an introduction to the Quaker movement in England.³⁷

Except for Rowntree, the authors of these works on the Society of Friends in England concentrate on the early years of the movement and seldom mention the decline in membership during the eighteenth century.³⁸ The best discussion of this aspect of Quaker history appears in two books, both concerned with American Quakers, but the conclusions regarding the changes that occurred within the Society and that caused the decline apply equally to the English Quakers during the first half of the eighteenth century. James Bowden wrote the two volume History of the Society of Friends in America in the mid-nineteenth century.³⁹ In the second volume he discusses the internal problems of the Quaker movement. The best treatment of the subject, however, is in A Religious History of the American People by Sidney Ahlstrom.⁴⁰

All of these general histories of English Quakers fail to include studies of family formation or other demographic materials. Local and regional studies of Quaker Communities throughout England similar to Well's work on American Quakers are still needed. Such undertakings will aid in the understanding of the history of the Society of Friends

in England, and will also provide information on a portion of the English population not heretofore studied by historical demographers.

ENDNOTES

¹The results of this project appear in the microfiche collection entitled Records of an English Village, Earls Colne, 1400-1750, compiled by Alan Macfarlane (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healy, 1980-81).

²Ibid.; Alan Macfarlane, ed., The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683 (Oxford: British Academy, 1976).

³Keith Wrightson and David Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700 (New York: Academic Press, 1979).

⁴Louis Henry, Manuel de demographie historique (Paris: Droz, 1961).

⁵E. A. Wrigley, ed., An Introduction to English Historical Demography (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolsen, 1966); T. H. Hollingsworth, Historical Demography (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969); Alan Macfarlane, S. Harrison, and C. Jardine, Reconstructing Historical Communities (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

⁶M. W. Flinn, British Population Growth, 1700-1850 (London: Macmillan, 1970).

⁷E. A. Wrigley, "Births and Baptisms: The Use of Anglican Baptism Registers as a Source of Information about the Number of Births in England before the Beginning of Civil Registration," Population Studies 31 (July 1977):281-312

⁸W. G. Hoskins, The Midland Peasant: The Economic and Social History of a Leicestershire Village (London: Macmillan, 1957).

⁹D. E. C. Eversley, "A Survey of Population in an Area of Worcestershire from 1660-1850, on the Basis of Parish Records," Population Studies 10 (March 1957):253-279.

¹⁰M. Drake, "An Elementary Exercise in Parish Register Demography," Economic History Review 14 (April 1962):427-45.

¹¹Margaret Spufford, "Rural Cambridgeshire 1520-1680" (M.A. thesis, Leicester University, 1962); M. Spufford, Contrasting Communities: English Villages in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

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¹³S. Sogner, "Aspects of the Demographic Situation in Seventeen Parishes in Shropshire, 1711-60: An Exercise Based on Parish Registers," Population Studies 17 (November 1962):126-46.

¹⁴P. Laslett and J. Harrison, "Clayworth and Cogenhoe" in Historical Essays 1600-1750 Presented to David Ogg, edited by H. E. Bell and R. L. Ollard (London: A & C Black, 1963).

¹⁵David Levine, Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism (New York: Academic Press, 1977); E. A. Wrigley, "Mortality in Pre-Industrial England: The Example of Colyton, Devon, Over Three Centuries," Daedalus 97 (Spring 1968):546-80.

¹⁶Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety.

¹⁷J. D. Chambers, "The Vale of Trent, 1670-1800: A Regional Study of Economic Change." Economic History Review, Supp.3 (1951).

¹⁸Alan Macfarlane, The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a Seventeenth Century Clergyman: An Essay in Historical Anthropology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

¹⁹Other recent local studies include David G. Hey, An English Rural Community: Myddle Under the Tudor and Stuarts (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1974); and W. M. Williams, A West Country Village: Ashworthy, Family, Kinship, and Land (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).

²⁰E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

²¹Ibid., pp. 7-8.

²²H. J. Habakkuk, "The Economic History of Modern Britain," Journal of Economic History 18 (1958):486-501; G. S. L. Tucker, "English Pre-Industrial Population Trends," Economic History Review, Second Series 16 (1963):205-18.

²³J. D. Chambers, Population, Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial England (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

²⁴W. L. Langer, "Europe's Initial Population Explosion," American Historical Review 69 (1963):1-17.

²⁵Habakkuk, "Economic History of Modern Britain"; and T. McKeown and R. G. Brown, "Medical Evidence Related to English Population Change in the Eighteenth Century," Population Studies 9 (1955-6):119-141.

²⁶ Several historians used local studies to arrive at generalizations on various specific aspects of English population history during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Family formation is the main concern of Laslett in his chapter on "Mean Household Size in England since the Sixteenth Century" and "Size and Structure of the Household in England over Three Centuries." In "Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England" E. A. Wrigley studies the incidence of deliberate control of family size by seventeenth and eighteenth century English couples. The general mobility of the pre-industrial English populace is the subject of E. J. Buckatzsch's article "The Constancy of Local Populations and Migrations in England before 1800." P. Laslett and R. Wall, ed., Household and Family in Past Times (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); P. Laslett, "Size and Structure of the Household in England over Three Centuries," Population Studies 23 (1969): 199-223; E. A. Wrigley, "Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England," Economic History Review, Second Series 19 (1966):82-109; E. J. Buckatzsch, "The Constancy of Local Populations and Migrations in England before 1800," Population Studies 5 (1951-52):62-69.

²⁷ Richard T. Vann, "Quakerism in English Society, 1655-1740: A Local Study (Buckinghamshire)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1960; R. T. Vann, The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).

²⁸ Jerry William Frost, "The Quaker Family in Colonial America: A Social History of the Society of Friends (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1968); J. W. Frost, The Quaker Family in Colonial America: A Portrait of the Society of Friends (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).

²⁹ Robert Vale Wells, "A Demographic Analysis of Some Middle Colony Quaker Families of the Eighteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1969).

³⁰ R. V. Wells, "Quaker Marriage Patterns in a Colonial Perspective," William & Mary Quarterly, Third Series 29 (1972):415-442; and R. V. Wells, "Family Size and Fertility Control in Eighteenth Century America: A Study of Quaker Families," Population Studies 25 (1971): 73-82.

³¹ John S. Rowntree, Quakerism Past and Present, Being an Inquiry into the Causes of its Decline in Great Britain and Ireland (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1859).

³² E. Isichei quotes these figures in Victorian Quakers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970). p. 112.

³³ George Fox, Journal, revised by Norman Penney (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1924).

³⁴ Joseph Besse, A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers, from 1650 to 1689, Taken from Original Records and Other Authentic Accounts, 2 vols. (London: n.p., 1753); Norman Penney, ed., First Publishers of Truth, Being Early Records of the Introduction of Quakerism into England and Wales (London: Headley Bros., 1907).

³⁵ George Lyon Turner, ed., Original Records of Early Non-Conformity Under Persecution and Indulgence, 3 vols. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911-14).

³⁶ W. C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955); W. C. Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955).

³⁷ Elbert Russell, The History of Quakerism (New York: Macmillan Co., 1942).

³⁸ Hugh Barbour, The Quakers in Puritan England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); William Wayne Spurrier, "The Persecution of the Quakers in England, 1650-1714" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1976); Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1975); C. Hill, Change and Continuity in Seventeenth Century England (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

³⁹ James Bowden, History of the Society of Friends in America, 2 vols. (London: Charles Gilpin and W. & F. G. Cash, 1850, 1854; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1972).

⁴⁰ Sidney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF QUAKERS IN ENGLAND AND NORTH ESSEX

In 1643, at the age of nineteen, George Fox, the son of a Leicestershire weaver, began a four-part search for a religious dogma in which he could believe implicitly.¹ The disparity of the religious teachings of the English clergymen and their actions troubled him, as did the pessimistic Calvinist doctrines of predestination and human depravity. By 1647 Fox, through his own experiences, had formulated the teaching which became the basis of the Society of Friends--all men are born of God Who gives to each individual a measure of divine light which can lead one to overcome the sins of the world.² From 1648 to 1650, Fox travelled as an itinerant preacher, finding followers among the nonconformists of Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, and Derbyshire. These converts called themselves at first Children of Light and later Friends.³ Fox's personality and his genius for organization enabled the Society of Friends to become one of the two survivors among the many radical religious groups that emerged during the Civil War and the Protectorate in England.⁴

During the next decade, the number of Friends increased from a few converts among Seeker and Baptist groups of the northern English counties to one of the largest nonconformist Protestant sects in Britain. From 1651 to 1654, Fox travelled throughout the northern counties where many of the future leaders of the Quaker movement joined

him. These men and women included James Naylor, William Dewsbury, Edward Burrough, and Margaret Fell who later married Fox. Following the great success of the Quakers in the northern counties, Fox and the other leaders began a campaign in the south of England. The southwest was receptive to the teachings of the itinerant ministers. Wales, Cornwall, and especially Gloucestershire provided many new converts.

Scholars have agreed that the Quakers and the other radical sects were prevalent in the northern counties of England during the last half of the seventeenth century because of the lack of interest in these areas by Anglican and Puritan clergymen. Anglican ministers preferred to serve the more prosperous parishes of the southern and eastern counties.⁵ Puritan preachers had fled the region when royalist troops occupied it during the civil war. The same circumstances explain the success of Fox and other nonconformist preachers in Cornwall and in Wales. In contrast, Quaker proselytizers travelling in the Puritan strongholds of the southeastern counties encountered hostility and persecution from both Anglicans and Puritans. Only in the clothworking area of northern Essex around the traditionally radical centers of Colchester and Coggeshall, in Bristol, and in London did Friends have the same success which they had experienced in the north and southwest.⁶ In the cities, especially in London and Bristol, Friends found many people receptive to their teachings. Poor craftsmen and laborers, mostly immigrants from the countryside, were the first to join the radical sects. The Quaker ideals of individualism and equality appealed to members of this class, as did the social services which the Society of Friends offered to members.⁷

In 1655 Quakers extended their preaching efforts outside of Eng-

land to Ireland, Scotland, and the New World. They had limited success among the English planters in Ireland, but none among the native Irish. Presbyterian Scotland provided a few converts. In the colonies of North America, Rhode Island and New Amsterdam welcomed Friends, and a large Quaker community existed on Barbados by 1660.⁸

The early "Publishers of Truth," as the Quaker ministers called themselves, preached no systemized doctrine, for conversion was an individual and mystical experience among the first Friends. There were, nonetheless, basic beliefs shared by all members of the Society of Friends. Quakers did not profess the doctrine of original sin. They did believe that all individuals were capable of achieving salvation. According to Friends, ultimate religious authority came not from Scripture but from within, from the Inner Light of Christ in each person; therefore, Quakers rejected the need for priests, rituals, and sacraments. As everyone had the same potential for salvation, men and women were equal in the sight of God.

The implications of these egalitarian beliefs threatened the privilege and power of both the hierarchy of the established Church and government officials; thus, throughout the first forty years of the Society, Friends suffered persecution from state and local officials. The most common grounds for arrest of Quakers were disruption of Church services and vagrancy. Failure to take oaths and non-payment of tithes were also frequent charges against Friends. Authorities preferred the latter charge against wealthier members of the Society, especially in the more prosperous counties such as Essex, for punishment included distraint of the accused's property as well as imprisonment. These proceedings justified the Quakers' accusation that the Anglican and

Puritan clergy were mainly mercenary in nature.⁹

The first Publishers of Truth frequently violated the law against disturbance of public worship. This law provided that anyone might address a congregation only after the regular clergyman had spoken for an hour. Visiting Quakers often felt moved to interrupt sermons of ministers with whose teachings they disagreed. Women Friends who did so seemed to be much more objectionable to authorities than their male counterparts.¹⁰ The Lord's Day Act of 1656 strengthened the existing law against the disturbance of worship services. Imprisonment was the usual punishment under the new act.¹¹

In the absence of other charges, hostile authorities could prosecute the itinerant members of the Society under the Vagrancy Act. Parliament had originally intended that this law would control the large number of beggars which resulted from increasing landlessness and poverty caused by the pressures of population growth and limited employment opportunities of the sixteenth century. This act provided that officials should arrest, whip, and return to their parish of origin all vagabonds and sturdy beggars.¹² In 1656 a new vagrancy act extended the law to include all persons travelling without sufficient cause--preaching of nonconformist beliefs was not sufficient cause for travel in seventeenth-century England.¹³

Friends viewed the Restoration in 1660 as a respite from persecution, for Charles II had promised religious toleration in the Declaration of Breda.¹⁴ Charles preferred Roman Catholicism and absolutism to English Protestantism and parliamentary control, and his policy of toleration for all religions was an attempt to prepare the way for a return to Catholicism in England as soon as conditions were favorable.

