

William Penn's Experiment in the Wilderness: Promise and Legend

AT THE CLOSE of the American War for Independence, a group of Quaker whalers from the island of Nantucket, who had experienced wartime deprivation because of English and American embargoes, determined to immigrate to a place where they could regain prosperity. Settling in Dunkirk and seeking only peace and security, the Quakers arrived just in time for the French Revolution. The central Paris government during the wars with Austria and England sent commissioners to Dunkirk in 1797 to stir up popular support. After a French victory, the commissioners demanded that all people show their support for the Revolution by lighting candles in the windows—what Friends called an illumination. But for 125 years Quakers had refused to illuminate their houses for military victories as a testimony to their pacifist principles.

Fearful of mob violence, William Rotch, leader of the Dunkirk Quaker community, sought protection from the Mayor, who referred them to the radicals recently arrived from Paris. Approaching one commissioner with some trepidation, Rotch explained the Quaker testimony and asked for understanding. The Commissioner responded: "We are now about establishing a Government on the same principles that William Penn the Quaker established in Pennsylvania—and I find there are a few Quakers in this Town, whose religious principles do not admit of any public rejoicings, and I desire they may not be molested."¹

Pennsylvania, Quakers, and William Penn had served as a positive symbol to French reformers since Voltaire had rhapsodized in 1733 about Penn and the Indians and their unsworn but observed treaty. One

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¹ William Rotch, *Memorandum Written by William Rotch in the Eighteenth Year of His Age* (New York, 1916), 65.

French revolutionary cried out, "O Tyrants of the earth. What have you gained by your bloodthirstiness? Think on William Penn, tremble and weep."² No American rebel is known to have made such a statement. Indeed, the contrast between the French and the American revolutionaries' images of Penn, the Quakers, and Pennsylvania is dramatic. In revolutionary America, references to Penn and the Quakers were normally negative. A prime example is Thomas Paine's attack on Friends in an early edition of *Common Sense*.³ Caroline Robbins sought in vain for citations of William Penn by those we term Founding Fathers.⁴ Although she found certain common ideological emphases by writers of the American constitutions, Penn's influence, if any, was indirect and unacknowledged.

The American revolutionaries had only superficial knowledge of Penn. In the eighteenth century the only Penn tracts published in America were religious writings including *No Cross, No Crown; Fruits of a Father's Love; A Key to the Scriptures*; and *Fruits of Solitude*. The pamphlets were as likely to have been printed in Boston or Newport as in Philadelphia.⁵ English Friends had a few of Penn's religious works reprinted, but not his political ones. The two-volume folio edition of *Works of William Penn* was owned by the Library Company of Philadelphia, some of the libraries of Quaker meetings, and a few individuals, but for most colonists it was too expensive to buy and too difficult to read. Penn's tracts on religious toleration, his proposals for a European parliament, and his suggestions for intercolonial union were virtually unknown to the Founding Fathers.

When the American patriots neglected Penn, they did so partly because they lacked of direct knowledge of him. But then the French knew little more about Penn and the Pennsylvania Quakers. What the French had was an image: an icon of Penn as a benevolent philosopher creating

² Edith Philips, *The Good Quaker in French Legend* (Philadelphia, 1932), ix; W.H. Barber, "Voltaire and Quakerism: Enlightenment and Inner Light," *Studies on Voltaire*, 29 (1963), 81-109; Graham Gangett, *Voltaire and Protestantism* (Oxford, 1980), 411-423.

³ Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*. . . *To which is added. . . an address to the People called Quakers* (Philadelphia, 1776).

⁴ Caroline Robbins, "The Efforts of William Penn to Lay a Foundation for Future Ages," *Aspects of American Liberty* (Philadelphia, 1977), 68-81. Also see n. 70.

⁵ Clifford K. Shipton and James E. Mooney, *National Index of American Imprints Through 1800* (U.S.A., 1969), II, 644.

a prosperous society with political and religious freedom. For Voltaire, Penn and the Friends had founded a country that was tolerant, free, and peaceful. Later, during the American Revolution, the French, like some present-day inhabitants of Pennsylvania, could have confused the images of Penn and Benjamin Franklin. After all, Franklin came to France as a revolutionary, a defender of liberty, a philosopher, a new-world rustic.⁶ "Quaker" Pennsylvania hazily seemed a semi-state of nature standing in vivid contrast to the civilized decadence supposedly characterizing France. The French approved of Penn because he symbolized a new way of life. By contrast, the American revolutionaries disapproved of Penn because he symbolized an old way of life. For Americans Penn had come to represent peace, the rights of minorities (including Indians and, via his Quaker successors, Blacks), Quaker dominance, sectarian politics, absence of militia, ordered liberty, and union with England—the antithesis of everything the Pennsylvania radicals wanted in 1776.