Charles also received a subsidy from Louis XIV of France which enabled the English monarch to dispense eventually with parliamentary taxation in order to maintain his government. The return of England to Roman Catholicism was a stipulation of the secret agreement between Charles and Louis. Charles kept his promise of toleration for several months despite the hostility of the Restoration Parliament, but the Venner Uprising of 1661 ended the religious liberty for Nonconformists. Venner was a leader of the Fifth Monarchists, a radical millenarian sect. The armed uprising on January 6 was their attempt to seize London and establish Christ's kingdom on earth. This unsuccessful coup gave Parliament a reason to reinstitute persecution of religious dissidents. On January 10 the government issued a proclamation declaring all religious meetings other than those held in parish churches to be seditious.¹⁵ Officials were to arrest participants of outlawed meetings and judges were to order them to swear an oath of allegiance to the king. Quakers defied the proclamation and in less than a week approximately 4,230 Friends were in prisons.¹⁶ As a result of the renewed persecution, George Fox and Richard Hubberthorne drew up a declaration which they presented to Charles II and in which they denounced all plotting and fighting, and warned Friends against involvement in worldly affairs.¹⁷ The king ordered the release of all imprisoned Quakers, but Parliament continued to enact laws against Nonconformists, such as the Clarendon Code.

The Clarendon Code contained four provisions designed to eliminate all religious dissent within the country. The Corporation Act of 1661 confined eligibility for public office to those who would receive Communion according to the rites of the Church of England. The Act of

Uniformity in 1662 expelled two thousand Puritan ministers from their livings in the Established Church. This act required that all clergymen swear their full acceptance of the entire Book of Common Prayer. In 1664 the First Conventicle Act forbade attendance of any religious rites except those of the Anglican Church. Disobedience meant imprisonment for the first and second offenses, and transportation for the third. Death was the penalty for anyone who attempted to re-enter the country after transportation. The last provision of the Clarendon Code affected the towns and cities principally. The Five Mile Act prevented any clergyman or schoolmaster from coming within five miles of a city or corporate town unless he promised never to attempt to alter the government of either the state or the Established Church.¹⁸

In May 1662, in addition to the Clarendon Code, Parliament passed a special Quaker Act. This law provided stricter penalties for all who refused to take oaths. Participation in Quaker meetings of more than four persons made Friends liable for severe fines or imprisonments for first and second offenses, and banishment for third offenses.¹⁹

In 1670 a Second Conventicle Act replaced the act of 1664. The new legislation eliminated the penalty of banishment, but it allowed justices to make forced entries of suspected meetinghouses and to use the militia to break up unlawful assemblies. One justice could convict and sentence an accused Nonconformist without a jury trial under the new act. The provision which evoked the most protest from both Nonconformists and Anglicans was that which awarded to informers one-third of all fines or distrained goods.²⁰

Despite the Clarendon Code, Charles II decided in 1672 that conditions were once again favorable for the establishment of religious

toleration in England; therefore, in accordance with his agreement with Louis XIV, Charles issued the Proclamation of Indulgence. This order suspended all penal laws against Nonconformists and Roman Catholic recusants. Quakers and other Protestant sects could gather in authorized meetinghouses. Catholics might worship in private residences.²¹ This period of toleration lasted only nine years after which public outcry induced a new Tory government to renew the persecution of all Nonconformists. The Tories enforced repressive measures especially against Quakers, who had taken an active part in attempting to elect Whig members to Parliament.²² The government utilized old statutes to ruin Dissenters economically. According to one of the laws which officials employed, the government could fine anyone over the age of sixteen twenty pounds for each month of non-attendance of church or the crown could seize and hold two-thirds of such a person's land until he attended services. Another law from the reign of Elizabeth I permitted the courts to imprison anyone accused of attending unlawful religious meetings until he conformed. If the accused failed to conform within three months, he forfeited all his estate to the king and suffered banishment.²³

When James II succeeded to the throne after the death of Charles II in 1685, William Penn used his earlier friendship with the new king to secure the release of imprisoned Friends. Penn, one of the early leaders of the Society of Friends and proprietor of the colony of Pennsylvania, was the son of Admiral William Penn who had served under James II when the latter had been High Admiral of the Royal Navy and Duke of York. Even a more zealous Catholic than Charles II, James II determined to restore Catholicism as the state religion of Britain. As did

Charles, James began by issuing a general pardon and a Declaration of Indulgence which suspended all penal laws against Catholics and Nonconformists.²⁴ This policy of religious toleration survived the Glorious Revolution of 1688. In 1689 Parliament passed the Toleration Act at the request of William of Orange.

The persecutions brought great hardships to most Friends, but at the same time, these sufferings demonstrated the need for some organization within the Society of Friends to provide for afflicted members. The consequences of unrestrained individualism and enthusiasm, as James Naylor and John Perrot had demonstrated in the early years of the Society's development, also convinced Fox and other leaders of the necessity of a structure to control such tendencies which could divide the Society.²⁵ George Fox assumed the responsibility of imposing discipline on members of the most individualistic of the radical English sects.²⁶

The basic units of the Society of Friends were the weekly meetings of small local groups. Monthly meetings included members from several weekly meetings, and these monthly meetings became the regional administrative units in charge of providing aid for imprisoned Friends and their families and for the poor. Marriages and the registration of births and deaths were also the responsibilities of the monthly meetings. As early as 1656, general meetings whose members represented several monthly meetings met in the northern counties of England. These general meetings evolved into the quarterly meetings that encompassed a county-wide area and eventually into the London Yearly Meeting consisting of Friends from every part of the nation. The yearly meetings were to issue advice to all meetings and to settle disputes or to

answer questions that the monthly or quarterly meetings could not.

Fox established two additional organizations during the 1670s. The first was the Morning Meeting, the chief functions of which were to distribute members in the London area and to supervise all publications by members of the Society. The Morning Meeting soon acquired the duties of dealing with members accused of moral lapses and of acting for the entire Society in emergencies.²⁷ The second of the additional organizations was the Meeting for Sufferings which consisted of London Quakers who corresponded with Friends in the various counties. These Quakers met quarterly with the Morning Meeting, and at least one member from each county also attended this session. After recording the sufferings of Friends in Great Britain as well as in the colonies, the Meeting for Sufferings presented these accounts to the authorities in order to make every effort to gain relief for the members of the Society experiencing imprisonment or financial hardships due to distraint of goods. With the cessation of persecutions, this organization eventually became the legal representative of the yearly meeting.²⁸

This organization of the Society of Friends resulted in its first major schism. Under the leadership of John Wilkinson and John Story, two of the first Publishers of Truth, many Quakers separated from Fox and his adherents.²⁹ The Wilkinson-Story faction objected primarily to the subjugation of the spiritual experience of the individual to the will of the group. They denied the right of a meeting to judge the actions of its members, condemned the provisions which authorized the Morning Meeting to supervise all publications, and protested the establishment of separate women's meetings at the local level. Finally, this opposition group disputed the new authoritarian role that

Fox had assumed, although they never denied his position as spiritual leader of the Society. This controversy continued until the deaths of Wilkinson and Story in 1681 and 1682 and, although most Quakers remained with Fox, a large number of Friends left the Society during these years.³⁰

While the first generations of Quakers had experienced almost constant persecution and had demonstrated an aggressive zeal in their preaching and proselytizing, the new generation after 1685 was more concerned with preserving the records of the founders and with legalism.³¹ Freedom from persecution also meant an opportunity for Friends to prosper due to their reputation for honesty in business and their simple mode of living. Many spiritual leaders of the Society in the last years of the seventeenth century expressed a concern for the increasing worldliness of members.

The zeal and personal conversions that had characterized the earlier generations of Quakers decreased in importance throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Quietism was the predominant theme of Friends' existence during these years.³² This new attitude and the adoption of birthright membership resulted in the disappearance of evangelical enthusiasm and also in a decline in membership, as the Society ceased to seek new members actively.

This same pattern of development and persecution of the Society of Friends occurred in the prosperous region of north-central Essex, the most notable Quaker center, after London, in the eastern counties, which were traditionally strongholds of Puritanism.³³ North-central Essex, the most densely populated and most prosperous sector of the county in the seventeenth century, is located fifty miles northeast of London in

the eastern lowlands of Britain. The countryside was and is mainly pastoral, devoted to the grazing of sheep and cattle. In 1650, a few large farms interspersed with many small farms surrounded numerous nucleated villages, many situated along the River Colne that flows through the center of the area. Colchester was the chief market center for the area, supplying corn and cattle to London and woolen cloth to the continent.³⁴

Several factors contributed to the establishment of a large concentration of Quakers in this district of northern Essex.³⁵ The Colchester-Coggeshall area had been a Lollard center in the fourteenth century and active Lollard groups still existed there in the early sixteenth century.³⁶ Under the leadership of the Lollard John Ball, a priest of Colchester, this region had supplied the largest contingent of the Peasant's Revolt of 1381.³⁷ In the fifteenth century, Lollard groups from northern Essex joined Sir John Oldcastle's attempt to overthrow the government of Henry V.³⁸ Although the government captured and punished all the participants in the revolt, Lollardy remained strong in the Colchester area. In 1528 the Vicar General uncovered a widespread network of Lollard groups which had developed since the fifteenth century.³⁹ This discovery caused Bishop Stokesley of London to initiate purges throughout the country. Of the more than two hundred heretics alleged to have abjured after conviction, over half were from Colchester, Steeple Bumpstead, Birdbrook, and other North Essex villages.⁴⁰

The beliefs professed by the Lollards were similar to those which later radical Protestant sects, including the Quakers, preached. They repudiated the sacrament of penance and denied the doctrine of Transub-

stantiation, calling the host a mere piece of bread. The Essex group also attacked the use of images.⁴¹ They believed that the Word of God in the Bible was the only true religious authority and would not sanction any practice which had no precedent in Scripture. Finally, the Lollards taught that any layman was as qualified as any priest to preach.⁴²

As early as 1527 the Essex Lollards experienced the influence of continental Protestantism. In this year, John Tyball, a Lollard and husbandman from Steeple Bumpstead, testified in court that he and a friend had purchased a copy of Tyndale's English version of the New Testament, printed in Antwerp.⁴³ Many Lollards gained a knowledge of Lutheranism by reading Tyndale's works and although the Lollards agreed with Luther's attacks on rituals, confession, and purgatory, they were not in sympathy either with his or Calvin's teachings concerning the sacraments, predestination, and the depravity of man.⁴⁴

During the middle of the sixteenth century, even more radical continental beliefs gained acceptance in the Lollard areas of northern Essex. Anabaptist teachings influenced a group which originally had formed in Kent in 1549 under the leadership of Henry Hart but which had moved to Bocking in Essex between June 1550 and January 1551 to escape persecution. Sixty members of the sect settled in Bocking where they formed the first Nonconformist congregation in England. The beliefs of this group were also similar to those of the Lollards in that both denied predestination and both viewed the sacraments as superstitious rituals. Hart's followers also denied that infants were born with original sin.⁴⁵

Anabaptist influences were also evident in the teachings of the

Family of Love, which also first appeared in Kent, but which gained its greatest support in the northern counties of England and in northern Essex. Hendrik Niclaes, who founded this pantheistic and antinomian sect in the Netherlands in 1550, had been a disciple of the Anabaptist Thomas Muntzer. An itinerant Dutch joiner, Christopher Vitteis, propagated the Familists' beliefs in England beginning in 1552.⁴⁶ The Familists teachings foreshadowed those of George Fox and his followers.⁴⁷ Niclaes's disciples believed that only the spirit of God within a person could enable one to understand Scripture, and that once a believer reached this understanding, he or she would recapture the state of innocence which had existed before the Fall. Familists also required their ministers to be itinerants as the apostles had been.⁴⁸ The Quaker Publishers of Truth later followed this same practice.

The teachings of the Dutch Anabaptists were not the only influences from the Netherlands to have an effect on the development of nonconformity in the Colchester-Coggeshall area. The Spanish repression of Protestantism in the southern provinces of the Netherlands during the last half of the sixteenth century forced large numbers of Protestants to leave. Almost every community in Flanders and Brabant lost one-half to two-thirds of its inhabitants. The population of the clothworking town of Hondschoote declined from 18,000 in 1560 to 385 in 1584. Other Flemish villages experienced similar depopulation during this time and many never recovered.⁴⁹ Their residents fled to Leiden, Germany, and East Anglia, where the majority settled in Colchester, Coggeshall, Halstead, and Braintree in northern Essex.⁵⁰ By 1570 both Halstead and Colchester contained over 200 "Dutchmen."⁵¹ These immigrants not only contributed to the economic growth of the area by introducing the

manufacture of the new draperies, they also provided a base for the growth of nonconformist religions which became more prevalent in the mid-seventeenth century in England.⁵²

During the seventeenth century radical Protestant sects found many converts among the northern Essex population with its Lollard traditions and Anabaptist influences. The Brownists established a congregation in Colchester in 1640 and by 1649 Coggeshall contained a substantial number of Diggers.⁵³ The Baptists also had attracted a large following in both towns. It was, however, the Quakers who attracted the most converts and who most troubled the Puritan clergy of the region.⁵⁴ The first Publisher of Truth to arrive in northern Essex was James Parnell, a youth of nineteen whom George Fox had converted three years earlier at Carlisle.⁵⁵ Parnell travelled throughout the area visiting Witham, Felsted, and Halstead before arriving at Colchester in June 1655. He remained in the town for ten days, winning many converts especially among the wealthy merchants. Several of these new Friends became important members of the Society.⁵⁶

After ten days, Parnell travelled to Coggeshall. Here he attended an anti-Quaker meeting after which the Puritan magistrates arrested him for causing a riot. The authorities returned him to Colchester and imprisoned him in the castle for eight months. While in prison, Parnell began a forty-day fast in April 1656, but at the end of ten days, weak from lack of food and from injuries received in a fall from his cell, he died, becoming the first martyr of the Society of Friends.⁵⁷

George Fox also came to Essex in 1655. He conducted a well-attended meeting in Coggeshall and five days later, preached at Colchester.

Here he also engaged in debates with Puritan and Independent ministers. Fox returned to this region many times during his life and he always preached to large meetings.⁵⁸

Quakers established meetings in the small villages of the region as well as in towns of Colchester and Coggeshall. The vicar of Earls Colne, Ralph Josselin, noted the existence of Friends in his village in July 1655 when Quakers nailed a paper on the door of the parish church. Josselin also worried about the growth of the sect's popularity in the neighboring villages of Gaines Colne, "the quaker's nest," and White Colne.⁵⁹ By 1674 Friends in Earls Colne had built a substantial meetinghouse, financed by several wealthy local merchants. By 1679, they had their own burial ground.⁶⁰

From the new converts in northern Essex came several leaders of the Society and also many of the first missionaries to travel to the colonies in North America. Benjamin Furly, the wealthiest merchant in Colchester, became William Penn's agent on the European continent, a translator-publisher of the Society in Holland, and co-author with George Fox of "A Battledoor for Teachers and Professors to learn Singular and Plural, etc."⁶¹ One of Parnell's first converts, Stephen Crisp, became a travelling preacher and one of the most effective pamphleteers for the Society.⁶² Another Publisher of Truth from this area was William Allen of Halstead and Earls Colne.⁶³ George Rofe of Halstead, Thomas Turner of Coggeshall, Thomas Thompson of Saffron Walden, and John Estaugh of Dunmow were among the first travelling preachers to reach North America.⁶⁴

Friends in northern Essex shared in the sufferings as well as in the evangelical enthusiasm of the Society. Quakers in this area, the

most prosperous in England at this time, suffered great financial losses. At least 172 Friends in northern Essex had their goods distrained during the reign of Charles II. The loss amounted to more than £2,290. Authorities placed another 277 Quakers in jail during this same period.⁶⁵ The mayor of Colchester in 1663 ordered the closing of the meetinghouse in that town and the arrest of 60 members. London dispatched a troop of cavalry to Colchester to aid the magistrates in dispersing the members of the Society who continued to meet each week throughout the winter in the street outside the closed meetinghouse.⁶⁶

In 1670, the mayor, William Moore, again ordered the closing of the Colchester meetinghouse. Officials boarded and bricked up the building twice that winter, forcing Friends to convene their meetings in the street once again. This time town officials permitted the street meetings to take place without interference, and eventually the mayor agreed to license the use of the meetinghouse by the Quakers.⁶⁷

After 1670, Friends in Essex continued to experience some arrests and distraint of property by the courts, but local authorities were not extremely zealous in persecuting Quakers who usually were prominent and wealthy members of the communities in which they resided. A justice in 1670 fined a churchwarden, two constables, and four overseers in Coggeshall five pounds each for neglect of duty. He accused them of showing insufficient enthusiasm in distraining the goods of accused Friends.⁶⁸

The lack of zeal on the part of local officials and the nationwide cessation of religious persecution after 1689 permitted the Quakers of northern Essex to prosper and increase their membership throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century. During the first half of the

eighteenth century, the factors of birthright membership and an emphasis on Quietism had the same effect on the Society in this region as they did on the Society worldwide--a marked decrease in membership. In the case of northern Essex, however, external economic factors beyond the control of the Quakers and general demographic patterns contributed as much to the decline in their membership as did the developments within the Society itself.⁶⁹

ENDNOTES

- ¹W. C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 28.
- ²Ibid., p. 36; Elbert Russell, The History of Quakerism (New York: Macmillan Co., 1942), p. 30.
- ³Russell, History of Quakerism, p. 30.
- ⁴The Baptists comprised the only other radical sect which has survived until the present.
- ⁵Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 75.
- ⁶Russell, History of Quakerism, pp. 33-34.
- ⁷Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (New York: Scribner, 1971), p. 153.
- ⁸Joseph Besse, A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers, from 1650 to 1689, Taken from Original Records and Other Authentic Accounts, 2 vols. (London: n.p., 1753), 2:278, 371.
- ⁹Hill, World Turned Upside Down, p. 75.
- ¹⁰Russell, History of Quakerism, p. 60.
- ¹¹Hill, World Turned Upside Down, p. 106.
- ¹²Russell, History of Quakerism, pp. 61-62; A. L. Beier, "Vagrants and the Social Order in Elizabethan England," Past and Present 64 (1974): 12, 21.
- ¹³Hill, World Turned Upside Down, p. 106.
- ¹⁴Precisely, Charles II had promised "a liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted, or called in question for differences of opinion in the matter of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom." Quoted in Russell, History of Quakerism, p. 88.
- ¹⁵Henry W. Clark, History of English Nonconformity, 2 vols. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1911; reprint ed., 1965), 2:21.

¹⁶W. C. Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 9.

¹⁷William Wayne Spurrier, "The Persecution of the Quakers in England, 1650-1714" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1976), p. 31.

¹⁸Russell, History of Quakerism, pp. 91-92; Braithwaite, Second Period, pp. 22-23.

¹⁹Clark, English Nonconformity, 2:44.

²⁰Russell, History of Quakerism, p. 94.

²¹Ibid., p. 100.

²²The Whigs had advocated religious toleration for Protestant Non-conformists, and William Penn and other influential Friends had given them support; Russell, History of Quakerism, p. 102.

²³Ibid., pp. 102-103.

²⁴Ibid., p. 104.

²⁵James Nayler, an early leader of the Quakers, made a symbolic entrance into the city of Bristol in 1656. He rode a donkey and his female companions strew palms in his path. Parliament found Nayler guilty of blasphemy and sentenced him to be whipped, to have his tongue bored through with a hot iron, and to have his forehead branded with the letter B.

John Perrot, once a prisoner of the Inquisition in Rome, preached a more individualistic approach to religion than even George Fox. Perrot objected to the practices of holding meetings at pre-arranged times and places. He also protested the custom of Quaker men removing their hats during prayers as a sign of reverence. For a short while in 1661 and 1662 Perrot attracted many followers and became a divisive element in the Society. He left England in 1662 to travel to Barbados. Russell, History of Quakerism, pp. 68-69, 127-128.

²⁶Hill, World Turned Upside Down, p. 252.

²⁷Russell, History of Quakerism, p. 137.

²⁸Ibid., p. 138.

²⁹Ironically, the Wilkinson-Story faction began in the same northern regions as had the original Quaker movement. Russell, History of Quakerism, p. 142.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 143, 147.

³¹Margaret Fell Fox was greatly concerned that this emphasis upon legalities would compromise the true spirit of the Society which her husband had helped to establish. In a letter to Friends in 1700 she urged members to concentrate more on "the clothing that God puts on us" than on "silly, outside, imaginary practices" such as the wearing of only somber colors. Cited in Russell, History of Quakerism, p. 194.

³²Ibid., p. 233.

³³Braithwaite describes this area of Essex in which Parnell worked as a place where "there was a leaven of waiting people, who were weary with running to and fro"; Braithwaite, Beginnings of Quakerism, p. 189.

³⁴K. H. Burley, "The Economic Development of Essex in the Later Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1957), pp. 45-48; Joah Thirsk, The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 6 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1967), 4:54.

³⁵Richard Vann states to the contrary in The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755 that he knows of no convincing explanation for this concentration of Quakers in an otherwise predominantly Puritan center. Vann cites Hugh Barbour's argument in The Quakers in Puritan England that "The general coldness of the eastern counties to Quakerism was related to the strength of Puritan parishes. Local factors must have been involved in the growth of the strongholds at Norwich, Coggeshall, and Colchester." Van then adds that "since no 'local factors' are specified, and since Norwich, Coggeshall, and Colchester also possessed strong Puritan parishes, it is by no means clear why Barbour considers them exceptional"; Vann, Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755 (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1969) pp. 15-16; Barbour, The Quakers in Puritan England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 86 and 167.

³⁶Lollards were the followers of John Wycliffe in the fourteenth century and those who continued to advocate his teachings during later centuries. They wished to replace the Latin Bible with vernacular translations and emphasized preaching of the Word more than the sacraments, rituals, or good works; A. G. Dickens, Reformation and Society in Sixteenth Century Europe (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966; reprint ed., New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1979), pp. 14-15.

³⁷William Andrews, ed., Bygone Essex (London: Simpkin, Marshall Hamilton, Kent and Co., Ltd., 1892), p. 98; Reginald Turnor and Phoebe Fenwick Gaye, Southeast England: Kent and Essex (London: Elek Books, 1956), p. 165.

³⁸Sir John Oldcastle had served Henry V loyally until 1413 when the clergy of London accused him of Lollardy. The churchmen obtained a confiction of heresy. Oldcastle refused to recant and the ecclesiastical court sentenced him to be burned. The king ordered a stay of execution, but Oldcastle used the opportunity to escape from the Tower. While in hiding with a Lollard bookseller in Smithfield, Oldcastle formulated a plan to overthrow the government, set himself up as regent, and reform the Church by force. Several reluctant participants of the

planned revolt revealed the plot to the authorities and Oldcastle and his followers from among the Lollard groups of Bristol, the Midlands, and Essex found themselves arrested as soon as they entered London. The capture and execution of Sir John Oldcastle and the rebels in 1414 marked the end of humane treatment of heretics in England; Claire Cross, Church and People, 1450-1660: The Triumph of the Laity in the English Church (Atlantic Highland, NJ: Humanities Press, 1976), pp. 25-26.