Quaker Pennsylvania gave the new nation an icon: William Penn conferring with the Indians. Two other icons, the liberty bell and Benjamin Franklin, were products of both colonial and revolutionary Pennsylvania. The first symbol had its origin and justification in William Penn's actions and represented an affirmation of religious and political rights. In the nineteenth century this image called Americans back to a heroic past, and it was, therefore, uncontroversial. But in the mid-eighteenth century the image had political ramifications. It served to unify the Society of Friends, to justify the peculiar position of social and political dominance enjoyed by Friends, and to present to outsiders the virtue of Quaker policies. Penn's icon also reminded the Indians of Pennsylvania that one group had a traditional interest in their well being.

The first part of this article will focus on Penn's writings during the initial stages of colonization to discover his conception of the importance of his role and the significance of Pennsylvania in world history. In later years Penn redefined his contributions to the new land. The second part examines the icon of Penn, using both literary and pictorial representations. Even during his lifetime, Penn's reputation was fused

⁶ Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1938), 569-571.

with his colony in a manner characteristic of no other individual involved with British settlements in America. To outsiders, Penn symbolized Pennsylvania, and the colony's success justified his policies. Within the colony, Quakers used Penn to defend their staying in power.

Just after he received the charter, Penn began planning for Pennsylvania, and he spelled out his ideas in numerous drafts of the Frame of Government, pamphlets, and letters. For our purposes, a most important source is three letters which Penn wrote in August, 1681. Penn wrote three letters within a single week at roughly the same period as he prepared his first promotional tract, *Some Account of the Province of Pensilvania*. All three letters move so easily from discussions of business to religion that one must assume that Penn saw no incongruity in linking the two realms. For example, in the letter to the Quaker Thomas Janney (August 21, 1681), he writes:

I sell from 100£ w[h]ich byes a share, to a 4th parte or to a 1000 Achre w[h]ch Coms but to 20£[.] mine eye is to a blessed governmt, & a vertuous ingenious & industrious society, so as people may Live well & have more time to serve the L[or]d, then in this Crowded land. God will plan[t] Americha & it shall have its day: {the 5th kingdom} or Gloryous day of Jesus Christ in us Reserved to the last dayes, may have the past parte of the world, the setting of the son or western world to shine in."⁷

Penn climaxes a discussion of terms for land sales with a short discourse upon the kind of society he envisages and then ends with a theological peroration about eschatology.

In *Some Account* Penn linked colonization schemes with the Hebrews (Moses and Joshua), Greeks (Lycurgus), and Romans (Romulus), and he defended settlements as means of creating new nations, increasing prosperity, and civilizing barbarians. Penn justified the efforts involved in colonization, stressing that there was room in the new world for those whose energy and abilities could not find sufficient scope in England. Bored and poor, many Englishmen, he claimed, turned to vice and might end as gamesters, highwaymen, or soldiers (the three

⁷ Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, *Papers of William Penn* (Philadelphia, 1982), II, 106. Hereafter *PWP*.

seemed morally equivalent).⁸ In *Some Account* and the letter to Janney, Penn assumes that the colony will bring prosperity, but only in the letter does he add that in Pennsylvania people will have more time to serve God.

Most intriguingly, Penn in the letter then links Pennsylvania to apocalyptic prophecies in the Old and New Testaments. He uses the fifth nation, for example, as a reference to the prophet Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream about death. Daniel foresees four kingdoms which will pass away because of flaws in their construction, but the fifth, whose foundation is laid by God, will endure.⁹ Penn is invoking the Mt. Zion prophecies to assert that God has laid the foundation for Pennsylvania. His second reference, the glorious day of Jesus, refers to Revelation where Christ returns at the end of time, making way for the new Jerusalem that will need neither sun nor moon because "the glory of God is its light" and there would be no night.¹⁰ Penn's metaphor mixes the sun's setting in the west and the inward light, conflating the "son" Jesus and "sun" light.