³⁹Ibid., p. 38.

⁴⁰A. G. Dickens, The English Reformation (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 29.

⁴¹Incidences of iconoclasm occurred in northern Essex in 1532, the most publicized case being that of a group of people who destroyed a large crucifix which stood at a crossroads in Coggeshall; Cross, Church and People, p. 77.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 38-41.

⁴³Dickens, English Reformation, p. 33.

⁴⁴Cross, Church and People, p. 74.

⁴⁵Champlin Burrage, The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550-1641), 2 vols. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964; reprint ed., 1912), 1:50-53; and Braithwaite, Beginnings of Quakerism, p. 5.

⁴⁶Hill, World Turned Upside Down, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁷Niclaes's book was among the volumes in George Fox's library; Braithwaite, Beginnings of Quakerism, p. 23.

⁴⁸Hill, World Turned Upside Down, p. 27.

⁴⁹Geoffrey Parker, Spain and the Netherlands, 1559-1659: Ten Studies (Short Hills, NJ: Enslow Publications, 1979), pp. 180-183.

⁵⁰Peter Clark and Paul Slack, English Towns in Transition, 1500-1700 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 93; B. A. Holderness, Pre-Industrial England: Economy and Society, 1500-1700 (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1976), p. 91; and Turnor and Gaye, Southeast England, p. 168.

⁵¹This information comes from a report of the Colchester bailiffs to the Privy Council in 1570 as quoted by Charles Wilson in England's Apprenticeship, 1603-1763 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 75.

⁵²Clark and Slack, English Towns, p. 94.

⁵³The Brownists consisted of followers of Robert Browne and Robert Harrison who formed a separatist movement in the 1580s. Browne believed that the Church of England was too corrupt for true Christians to attend and that the true church was a voluntary gathering based on a covenant to which all members subscribed. Patrick McGrath, Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I (New York: Walker & Co., 1967), pp. 304-305; and Burrage, Early English Dissenters, 1:192, 205.

Teh Diggers, another radical sect, concerned themselves not only with religious reform but also with economic reform. In addition to advocating the abolition of ministers, tithes, the Bible, and the Sabbath, the Diggers urged the abolition of private property rights and the establishment of agrarian communism in England. Hill, World Turned Upside Down, pp. 110-117.

⁵⁴Alan Macfarlane, ed., The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683 (Oxford: British Academy, 1976), pp. 348-380. While Josselin never mentions other sects in his diary, he notes the existence and the growth in membership of the Society of Friends numerous times.

⁵⁵George Fox, Journal, revised by Norman Penney (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1924), p. 89.

⁵⁶Norman Penney, ed., First Publishers of Truth, being Early Records of the Introduction of Quakerism into England and Wales (London: Headley Bros., 1907), pp. 91, 96.

⁵⁷Hugh Barbour, The Quakers in Puritan England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 54; Penney, First Publishers of Truth, p. 94.

⁵⁸Fox, Journal, pp. 110-111, 343.

⁵⁹Macfarlane, Diary, pp. 348, 350, 380.

⁶⁰Alan Macfarlane, The Family Life of Ralph Josselin: An Essay in Historical Anthropology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 27; a transcribed copy of the transfer of property from Abraham Vangaver to the Quaker meeting of Earls Colne in 1674 is included in the Quaker Records in the microfilmed collection of Records of an English Village, Earls Colne, 1400-1750, compiled by Alan Macfarlane of Cambridge University.

⁶¹Fox, Journal, p. 198; Catherine Owens Peare, William Penn: A Biography (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), pp. 138, 220. Furly and Fox wrote "The Battledoor" as a defense of the Quakers' use of thee and thou when addressing single persons.

⁶²Barbour, Quakers in Puritan England, p. 113.

⁶³Macfarlane, Diary, p. 675.

⁶⁴James Bowden, History of the Society of Friends in America, 2 vols. (London: Charles Gilpin and W. & F. G. Cash, 1850, 1854; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1972), 1:360-361, 222, 224.

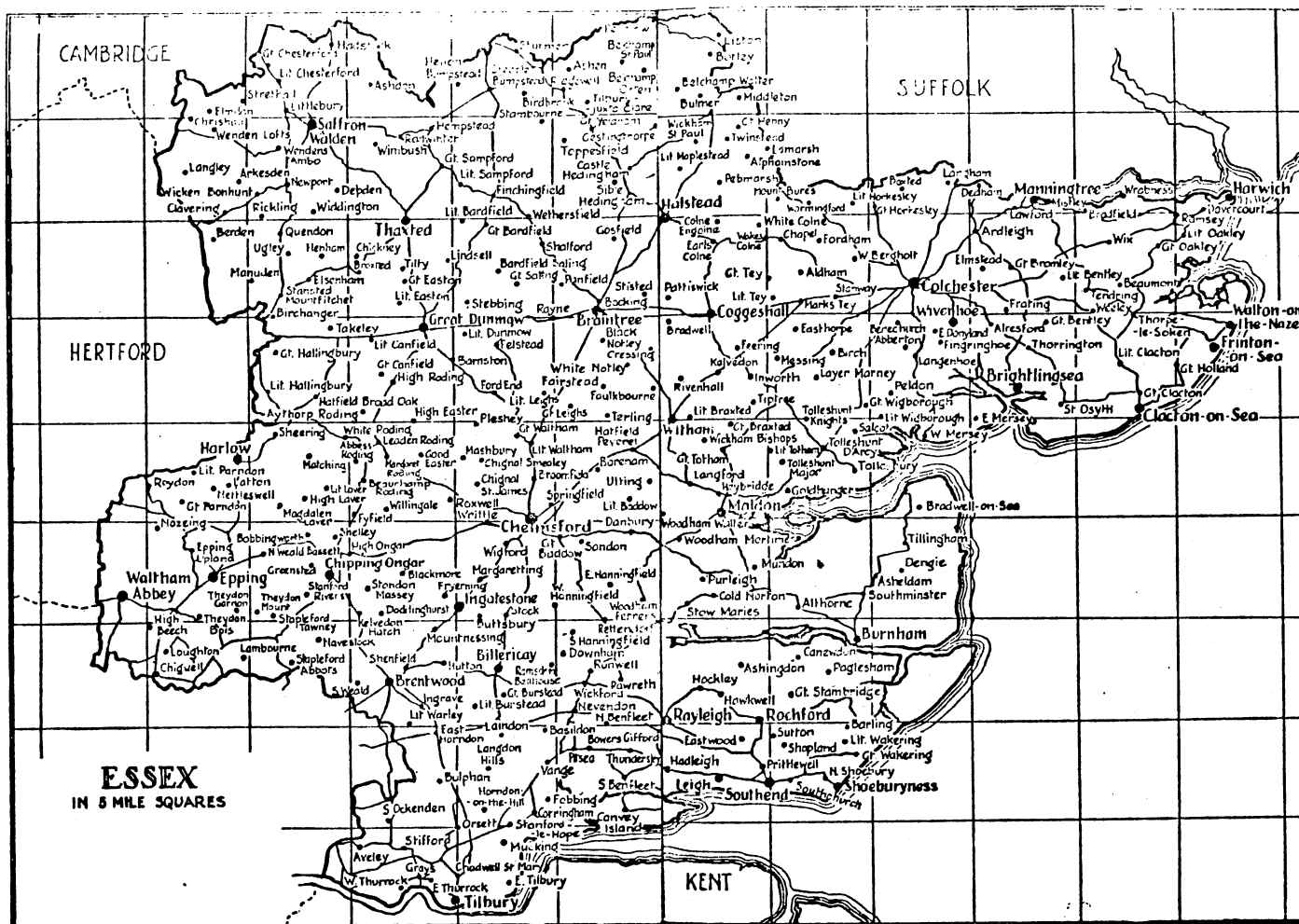
⁶⁵Spurrier, "Persecution of the Quakers," p. 116.

⁶⁶Penney, First Publishers of Truth, pp. 94-95.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 95, 102.

⁶⁸Besse, Sufferings, pp. 24-27.

⁶⁹Economic and demographic factors which affected the membership of the Society of Friends in northern Essex will be discussed in the final chapter.



MAP OF ESSEX IN 5 MILE SQUARES

Source: Arthur Mee, The King's England: Essex (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), pp. vi-vii.

CHAPTER III

THE QUAKERS OF EARLS COLNE

1655-1699

The village of Earls Colne is situated on the River Colne among the low hills of the boulder clay plateau of north-central Essex. According to the Essex county hearth tax records of 1670, the village consisted of 207 dwellings.¹ Approximately two-thirds of these houses, many subdivided, flanked the main street, known as Hill Street; the remaining residences were farm houses or cottages located on the outlying small landholdings that surrounded the village.² Shops occupied the front portions of several of the buildings along Hill Street and there was a market place with open stalls in the center of the community. The Church of St. Andrew and the Harlakenden manor house, built on the site of a dissolved Benedictine Priory, dominated the village landscape.³

The crofts, or enclosed fields, of the countryside served not only as pastures but, even more importantly, as land for the cultivation of grains, hops, fruits, and vegetables--crops which supplied the markets of the numerous clothproducing towns of northern Essex. Coggeshall, five miles south of Earls Colne, and Colchester, ten miles to the east, received most of the villagers' produce. The farms of the Earls Colne area also supplied food for the rapidly increasing population of seventeenth-century London, located forty miles to the southwest. Farmers

transported corps intended for the London market to Colchester along the main Cambridge-Colchester highway, a portion of which passed through the center of Earls Colne. From Colchester, ships carried the produce to the capital city.⁴ In its role as supplier of agricultural products to London and the manufacturing towns of northern Essex, Earls Colne was similar to many other villages engaged in commercial agriculture throughout the county of Essex in the seventeenth century.

The location of Earls Colne near the center of one of the most prosperous textile-producing areas of England caused the village to differ, however, from communities in the south and west of Essex, such as Terling, a village with a strictly agricultural economy located only ten miles south of Earls Colne. Whereas most of the population of Terling engaged solely in food production for the commercial market, a considerable number of Earls Colne residents found employment in one of the clothing trades.⁵ In this respect, Earls Colne reflected more accurately the economic situation peculiar to the communities of the north-central and northeastern portions of Essex--a situation that began with the arrival in Colchester during the 1560s and 1570s of Flemish and Brabançon immigrants fleeing the Duke of Alva's forces in Flanders and Brabant. These immigrants from the textile centers of the Netherlands brought with them the techniques of making baize and serge cloths--bays and says--improved fabrics of combed wool. The introduction of the New Draperies helped revitalize the British cloth industry and brought prosperity to the Colchester area.⁶ By the seventeenth century, the Flemish and the manufacture of bays and says had spread westward to Halstead, Coggeshall, and Earls Colne.⁷ In the 1650s and 1660s, 38 per cent of the population in the Earls Colne region, which

included those living within a five-mile radius of Earls Colne, were involved in some aspect of textile manufacturing.⁸

The distribution of occupations among the Quakers of the area reflected the predominance of the textile industry in this region. Table I lists the occupations of ninety-one males who became members of the Society of Friends before 1700, and for whom documents record an occupation.⁹ Of these ninety-one Friends, thirty eight or 41.7 per cent were engaged in the production of cloth. A third of these persons were merchants, generally wealthy and respected members of the community. Those involved in cloth making, such as weavers, woolcombers, and yarnmakers, constituted the remaining two-thirds of this group. The predominance of members involved in the clothing trades among the Quakers of the Earls Colne area reflects the popularity of the teachings of the Society among those engaged in the manufacture of cloth throughout England. As shown in Table II, clothiers, glovers, fellmongers, weavers, drapers, fullers, woocombers, and other merchants and clothworkers comprised 32.0 per cent of the total membership of the Society of Friends in England in the seventeenth century. Cloth merchants and craftsmen accounted for 41.7 per cent of the Quakers in the Earls Colne region and this higher percentage indicates the importance of the production of cloth in north-central Essex.