Penn's purpose in these phrases is to assure Janney—and perhaps himself as well—that all the worldly activities in obtaining the charter did not contaminate the new enterprise. Penn wants credit for his work, writing "for in no outward thing I have knowne, a greater exercise" but at the same time "my mind more inwardly resigned to feeble the L[or]ds hand to bring it to pass." Here the enterprise is justified in a manner immediately intelligible to every Quaker. The Lord's will was known not be striving but by silently waiting. If Penn had gained the Charter on his own initiative or only by the King's gift, then Pennsylvania would be a fatally flawed operation, one of the first four nations. But by insisting upon silent waiting, the deference, the feeling of assurance or clearness, Penn could comfort his correspondents that God had laid the foundation for Pennsylvania, that it would endure, and that settlers could be certain of material and spiritual prosperity.

In the second letter, to the Quaker James Harrison (August 25,

⁸ "Some Account of the Province of Pensilvania," in *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania*, ed., Albert Cook Myers (New York, 1912), 202-203, 205

⁹ Daniel 5:5. The passage was cited by the Fifth Monarchy men who staged an uprising in London in 1660.

¹⁰ Revelation 21:22.

1681), Penn provides instructions to an agent selling land and again develops a theological justification for the colony: "For my country [I see] the lord in the obtaineing of it, & mor[e was] I drawne inward to looke to him, & to o[we it] to his hand & pow[e]r then to any ot[her way]." ¹¹ Since Penn acknowledged his obligation to the Lord for his gift, he had, like the people of Israel in the promised land, an obligation to "serve his truth & people; that an example may be Sett up to the nations. there may be room there, tho not here, for such an holy experiment."

The *holy experiment* is one of the most famous phrases Penn ever wrote; it has been quoted in lectures, book titles, and anthologies. But what exactly did Penn mean by "experiment?" There are two likely usages. The first is our common meaning taken over from scientific enquiry. Here experiment means to introduce certain variables in a controlled environment to establish some general principles. Experiment had already acquired this general connotation by 1680. ¹² Clearly Pennsylvania as virgin soil could be seen as a place to try out certain principles—religious liberty, assembly power, economic opportunity—in a test to see what kind of society resulted. The other meaning of experiment uses the term as a synonym for experience. In one of the most famous passages of his *Journal*, George Fox, in discussing knowledge gained through inward revelation, commented, "That I know and know experimentally." Here Fox claimed a direct experience of God. ¹³

Which of these meanings was Penn using? Was Pennsylvania to be a holy scientific experiment or a holy experience? Was Penn trying to investigate the character of his new society and to change the character of English society by proving that his particular constitutional arrangement worked well? Was he trying to determine the pattern of the new colony? Or was he attempting to persuade others that the Lord had, by his grace, provided the land and the foundation for a new Christian existence? I think the last alternative is most plausible.

¹¹ *PWP*, II, 108.

¹² *Oxford English Language Dictionary on Historical Principles*, III, 431-432. The two meanings of experiment were (1) "Action of trying anything" or "test" or "trial," and (2) "To have experience of."

¹³ John L. Nickalls, ed., *Journal of George Fox* (Cambridge, 1952), 11.

This interpretation cannot be proved simply by an analysis of the letter to Harrison, but Penn sent a letter to the Quaker Robert Turner on August 25, 1681, that underscores the case more convincingly. Enclosed with a packet of maps and copies of *A Brief Account* was a letter combining religious rhetoric and business advice. After discussing the price of quitrents with Turner, who was selling lands, Penn mentions his having rejected an offer of £6,000 (from a person not named but described so that Turner could identify him) to establish a company having a monopoly of the Indian trade between the Susquehanna and Delaware Rivers.¹⁴ Since there was also a rent involved, Penn could have at the outset of his enterprise solved his most pressing financial problems. The combination of land sales and £6,000 would have enabled Penn to escape from debt. And as few of the kind of settlers Penn had wished to attract were moving to Pennsylvania for trade with Indians, the sale should not have interfered with attracting colonists.

Penn justified his rejection of the offer by emphasizing the religious foundation of the colony:

But as the lord gave it me over all & great opposition, & that I never had my mind So exercised to the lord about any outward Substance, I would not abase his love nor act unworthy of his Providence & So defile w[ha]t came to me clean. No, lett the Lord guide me by his wisdom & preserve me to honour his name & serve his truth & people, that any example, a standard may be Sett up to the nations, there may be room there, tho' none here.¹⁵

In this passage the wording "over all" does not just refer to opponents whose efforts were based upon politics. In Luke 11:10, Jesus gave to the seventy disciples beginning their missionary activities powers "over all" demons and forces of evil. George Fox recorded his triumphs over the powers of darkness with the frequently invoked phrase that the Lord "over all."¹⁶ Fox meant that the power of the Inward Light conquered all opposition. Since the Lord overawed all opposition and gave to Penn

¹⁴ *PWP*, II, 110, Edwin B. Bronner, *William Penn's "Holy Experiment,"* (New York, 1962), 1. The men who offered the £6,000 were William Meade and Samuel Groome. W. Penn to P. Pemberton, Feb. 8, 1687, in Etting Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Penn Papers, Micro. 5:701. I am indebted to Richard Ryerson for this identification of Meade and Groome.

¹⁵ *PWP*, II, 110.

¹⁶ *Journal of George Fox*, 129, 130, 138, 139, 140, 146.

the Charter, the proprietor was responding to his mission with pure motives and attempting to fulfill the "promise" of the Lord's colony.

In all three letters Penn invoked the doctrine of divine providence. Quakers, like virtually everyone else in seventeenth-century England, believed that God determined events. He established and pulled down governments. Friends also believed that God became involved in the minutiae of life; after all, the scriptures insisted that the "very hairs of your head are all numbered" and God's care extended to sparrows. Yet, in keeping with Old Testament precedents, Friends recognized that God's activity was influenced by human response. Penn's letter to Turner acknowledges that he received the Charter through God's providence and asks the Lord to guide him "that an example, a standard may be Sett up to the nations." The scriptural reference is Isaiah 11:10: "In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious." Pennsylvania's role in salvation history is sufficiently important that Penn takes a prophecy originally intended for Mt. Zion and then interpreted by the Christian Church as applying to Jesus and attaches it to the colony. Penn wishes to establish a location where the rule of the Lord is so pervasive that it may usher in the end of time.¹⁷

If this letter can be seen as the key to the "holy experiment," Penn's argument is that if anyone is creating, or experiencing, or experimenting, it is God. Penn simply seeks clearness for his actions. He must make certain that what he is doing does not jeopardize the example, but he is aware that success or failure will depend not upon his clarity of vision but upon the providence of God and religious quality of those who migrate. And who, for Penn, was more likely to be godly and listen to the Lord than Quakers?

An additional confirmation of the providential interpretation of the "holy experiment" is in the name Penn gave to the new colony's chief city, Philadelphia. Historians stressing the Greek derivation of the name frequently refer to the city of brotherly love. The scriptural

¹⁷ Sacvan Bercovitch, *Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven, 1975) argues that by the end of the seventeenth century, New England Puritans fused salvation history with a specific region. He believes that this joining of sacred time and space to create a unique destiny occurred only in America. The argument in this article is that William Penn in England made the same kind of fusion of land and eschatology for Pennsylvania.

references are ignored. In the third chapter of the book of Revelation the "angel of the church in Philadelphia" writes, "I know your works," and prophecies that Philadelphia will become "the city of my God, the New Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven." In the letters Penn linked Pennsylvania to the new Jerusalem of the prophets; now he again links the old city with his new capitol. (While this "greene Country Towne" of gardens and orchards was designed to be healthful and fire-resistant, Penn might have remembered that "greene" was a symbol of salvation, the new order of Christ's reign, and the transformation of Wilderness.)¹⁸ Philadelphia could become a city of brotherly love because the Lord had laid its foundation and its inhabitants "kept my word and have not denied my name."¹⁹ Surely Penn's contemporaries understood both the brotherly love and the new Jerusalem connotations in the word Philadelphia.²⁰

In the three letters written in August, 1681, Penn employs his clearness or experience of God's grace as an argument for the virtue of the colonization efforts. Yet he has never mentioned any of the supposed special features of Pennsylvania except "room." And what characterizes the religious references are their optimism and vagueness. Nowhere does Penn use the word experiment in referring to what historians have often defined as the four distinctive features of Pennsylvania's founding: liberty of conscience, pacifism, the consent of free men, the structure of the Frames of Government.

First, no evidence indicates that Penn thought religious freedom on trial in a unique way. He argued for religious liberty as a policy dictated

¹⁸ *PWP*, II, 121, 503.

¹⁹ Revelation 3.8. The "my" refers to the "Son of God" who is speaking.