As Tables I and II illustrate, the Society of Friends attracted few laborers, servants, or poor farmers; instead, the middle classes accounted for the majority of the membership in the Earls Colne area, as well as throughout England. Over 70 per cent of those engaged in agriculture who joined the Society in the Earls Colne area were yeoman. Craftsmen, shopkeepers, and tradesmen who had profited by satisfying

the increased demand for consumer goods during the seventeenth century were also prominent among meeting memberships. Increased literacy among this sector of northern Essex society and the appeal of the egalitarianism professed by Friends were the most prominent reasons for the attraction of the Society for these citizens throughout the second half of the century, despite continual persecution, both physical and economic, until 1670.

TABLE I
OCCUPATION OF QUAKERS, EARLS COLNE AREA, 1655-1699

Occupation	Number	Per cent	Per cent Total Male Quaker Population*	
Gentlemen & Professional			2.1	
Cloth Producers	38	41.7	23.2	
Merchants	13	14.3	7.9	
Craftsmen	25	27.4	15.3	
Other Craftsmen	19	20.9	11.6	
Tradesmen	9	9.9	5.5	
Agricultural	23	25.3	14.0	
Yeoman	17	18.7	2.4	
Husbandmen	4	4.4	1.2	
Laborers	2	2.2		
TOTAL	91	100.0	55.5	

*The total male Quaker population during this period was 164. Friends occupations appear on records comprised 55.5 per cent of the total; therefore, it is possible that a change in occupational distribution would occur if all occupations were known.

Source: Alan Macfarlane, ed., Records of An English Village (microform): Earls Colne 1400-1750 (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healy, 1980-81) Quaker Register: Monthly Meeting marriage certificates (documents 93.00005-93.00712); Quarterly meeting, marriage certificates (document 97.00005-102.01775).

TABLE II

OCCUPATIONS OF EARLS COLNE QUAKERS COMPARED TO ENTIRE QUAKER
POPULATION OF ENGLAND IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Occupation	Earls Colne*	Per cent Total Male Quaker Population of Earls Colne	England
Textiles**	41.7	(23.2)	32.0
Agricultural	23.1	(12.8)	27.0
Other Crafts	20.9	(11.6)	19.0
Other merchants	-	-	1.5
Tradesmen	9.9	(5.5)	11.0
Professional	1.1	(.6)	1.5
Gentlemen	1.1	(.6)	.9
Laborers and servants	2.2	(1.2)	7.1
TOTAL	100.0	(55.5)	100.0

*These percentages are based on the portion of the meeting membership for which occupational records are available. The closeness of the pattern between these Quakers of the Earls Colne area and the total Quaker population of England suggests that the percentages of known occupations of Earls Colne Friends are reflective of the actual occupational distribution of all the male Quakers of the district.

**This category includes merchants and artisans.

Sources: Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750. William Wayne Spurrier, "The Persecution of the Quakers in England, 1650-1714" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1976), p. 233.

From 1590 to 1640, the expansion of educational facilities and the increase in the number of licensed schoolmasters throughout Essex substantially raised the literacy rate of the county. By 1640, 60.0 to 70.0 per cent of the male population of the county were literate.¹⁰ During the second half of the seventeenth century, the number of schools and masters declined due in part to civil war, and consequently, the literacy rate also declined. By 1690, only 50.0 to 55.0 per cent of the male population of Essex were literate.¹¹ In the village of Earls Colne, only ninety-one of the 160 males signing the Association Rolls in 1696 were able to affix their signature. This denotes a literacy rate for the village of approximately 58.0 per cent.¹² Throughout the county, laborers, servants, and women remained largely illiterate.¹³

Among those persons who joined the Society of Friends in the Earls Colne area from 1653 to 1699, literacy was extremely high in comparison to other sections of Essex. Marriage certificates and wills permit the verification of the literacy of more than 35 per cent of male Friends and of 26 per cent of female Friends in the region. Of the males, 93.1 per cent could sign their names and 65.9 per cent of the females could do likewise. These figures contrast sharply with those of the levels of literacy throughout the rest of Essex and especially with those of Terling, which are presented in Table III.

This high degree of literacy had enabled these members of a prospering middle class to explore alternative religious theories such as those of George Fox and James Parnell.¹⁴ As the economic status of these literate merchants, craftsmen, tradesmen, yeoman, and their wives and daughters improved, they became increasingly dissatisfied with the hierarchical control of religion in England. The egalitarian tenets of

the Society of Friends attracted many of the most radical of this segment of society. These people, united many times by business connections and marriage as well as by religion, sustained each other during the years of persecution from 1655 to 1670. During the same period, the persecution of Quakers in northern Essex usually took the form of fines or distraint of property--a method local puritan authorities believed to cause more distress than imprisonment among the prosperous Friends of the region. Many local magistrates, however, demonstrated a lack of enthusiasm in prosecuting Quakers after 1670, and the Society continued to increase its membership and to prosper throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century.¹⁵

TABLE III

LEVEL OF LITERACY IN TERLING COMPARED TO QUAKERS OF EARLS COLNE

	Terling		Earls Colne Quakers	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Men	54 of 76	71.1	54 of 58	93.1
Women	2 of 7	28.6	27 of 41	65.9

Sources: Keith Wrightson and David Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700 (New York: Academic Press, 1979), p. 146; Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Quarterly meeting marriage certificates (documents 97.00005-102.01775); Probate Records (documents 59.00597-61.01280).

Tables IV and V indicate the extent of wealth among the Quakers of the village of Earls Colne, and the figures presented for the village most likely reflect the economic situation of Friends in the entire seventy-eight square mile area around Earls Colne, as the economy of the surrounding villages was similar to that of Earls Colne. The hearth distribution in Earls Colne in 1670 lists 207 households of which 118 (57 per cent) were exempt from taxation. Of the nine Quaker households in the village, all paid the hearth tax. Households with less than four hearths accounted for 65.2 per cent of the number of households taxed in Earls Colne, while households with four or more hearths totalled 88.9 per cent of the total households owned by Friends. Whereas Quaker households constituted only 4.35 per cent of the total households, they accounted for 10.11 per cent of households taxed in the village that year. Throughout northern Essex in 1670, 21.4 per cent of households taxed had more than four hearths, while households of Friends with five or more hearths accounted for two-thirds of Quaker households assessed in Earls Colne. These figures demonstrate that the Quaker families of Earls Colne had, for the most part, a higher economic status than the majority of villagers or than the majority of the population of northern Essex.

The economic prosperity of north-central Essex county and especially of the Quakers living within the Earls Colne area had a substantial effect upon family formation among the members of the Halstead, Coggeshall, and Earls Colne meetings during the last half of the seventeenth century. Table VI compares the ages at first marriage between the Earls Colne area Quakers and the population of ten other English communities during this time period. While the age at first marriage

of the male Quakers is just slightly below the mean for all males in the sample, the age for female Quakers is 1.2 years less than the mean age of first marriage among all women included in the sample. Only Terling, another Essex community, lists a lower age of first marriage among its female inhabitants.¹⁶ While a lack of employment opportunities, both in agriculture and manufacturing, and a limited amount of available arable land forced couples to delay marriage in many areas of England at this time, the economic security of the Essex Quakers permitted earlier marriages within the sect. The dependence on land that existed throughout much of the rest of England had little effect on the majority of the Quaker community of northern Essex, as two-thirds of the members of the Society were engaged either in some aspects of the prosperous cloth trade or in providing retail goods and services for the local population.

Favorable economic factors were not, however, the only reasons for a lower age of first marriage among the Quakers of the Earls Colne area. Prosperity only facilitated what non-conformity had made necessary. Religious beliefs prohibited members of the Society of Friends from marrying outside the sect. This sanction greatly limited the choice of marriage partners available to young male Quakers. Forced either to look outside the area for a mate or to choose among the small number of eligible female Friends who were generally younger than most women marrying for the first time in England, most Quaker men selected a mate from their own area. Only thirteen per cent of Friends marrying in the three meetings of the north-central Essex area during the period 1655-1699 came from a meeting more than ten miles from Earls Colne.¹⁷ The absence of illegitimate births and pre-marital pregnancies among

the Friends of the area reflects also the moral standards of the Quaker religion and perhaps an emphasis on early marriages to avoid such circumstances.¹⁸

TABLE IV
HEARTH DISTRIBUTION EARLS COLNE, 1670

Number of Hearths	Total	Quaker
1	127 (118 exempt)	1
2	35	-
3	13	-
4	11	2
5	8	2
6	8	2
7	2	2
8 or more	2	-
Total Households	207	9
Total Households Taxed	89	9

Source: Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Hearth Tax Rolls, 1670 (documents 135.00005-135.01169).

TABLE V
HEARTH TAX COMPARISON, PERCENTAGES, 1670

Number of Hearths Taxed	N. Essex*	Earls Colne	Quakers
1-2	44.4	50.6	11.1
3	20.0	14.6	-
4	14.1	12.4	22.2
5-9	18.8	20.2	66.7
10-16	2.3	1.1	-
17 or more	.3	1.1	-
Households Taxed	4811	89	9
Per cent of Total	46.8	43.0	100.0

Sources: K. H. Burley, "The Economic Development of Essex in the Later Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1956), pp. 348; Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Hearth Tax Rolls, 1670 (documents 135.00005-135.01169).

*This column does not total 100.0 per cent as figures are quoted from Burley's dissertation.

This lower age of first marriage among the Quaker women was one cause of a comparatively high birth rate among this group. Again the economic status of the Friends in the Earls Colne area enabled Quaker families to raise more children. Similarly high birth rates existed among the families of the more affluent sectors of British society at this time. According to Gregory King's estimates of the population of England in 1688, families of "freeholders of the better sort" and mer-

TABLE VI
AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE
1650-1699

	Male	Female
Quakers, Earls Colne area, Essex	27.6	25.3
Alcester, Warwickshire	27.8	27.2
Aldenham, Hertfordshire	29.7	26.2
Banbury, Oxfordshire	27.4	25.8
Bottesford, Leicestershire	27.6	26.7
Colyton, Devon	26.4	29.4
Gainsborough, Lincolnshire	27.0	25.3
Hartland, Devon	30.7	28.4
Hawkshead, Lancashire	31.0	27.1
Shepshed, Leicestershire	29.2	27.1
Terling, Essex	25.5	23.2
Mean	28.2	26.5

Sources: R. A. Dodgshen and R. A. Butlin, ed., An Historical Geography of England and Wales (London: Academic Press, 1978), p. 217; Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly meeting, marriage certificates, (documents 93.00005-93.00712); Quarterly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 97.00005-102.01775).

chants consisted of five children on the average, those of the elite, six children. The birth rate among shopkeeper, tradesmen, and artisans was 4.0-4.5 children.¹⁹ The birth rate among the Quakers also conforms with that of the Essex village of Terling during the same years. This agricultural community, ten miles south of Earls Colne, had a slightly lower age at first marriage and a birth rate of 4.88, which was only .18 more than that of the Quakers of Earls Colne as shown in Table VII.²⁰

TABLE VII
NUMBER OF BIRTHS BY WIFE'S AGE AT MARRIAGE
1653-1699

	20-24	25-29	30-34	All
Number of Women	12	10	4	26
Number of Births	57	48	17	122
Mean	4.8	4.8	4.3	4.7

Sources: Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform: Earls Colne 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly meeting, birth records (documents 95.00327-96.0078), marriage certificates (documents 93.00005-93.00712), burial and death records (documents 96.00796-96.0712); Quarterly meeting, birth records, (documents 95.01600-96.00783), marriage certificates (documents 97.00005-102.01775).

Note: Women included in this table are those for whom records listed both age at first marriage and age at death of over forty-five.

Large Quaker families were also the result of relatively long life spans among adult Friends and the consequently long duration of Quaker marriages during the last half of the seventeenth century. The mean age at death for adult male Friends was 57.7; for females it was 55.1.²¹ The life expectancy for adults throughout England at this time was thirty-five to forty years, although those persons who were better able to afford adequate housing, food, and medical aid had a higher life expectancy, as did the Quakers.²² The later age at death meant that more marriages between members of the Society of Friends lasted throughout the entire childbearing years of the wife. Table VII demonstrates this fact.

TABLE VIII
DURATION OF MARRIAGE, 1653-99

Years	Number	Per cent	Per cent of all married Quaker women
1-4.9	0	-	-
5-9.9	1	4.4	1.0
10-14.9	4	17.4	4.0
15-19.9	2	8.7	2.0
20-24.9	5	21.7	4.9
25-29.9	2	8.7	2.0
30-49.9	6	26.1	5.9
50 or more	3	13.0	3.0
TOTAL	23	100.0	22.8

Sources: Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 93.00005-93.00712), burial and death records (documents 96.00796-96.0172); Quarterly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 97.00005-102.01775).

TABLE VIII (Continued)

Note: Statistics were compiled from marriages in which the date of marriage and the date of death of the wife was available. All Quaker marriages at this time ended in the death of one of the partners, as there was no divorce among members of the Society of Friends.

As no women in the Earls Colne, Halstead, or Coggeshall meeting married before the age of twenty, those unions which endured for more than 25 years encompassed the complete childbearing span of the woman's life. Of the Quaker marriages represented in Table VIII, 47.8 per cent fall into this category, and 13.0 per cent of the couples were married for more than fifty years. Only 4.4 per cent of these marriages ended in less than ten years, and none terminated before five years. There were few deaths that resulted from childbearing during these years. Most female Friends who died before the age of forty-five did so from epidemic or endemic diseases.²³

The demographic characteristics of the members of the Society of Friends in the Earls Colne area during the first fifty years of the sect's existence tended to conform generally to the nationwide population trends of the period. Although women's ages at first marriage were low compared to national statistics, they were compatible with statistics from other areas of Essex; and the men's age at first marriage varied little from the mean. Birth and death rates among Quakers of this region were similar to the same figures available for sectors of the English populace that shared an equivalent occupational or economic status. During the next fifty years, however, economic set-backs and conditions inherent in the Quaker religion reversed this trend.

ENDNOTES

¹K. H. Burley, "The Economic Development of Essex in the Later Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1957), p. 394; the population of Earls Colne in 1670 was approximately one thousand; Alan Macfarlane, Sarah Harrison, and Charles Jardine, Reconstructing Historical Communities (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 44.

²Landholdings of twenty acres or less predominated in this area of Essex in the seventeenth century; see Burley, "Economic Development of Essex", p. 37.

³Alan Macfarlane, ed., Records of an English Village, vol. 1: Church Records (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healy, Ltd., 1980), p. 3.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Keith Wrightson and David Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700 (New York: Academic Press, 1979), p. 21.

⁶Burley, "Economic Development of Essex," p. 390.

⁷Ibid.

⁸The total number of adult Quakers during the years 1653-1699 was 322--164 men and 158 women. One woman not included in the occupational statistics was a widow and appeared as a grocer on Quaker marriage certificates; Alan Macfarlane, ed., Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750 (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healy, 1980-81), Quaker Register: Quarterly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 97.00005-102.01775).

⁹D. Cressey, "Education and Literacy in London and East Anglia, 1580-1700" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1972), pp. 103-114.

¹⁰Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, p. 148.

¹¹Macfarlane, et al, Reconstructing Historical Communities, pp. 189-190.

¹²Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, p. 148.

¹³Meeting records show the literacy of one-third of those joining the Society of Friends (a total of 47) between 1655 and 1665. Fourteen of the earliest Quakers were able to write, while only two were illiterate; Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker register: Monthly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 93.00005-93.00712); Quarterly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 97.00005-102.01775).

¹⁴The case of John Furley, a wealthy merchant of north-central Essex, demonstrates this lack of enthusiasm on the part of Essex judges. Authorities distrained Furley's goods at his first arrest for preaching Quaker doctrines, but the constable later returned the goods to the merchant. At the time of his second arrest, the constable allowed Furley to move to another jail to better conduct his business. William Wayne Spurrier, "The Persecution of the Quakers in England, 1650-1714" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1976), pp. 155, 162.

¹⁵Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, pp. 48-72.

¹⁶Geographical data was taken from marriage certificates in the Quaker registers of Halstead, Coggeshall, and Earls Colne.

¹⁷Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker register: Monthly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 93.00005-93.00712); Quarterly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 97.00005-102.01775).

¹⁸The absence of illegitimate births and premarital pregnancies was determined from birth records and marriage certificates in Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Quarterly meeting, birth records (documents 95.01600-96.00783); marriage certificates (documents 97.00005-102.01775).

¹⁹King's figures appear in "Tables of Estimates of Gregory King, Charles Davenant, and W. Couling: A Scheme of the Income and Expense of the several Families of England, calculated for the year 1688" in J. D. Chambers, Population, Economy, and Society in Pre-Industrial England (London, Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 38.

²⁰Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly meeting, burial and death records (documents 96.00796-96.01712).

²¹R. A. Dodgshon and R. A. Butlin, An Historical Geography of England and Wales (London: Academic Press, 1978), pp. 212-213.

²²Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly meeting, burial and death records (documents 96.00796-96.01712).

²³Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE QUAKERS OF EARLS COLNE, 1700-1750

Throughout Great Britain and the north American colonies during the first half of the eighteenth century, the membership of the Society of Friends greatly declined.¹ Philosophical changes within the Quaker religion, especially Quietism and birthright membership, accounted for much of the decline. Local economic and political factors also contributed to the decreasing number of Friends in many areas, such as northern Essex.

This trend began with the Keithian schism in 1691. George Keith was a Scottish Presbyterian who joined the Society of Friends in 1663. He was an associate of William Penn and became headmaster of the Quaker school in Philadelphia. In 1691 Keith began publishing a series of pamphlets in which he denounced the tax discipline and heretical doctrines of the sect and the policies of Penn. After the London Yearly Meeting disowned Keith in 1692, he founded a separatist group known as the Christian Quakers and Friends.²

The Keithian schism did not separate many members from the Society, but it did emphasize the increasing formalism and worldliness that had begun to replace the evangelical zeal and personal conversions of the early Quakers. The first generation of Friends had shown great enthusiasm in preaching in spite of almost constant persecution. The second generation, free from persecution, became more concerned with legalism

than with proselytizing; therefore, towards the end of the seventeenth century the number of new converts began to decline.³ This trend continued throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1726 the London Yearly Meeting asked each monthly meeting to report the total number of convincements annually. In only two years during the period from 1726 and 1756 did more than half the monthly meetings report any new converts. The Colchester meeting in northern Essex reported newly-converted members in only one year during this thirty year period.⁴ To offset this lack of conversions, the Society of Friends instituted birthright membership; however, the granting of full membership to Friends' children without the requirement of a personal conversion caused an even greater decline in religious enthusiasm in the sect. Many of these third generation birthright members left the Society on attaining adulthood. They either married non-Quakers or joined the Anglican Church because of economic or political ambitions.⁵

The figures in Table IX demonstrate that the meetings in the Earls Colne region experienced the same decrease in new memberships after 1690, and a reconstruction of area Quaker families proves that the loss of third and fourth generation members was also prevalent in north-central Essex. Only 31.1 per cent of Friend's children born between 1690 and 1730 remained Quakers as adults. The experiences of the Start and Crisp families best illustrate this fact. John Start and Elizabeth Arner of Halstead meeting married in 1671. Both their son and grandson became members of the same meeting, and both married daughters of prominent local Quakers. The seven surviving children of John Start III were birthright members of the Halstead meeting, but only his oldest son remained a Quaker. The other six eventually joined

the Anglican Church.⁶

The experience of the family of Stephen Crisp parallels that of numerous other Quaker families, but the fact that Crisp was one of the First Publishers of Truth makes the return of his four grandchildren to Anglicanism noteworthy. Stephen Crisp was a Colchester weaver whom James Parnell converted in 1655. Crisp became a travelling minister and one of the most prolific early writers of the Society of Friends. In his absence, Crisp's wife, Dorothy, returned with their son, Francis, to her home village of Earls Colne. Francis became a member of the Earls Colne meeting and married a widowed Friend, Grace Hutt, in 1701. They had five children, four of whom survived and were birthright members of the Earls Colne meeting. All four of Stephen Crisp's grandchildren, however, had joined the Anglican church in Earls Colne by 1724.⁷ This loss of members among the third and succeeding generations is only one explanation for the decrease in the number of Friends in the Earls Colne area during the first half of the eighteenth century. The changing economic conditions in northern Essex, which began towards the end of the seventeenth century and continued into the next century, greatly aggravated the situation of the Society of Friends in this region.

A depression occurred in the woolen cloth trade throughout England in the 1690s as incessant warfare on the Continent closed many foreign markets.⁸ The War of the Spanish Succession was the catalyst for the severe depression that affected the weavers and cloth merchants of the Earls Colne region. During the seventeenth century, the merchants of northern Essex had exported large quantities of the county's bay and say cloth to Spain and Italy where monastic houses and convents pur-

chased it to make robes and habits for the clergy and nuns of these two Mediterranean countries. The outbreak of war against the Bourbon rules of Spain and France in 1701 ended this trade.⁹

At the same time, newer fabrics began to compete successfully with the bays and says of Essex and eventually to replace them as the leading export of the English cloth trade. This development resulted from the growth of the Caribbean and southern North American colonies of Great Britain and from a change in fashions caused by the introduction of calicoes into England from India. The Caribbean Islands supplied large quantities of cotton to the cloth areas of Lancashire and Norwich. Here weavers mixed the cotton with linen and worsted wool to manufacture the fustians of Lancashire and the stuffs of Norwich. Merchants found a large market for these cheap, light-weight cloths in the warmer climates of the New World and also in the Mediterranean countries after the War of Spanish Succession had ended. The cotton-mixed cloths replaced the heavier, all wool bays and says in Italy, Spain, and North Africa, thereby causing the almost complete collapse of the cloth industry in North Essex.¹⁰

The introduction of calicoes from India resulted in a change in English styles during the first half of the eighteenth century. Fashionable middleclass women began to demand finer and lighter materials. The fine worsteds of the West Riding of Yorkshire and the bombazines of Norwich replaced the new draperies of northern Essex, which had been popular throughout the entire seventeenth century.¹¹

As 40.0 per cent of the Quakers in the Earls Colne area were either merchants or craftsmen engaged in the manufacture of bays and says, the failure of the cloth industry in northern Essex had a devasta-

ting effect on the membership of the Society of Friends in the region. During the first fifty years of the Society, more than three hundred inhabitants of the area became Friends, but Quaker records from 1700 to 1750 list only 132 members. Many Friends left the depressed Earls Colne vicinity for either the newly established cloth-producing centers of northern England, for London, or for Pennsylvania.¹² There were few new inhabitants to replace those who had emigrated. Table IX lists by decades the number of adults joining the Quaker meetings and the total membership in Earls Colne, Halstead, and Coggeshall throughout the period from 1655 to 1749. The conspicuous decrease in members after 1690 illustrates the combined effect of the developments within the Society of Friends and the economic decline of the cloth industry on the Quaker sect in north-central Essex.

A comparison of occupations among male Friends of the first half of the eighteenth century and of the seventeenth century (Table X) illustrates the effects of the severe depression in the area's cloth trade on the population. The most notable declines were in the clothing crafts and among tradesmen and shopkeepers. Whereas twenty-five Friends engaged in weaving and woolcombing during the 1600s, Quaker records list only four clothworkers as members of the Society during the next fifty years. Only one of the four, a baymaker, practiced his craft after 1730. This sharp decrease in the number of clothworkers and the emigration of a substantial portion of the population adversely affected the shopkeepers and tradesmen of the area who had prospered during the seventeenth century by supplying the needs of the thriving cloth workers. The depression caused the shopkeepers, who had comprised 10.0 per cent of Quaker membership during the early years of the Society,

to emigrate also to the new cloth-producing centers in northern England or Pennsylvania where the increasing population of these regions provided a more stable economic base. During the 1700s, only one tradesman, a baker, appeared on the Coggeshall, Earls Colne, or Halstead meeting rolls.¹³

While the number of cloth merchants within the Society of Friends declined during this period, their percentage among the male population increased slightly. This group also continued to prosper despite the depression in the woolen cloth industry. The economic diversity of many clothiers during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries accounts for this fact.¹⁴ The wealthy cloth merchants of the area invested their profits principally in land and sometimes in other businesses as well. Several became linen merchants after the collapse of the wool trade in Essex. All left their sons and daughters valuable agricultural lands from which they continued to profit from produce sales to London.¹⁵

The history of the family of Joseph Bott of the village of Earls Colne is typical of the experience of the Quaker cloth merchants of north-central Essex. Bott's father had been a successful saymaker during the 1600s and had left his oldest son enough capital to enable him to become a clothier. Bott invested his profits from the cloth trade in land--both agricultural lands surrounding Earls Colne and rental property in the village. He also engaged in the retail victual trade for several years during the beginning of his career. In his will, written in 1743, Joseph Bott bequeathed three freehold tenements and two copyhold fields as well as £600 to his wife and three children.¹⁶ Joseph Bott, junior, the oldest son inherited most of his father's

TABLE IX
MEMBERSHIP OF QUAKER MEETINGS IN THE EARLS COLNE AREA,
1655-1749

	1655-59	1660-69	1670-79	1680-89	1690-99	1700-09	1710-09	1720-29	1730-39	1740-49
New adult members	27	40	114	94	47	37	15	29	23	26
Total membership	27	57	139	170	153	130	94	84	84	71
- - -										
Percentage change in total membership	-	+111.1	+143.9	+22.3	-10.0	-15.0	-27.7	-10.6	-	-15.5

Sources: Alan Macfarlane, ed., Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750 (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healy, 1980-81), Quaker Register: Monthly and Quarterly meetings (documents 93.0005-102.01713).

Note: New members include Friends' children who, on attaining adulthood, joined the sect.

TABLE X

OCCUPATION OF QUAKERS, EARLS COLNE AREA, 1700-1750
 COMPARED TO SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Occupation	1655-1699		1700-1750	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Gentlemen and Professional	2	2.1	1	4.5
Cloth Producers	38	41.7	8	36.4
Merchants	13	14.3	4	18.2
Craftsmen	25	27.4	4	18.2
Other Craftsmen	19	20.9	6	27.3
Tradesmen and shopkeepers	9	9.9	1	4.5
Agricultural	23	25.3	6	27.3
Yeomen	17	18.7	6	27.3
Husbandmen	4	4.4	0	0
Laborers	2	2.2	0	0
TOTAL	91	100.0	22	100.0

Source: Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly meeting, marriage certificates (documents)

Note: Society of Friends' records for the eighteenth century are not as complete as those of earlier years; therefore, data such as occupation are more difficult to ascertain for the latter years. The twenty-two males for whom occupations are known represent 36.7 per cent of the male Friends of the period 1700-1750. Figures for the earlier period constitute 55.5 per cent of the male population of the Society.

property and in 1744, he appears in village records as a gentlemen and overseer of the poor for the village of Earls Colne.¹⁷

Quaker clothiers were not the only area Friends who provided conscientiously for the future of their families. Craftsmen also purchased small tracts of land; and those Friends from yeomen families whom the depression in the cloth trade had affected least, as they were dependent solely on the London produce market, also reinvested their earnings in more land. Joseph Bott and William Kent, for example, purchased the deeds to numerous small landholdings from many of those Friends who left the area during the first decades of the eighteenth century. William Kent and his wife, Katherine, began with one freehold tenement in the village of White Colne at the end of the seventeenth century. In their wills forty years later, the Kents left two freehold tenements with land and two copyhold parcels of land in White Colne, two freehold tenements with land and a copyhold messuage with land in Colne Engaine, a freehold messuage with land in Pebmarsh, and a meadow in Earls Colne. The wills also contained bequests totalling £225 and annuities of £5 each for their two servants.¹⁸

The Botts, Kents, and other Quaker families who remained in the Earls Colne area and who had the capital to invest in land continued to prosper throughout the eighteenth century. Members of the Society of Friends became some of the most prominent citizens of the region. Their reputation for honesty in business affairs and for their humanitarian concerns gained for them social and economic prestige at the same time as their numbers decreased.¹⁹

Literacy also increased among the Quakers of the Earls Colne area during the first fifty years of the eighteenth century. Based on sig-

natures on marriage certificates, all the male Quakers marrying during these years were literate. Only four women were unable to sign their names.

The study of marriage certificates for the years 1700-1750 also discloses a development in the demographic patterns among the Quakers of the Earls Colne area that resulted from both the decline in meeting membership and the changing character of Quaker wealth. The data reveal that the Quakers of Earls Colne still married much earlier than couples in all of the other listed villages, except Terling.²⁰ Male Friends married 1.2 years before the mean age of marriage for all males in these studies; female Friends married two years earlier on the average than their contemporaries (Table XI).

As during the seventeenth century, the increasing prosperity of the remaining Quakers facilitated what non-conformity and declining membership made necessary. The sanction against marrying outside the Quaker religion required young adult Friends to select a marriage partner from among the small local Quaker community or to look outside the area for a mate. The decreasing membership of the three meetings of the Earls Colne area forced 25.0 per cent of Friends marrying for the first time during this period to choose a partner from a meeting more than ten miles away. This figure was only 13.0 per cent during the period 1650-1699.²¹

The landed wealth of many of their parents enabled these young adults to wed at a younger age than previously. Quaker parents frequently presented their children with their portion of the family's landholdings as a marriage gift. When Henry Adams married Mary Clarke in 1704, his father, a wealthy Earls Colne yeoman, gave Henry his share

of the extensive family property. Mary received from Dan Bayly, her grandfather and another Earls Colne yeoman, a manor house and messuage which would have otherwise been part of her inheritance after his death.²¹

TABLE XI
AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE
1700-49

	Male	Female
Quakers, Earls Colne area, Essex	26.8	24.8
Alcester, Warwickshire	27.4	28.2
Aldenham, Hertfordshire	29.2	25.8
Banbury, Oxfordshire	26.6	26.7
Bottesford, Leicestershire	28.7	27.4
Colyton, Devon	26.6	28.6
Gainsborough, Lincolnshire	27.5	25.5
Hartland, Devon	29.6	28.2
Hawkshead, Lancashire	31.9	27.4
Shepshed, Leicestershire	28.5	27.4
Terling, Essex	24.7	24.4
Mean	28.0	26.8

Source: Data for the other ten villages are from Table 8.4 in R. A. Dodgshon and R. A. Butlin, An Historical Geography of England and Wales (London: Academic Press, 1978), p. 217; Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly meeting, marriage certificates.

Even more than the lower age at first marriage, the data concerning the marital status of the members of the Society of Friends as presented in Table XII reflect the effects of an increase in landed wealth and a

decrease in population. Eighteenth-century Quaker parents may have pressured their heirs to marry to insure the family's future possession of its landholdings, for from 1700 to 1750, only one Quaker male remained single and he was one of seven children of a landless bay-maker.²³ The figures for single female Friends during the same years are deceptive, as these five women all died between the ages of fifteen and twenty. Not including the five Quaker women who died too early to have married, all but one of the Earls Colne area adult Friends were married at least once during the first half of the eighteenth century.

The difference in the percentage of Friends widowed and remarried in the two time periods is a result of the decreasing membership of the Society. In the earlier years 11.8 per cent of male Friends had remarried, but only 5.2 per cent wed for a second time in the eighteenth century. Widows remarried more frequently, however, in the later period. These figures demonstrate that the lack of eligible females improved the chances of widows to remarry while reducing the prospects of widowers. The fact that many of the widows wed men who had never previously married emphasizes this situation, as do the statistics for time between marriages.²⁴ During the seventeenth century, Quaker females waited an average of 7.5 years to remarry, but in the years between 1700 and 1750, this waiting period decreased to 1.5 years. The lack of single eligible women among the Quakers meant that more widows remarried sooner.²⁵

A lower age at first marriage and a more rapid rate of remarriage should have resulted in an increase in the birth rate among the Friends of the Earls Colne region in the eighteenth century.²⁶ Instead, the birth rate declined from 4.7 to 4.0 during this period.²⁷ The chief

factor in this seemingly contradictory demographic pattern was a high mortality rate among the female Quakers in north-central Essex after ✓ 1700. In the previous century, the women members of the Earls Colne group had lived from twelve to seventeen years longer than the average Englishwoman, but the age of death of female Friends in the eighteenth century more closely approximated the mean.²⁸ Quaker women in the later time period died 12.6 years younger than their mothers and grandmothers, whereas the age at death for male Friends decreased by only 1.5 years (Table XIII). Deaths due to childbearing or to complications resulting from childbirth were an important factor in the high mortality rate. Such deaths accounted for only 13.0 per cent of female mortality in 1655-1699, but half of the Quaker wives of 1700-1750 died during childbirth or immediately thereafter.²⁹

An explanation for the higher incidence of deaths resulting from childbearing after 1700 may be an increased frequency of pregnancies among the women of this group. The loss of members of the Society due to emigration and the decline in the number of adult converts during the first half of the eighteenth century may have encouraged Quaker wives to have more children as quickly as possible in order to replenish the membership of the local meetings. A shorter interval between births during 1700-1750 tends to substantiate this hypothesis (See Table XIV). Records are available for the birth dates of the children of forty-five female Friends from 1655 to 1699 and of thirty-one women during the second period. An average of 28.2 months occurred between the live birtys in the first group, as compared to 21.3 months in the later group. More frequent pregnancies among female Quakers after 1700 increased the risk of complications and resulted in a higher

mortality rate.

TABLE XII
MARITAL STATUS

	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	1655-1699	1700-1750	1655-1699	1700-1750
Single				
Number	9	1	7	5
Per cent	5.9	1.7	4.6	7.0
Married				
Number	96	37	101	52
Per cent	62.7	61.7	66.0	72.2
Widowed				
Number	23	17	35	9
Per cent	15.0	28.2	22.9	12.5
Widowed and Remarried				
Number	18	4	8	6
Per cent	11.8	6.7	5.2	8.3
Widowed twice				
Number	7	1	2	0
Per cent	4.6	1.7	1.3	0.0
TOTAL				
Number	153	60	153	72
Per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly and Quarterly meetings, marriage certificates, birth, and burial records (documents 93.00005-102.01713).

Note: Marital status is given for all known Friends in the years 1700-1750. For the years 1655-1699, the marital status is known for 93.3 per cent of male Quakers and for 96.8 per cent of females.

TABLE XIII
AGE AT DEATH

	Male	Female
1653-1699	57.70	55.11
1700-1750	56.27	42.50

Source: Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly meeting, burial and death records (documents)

TABLE XIV
INTERVALS BETWEEN BIRTHS (IN MONTHS)

Years	Interval Between					
	0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6
1655-1699	16.0	27.2	32.4	30.9	33.2	29.3
1700-1750	13.0	20.2	17.1	28.1	27.2	22.4

Source: Alan Macfarlane, ed., Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne 1400-1750 (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healy, 1980-81), Quaker Register: Quarterly meeting, birth records (documents 95.01600-96.00783) and marriage certificates (documents 97.00005-102.0177).

The higher mortality rate among Quaker women in Earls Colne resulted in a shorter duration of most marriages (Table XV) and in the lower birth rate, for many female Friends died before the end of their childbearing years. In the period from 1655 to 1699 only 4.4 per cent of Quaker marriages in the Earls Colne area lasted less than ten years; from 1700 to 1750, the death of the wife before the tenth anniversary ended 35.7 per cent of Quaker marriages. There were no marriages of more than thirty years after 1700.³⁰

TABLE XV
DURATION OF MARRIAGE, 1700-50

Years	Number	Per cent	Per cent of total married female Quakers
1-4.9	3	21.4	5.8
5-9.9	2	14.3	3.8
10-14.9	3	21.4	5.8
15-19.9	0	-	-
20-24.9	3	21.4	5.8
25-29.9	1	7.2	1.9
30.0	2	14.3	3.8
TOTAL	14	100.0	26.9

Source: Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 93.00005-93.01712).

While the demographic characteristics of the earlier members of the Society of Friends in the Earls Colne area tended to conform basically to the nationwide trends of the same time, the demographic patterns of later generations of area Friends differed in most instances from the general population of Great Britain. From 1690 to 1750, the population of England experienced a period of modest growth due in part to an improvement in the life expectancy among adults.³¹ The Quakers of Earls Colne, however, decreased in number during the first decades of the eighteenth century. The mortality rate among Friends rose at the time when the national rate decreased, and their birth rate decreased as the birth rate throughout the rest of the English population began to increase.³² Due to these demographic factors, the general decline of Society membership, and the economic depression in the Essex cloth trade, the percentage of Quakers among the population of north-central Essex continued to decrease during the eighteenth century. While the overall economic status of the remaining Friends did not change, the decline in numbers meant that role of the sect as a dominant economic and social force in northeastern Essex had ended.

ENDNOTES

¹Richard Vann, The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 164.

²Sidney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 210.

³Elbert Russell, The History of Quakerism (New York: Macmillan Co., 1942), p. 194.

⁴Vann, Social Development, p. 165.

⁵The best example of this development within the Quaker religion is the return of William Penn's sons to the Anglican Church; Ahlstrom, Religious History, p. 211.

⁶Alan Macfarlane, ed., Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750 (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healy, 1980-81), a Parish baptismal records (documents 73.00005-76.00005).

⁷Ibid.

⁸Milton Briggs and Perry Jordan, Economic History of England (London: University Tutorial Press, 1954), p. 159.

⁹N. B. Harte and K. G. Ponting, ed., Textile History and Economic History: Essays in Honour of Miss Julia de Lacy Mann (Manchester: University Press, 1974), p. 118.

¹⁰L. A. Clarkson, The Pre-Industrial Economy of England, 1500-1750 (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1971), pp. 111-112; Sir John Clapham, A Concise Economic History of Britain from the Earliest Times to 1750 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), pp. 241-242.

¹¹Bombazine consisted of a warp of worsted wool and a cotton or silk weft. Clapham, Concise Economic History of Britain, p. 242; Clarkson, Pre-Industrial Economy, p. 111.

¹²K. H. Burley, "The Economic Development of Essex in the Later Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth centuries: (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1957), p. 368.

¹³Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Quarterly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 97.00005-102.01775).

¹⁴Harte and Ponting, Textile History, p. 127.

¹⁵Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Freehold deeds, Colne Priory (documents 496.00005-534.00005), Freehold deeds, Earls Colne manor (documents 319.00005-330.00492), Probate records (documents 59.00597-61.01280), Quaker Register: Quarterly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 97.00005-102.01775).

¹⁶Joseph Bott, Will (27/9/1743); in Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Probate Records (document 61.00334).

¹⁷Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne 1400-1750, Overseer of the Poor accounts (documents 116.00005-117.00005).

¹⁸Katherine Kent, Will (21/6/1741); in Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Probate Records (documents 60.00570).

¹⁹These same developments occurred among the Quakers of Philadelphia in the eighteenth century. Frederick B. Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948).

²⁰Age at first marriage in Terling was low due to increased demand for farm labor and to the ability of London to "absorb" the excess population. David Levine, Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism (New York: Academic Press, 1977), p. 7.

²¹Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 93.00005-93.00712).

²²Mary inherited the remainder of her grandfather's property in Essex and Suffolk counties after his death; see Dan Bayly, Will (7/8/1719) in Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Probate Records (document 53.00962).

²³Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly and quarterly meetings, marriage certificates, birth and burial records (documents 93.00005-102.01713).

²⁴Elizabeth Clay and Elizabeth Evens of Coggeshall meeting and Abigail Smith and Elizabeth Christian Wheatley of Earls Colne meeting remarried during the period 1700-1750. All four married men who had never previously wed; see Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Quarterly meeting, marriage certificates (documents 97.00005-102.01775).

²⁵ Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Quarterly meeting, birth records (documents 95.01600-96.00783).

²⁶ A decrease in the age at first marriage of 2.5 years usually resulted in an increase of 0.75 to 1.0 births per family. R. A. Dodgshon and R. A. Butlin, eds., An Historical Geography of England and Wales (London: Academic Press, 1978), p. 218.

²⁷ Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Quarterly meeting, birth records (documents 95.01600-96.00783).

²⁸ The mean age of death in seventeenth and eighteenth century England was between 35 and 40; Levine, Family Formation, p. 120.

²⁹ Macfarlane, Records of an English Village (microform): Earls Colne, 1400-1750, Quaker Register: Monthly meeting, burial and death records (documents 93.00731-94.00962).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Dodgshon, Historical Geography, p. 206; Levine, Family Formation, p. 7.

³² Levine, Family Formation, p. 7.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

During the last half of the seventeenth century, the majority of Friends of the Earls Colne area were engaged in occupations that allowed them to share in the general prosperity of the cloth-producing district of northern Essex. The demographic characteristics of these Quakers conformed generally to the trends among those sectors of the British population that shared the same economic and occupational status. While the women's ages at first marriage may have been lower than the national average, the men's ages varied little from the mean. The relative prosperity of the Quaker merchants, artisans, and shopkeepers and their lack of dependence on land during this period permitted early marriages. The lower death rate and higher birth rate among this group also resulted in part from a higher standard of living, and these statistics compare favorably with the same figures for the more affluent members of the English middle class.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the demographic trends among the members of the Society of Friends in the Earls Colne area began to deviate in most aspects from the national pattern. During the first half of the eighteenth century, England experienced a period of modest population growth due to a slight increase in the national birth rate and a decline in adult mortality rates.¹ Statistics for the Quakers of the Earls Colne region, however, demonstrate a rise in

adult mortality rates, especially among women, and consequently, a lower birth rate than that of the previous fifty-year period. These factors were partially responsible for the 54.0 per cent decrease in the Quaker population after 1699.²

Economic factors were equally important, however, in causing the decline in the number of Friends in the area during the first half of the eighteenth century. The failure of the cloth-producing industry of northern Essex forced inhabitants to migrate to the new textile centers in northern England, to London, and to North America.³ Many of these migrants were Quaker cloth-producers, craftsmen, and tradesmen. Friends who remained in the Earls Colne area were generally those who had invested their commercial profits in land and who continued to prosper from the London produce trade. Even among the Friends who stayed in Essex, a decline in religious fervor due to Quietism and birthright membership, resulted in further decreases in membership, a phenomenon that affected the Quaker religion as a whole at that time.⁴

The pattern of growth and declension of the Society of Friends in the Earls Colne region strikingly parallels developments not only among the Quakers in England and the North American colonies, but also among the Puritans of colonial New England. Both sects achieved their greatest numbers and influence during a period of radical social and political unrest in Britain, and both flourished in spite of persecution and hardships. The Quakers faced physical and economic persecution in England and those Friends who emigrated to the Middle colonies between 1682 and 1700 experienced the difficulties of settling a frontier on a new continent. In Massachusetts, during the seventeenth century, the Puritans suffered even greater hardships due to the less

favorable climate of the New England coast. The Quakers and the Puritans demonstrated religious fervor and fortitude during these years and managed to increase in membership and wealth.

With the re-institution of a stable government in England and the establishment of successful colonies in both Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, the radicalism which had characterized both Puritanism and the Society of Friends in their earlier years was no longer of prime importance to their members. Puritans and Quakers focused their attention instead on commercial or political enterprises, succeeding well especially in the former. This shift in emphasis from radicalism to a greater involvement in business and government resulted in a decline of religious fervor among later generations of both sects. The quiet prosperity of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts did not encourage the same intense emotions among second and third generation Friends or Puritans. The political and social climates of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were a sharp contrast to the years of the English Civil War and the Restoration.

The disappearance of enthusiasm among members of a religious sect whose basis is intense personal conversion will result in a decrease in the number of converts and in total memberships. The Quakers and the Puritans of New England experienced this decline. To remedy the situation, both sects compromised their earlier standards of personal conversion as the prerequisite for membership and allowed the admittance to the congregation or meeting of children of members. The Puritans of New England approved the Half-Way Covenant in 1662, while Friends adopted the principle of birthright membership as their numbers began to decrease after 1690. The acceptance of offspring into

the sect who had not received a religious experience further weakened the fervor and vitality of both religions.

As in Earls Colne, external factors contributed also to the decline of the Quakers in Pennsylvania and the Puritans in Massachusetts. As the arrival of non-Puritan immigrants in Massachusetts Bay increased throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the "saints" represented an ever small percentage of the total population. While maintaining their economic status, the Puritans in New England gradually had to relinquish political control and influence. In Pennsylvania, the Indian wars which began by the middle of the eighteenth century forced the pacifistic Friends in the Pennsylvania legislature to incur the wrath of the majority of that colony's citizens by voting against military expenditures and provisions. Quakers, a minority in Pennsylvania as were the Puritans in Massachusetts by this time, decided to withdraw from government involvement, but public dissatisfaction with their anti-war beliefs resulted in an even greater decline. The similarities in development and declension of the Society of Friends and the Puritans deserve further study as does the question of whether other non-conformist radical sects, such as the Baptists and Mennonites, also experienced an identical evolution.

The fact that the demographic pattern of the Quakers of Earls Colne adhered to similar trends among their economic and occupational counterparts in the British population during the first fifty years of the Society's existence seems to demonstrate that nonconformity had little effect on family formation in the area during the seventeenth century. In the succeeding century the population of the nation increased, while that of the Earls Colne Quakers decreased. Unfavor-

orable economic conditions in northern Essex make it difficult to assess the true effect of the changes in the nonconformist practices of the Society on the demographic characteristics of its members. Similar demographic examinations of Quaker and other nonconformist sects in other regions of England would not only aid in providing a more accurate account of the growth and decline of nonconformity, but would also add another dimension to the study of English demography in general.

ENDNOTES

¹R. A. Dodgshon and R. A. Butlin, eds., An Historical Geography of England and Wales (London: Academic Press, 1978), p. 206.

²See Table IX.

³K. H. Burley, "The Economic Development of Essex in the Later Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1957), p. 368.

⁴Elbert Russell, The History of Quakerism (New York: Macmillan Col., 1942), p. 233.

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VITA

Theresa Mackle Clemmons

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: FRIENDS AND FAMILIES: A STUDY OF THE QUAKERS OF THE
EARLS COLNE AREA, 1655-1750

Major Field: History

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Panama City, Republic of Panama, February
6, 1947, the daughter of Eugene A. and Theresa R. Mackle.

Education: Graduated from Northside High School, Fort Smith,
Arkansas, in May, 1964; received Associates of Arts degree
from Westark Junior College, Ft. Smith, Arkansas in May 1966;
received Bachelor of Arts degree in French from Oklahoma
State University in May, 1980; completed requirements for
the Master of Arts degree at Oklahoma State University in
May, 1983.

Professional Experience: Graduate assistant, Department of
History, Oklahoma State University, 1980-1982; Research
assistant, Historic Preservation Office, Department of
History, Oklahoma State University, 1983.