²⁰ A Lutheran proponent of George Keith looked upon the Quaker division as "a gate for a great harvest, which the Lord opens for us wider and wider, giving us strength to make his Philadelphia Word a foundation on which Jerusalem can descend from above" "Copy of a Report from the New World, being an Account of the dangerous Voyage and happy Arrival of some Christian Fellow-Travelers, who undertook their Pilgrimage to the end of spreading the Belief in Jesus Christ," *PMHB*, XI (1887), 440, see also *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania*, 329. There was a group of mystics in England and on the continent in the 1690s known as the Philadelphia Society. The eschatological emphases by the early German immigrants is emphasized in Klaus Deppermann, "Lukunftswartungen und Reformvorstellungen der fruhen deutschen Pietisten, die nach Pennsylvanien auswanderten," paper delivered at a Conference on Religion and Society, Space and Time A Comparative Approach to the History of the Eighteenth Century," Krefeld, Federal Republic of Germany, June 19, 1983

by common sense and defensible on religious, economic, and political premises.²¹ He wrote about the toleration already practiced in Holland; he knew of the religious freedom promised to settlers in West Jersey and Maryland, and an early draft of the charter of Pennsylvania copied the 1663 Rhode Island charter on liberty of conscience.²² Neither Penn nor the first settlers focused upon the guarantee of religious liberty as a special policy that had to be tested to prove its practicality. Pennsylvania's eighteenth-century reputation as a citadel of religious freedom grew out of the contrast with the less liberal policies long maintained in most of New England, Virginia, and England, and followed in Maryland, New York and the Carolinas after 1690.

Second, if the pacifist testimonies of Friends were to be a distinctive feature of the Holy Experiment on trial, Penn might have mentioned that policy. In fact, there were reasons not to be open about pacifism. Under the Charter, the Crown named Penn Captain General and made him responsible for the colony's defense, and opponents might have insisted that Penn's religion disqualified him from being a proprietor. Penn may not have discussed pacifism with his Friends because they already accepted the testimony, but this was not true of the Germans, Scotch Presbyterians, and French Calvinists he hoped would migrate.²³

Penn provided no discussion of pacifism in connection with Pennsylvania in this early period in either letter or pamphlet. The only place that pacifism is mentioned is in letters to the Indians, and here it is used to reassure them.²⁴

The other features often cited as distinctive were the experiment's pattern of government, with its broad participation of freemen. Certainly Penn did consider a wide variety of forms in the various drafts of the *Frame of Government*, and he wrote many of the "Laws Agreed Upon in England" and ratified in Chester in 1682. The difficulty here

²¹ J.W. Frost, "Religious Liberty in Early Pennsylvania," *PMHB*, CV (Oct., 1981), 421-424.

²² *PWP*, II, 76, fn. 64.

²³ *PWP*, II, 108, 123, 284.

²⁴ *PWP*, II, 261; *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* III, Part II, 251-253. William Loddington and Thomas Tryon made pacifism a central theme of their tracts on early Pennsylvania. William Loddington, *Plantation Work the Work of this Generation* (London, 1682); Thomas Tryon, *The Planter's Speech to his Neighbors and Country-Men of Pennsylvania, East and West-Jersey* (London, 1684).

is in the word "holy." Elsewhere Penn carefully distinguished the functions of government from the needs of religion. Religion was spiritual and based on love; government was political and based on power. Since there were good governments before Christianity began, Penn would not have thought it necessary to make religion a part of the original concern of government.²⁵ In the preface to the *Frame*, Penn enunciated a limited version of the potentialities of government, asserting that governments took their character from the citizens and not citizens from the government.²⁶ The conclusion seems inescapable: government was not going to make a *holy* experiment.

In the preface to the *Frame of Government* and in instructions provided to his commissioners, who arrived in Pennsylvania before him, Penn added a commonly held Christian doctrine to the complex of ideas concerning virtue and Pennsylvania. The magistrate had a responsibility to use the law to encourage the good and to be a "rod" to evil doers.²⁷ Only God gave grace, but everyone's obligations to observe the moral law rested upon reason. Penn himself drew up the puritanical parts of the first law codes, and there is no evidence that the predominately Quaker colonists disapproved of his stringency.²⁸ Sin had to be suppressed because of conditions God had laid upon Penn. God gave the colony as a free gift but with qualifications required to maintain his blessings. God's election of Penn and the settlers did not lead to anarchy, but discipleship.

In his publicity for Pennsylvania, Penn sought Christian, industrious, and virtuous people—the three concepts were often linked. His attempted realism or accuracy in describing the new land rested upon the responsibility God had laid upon him.²⁹ If Pennsylvania were too glorified and made to appear too easy a life or only as a source of riches,

²⁵ William Penn, "One Project for the Good of England," (1679), *Select Works* (London, 1825, reprinted 1971) III, 189-191.

²⁶ *PWP*, II, 52, 347.

²⁷ *PWP*, II, 143, 346.

²⁸ *PWP*, II, 182, 367. The stringent regulations had their origins in the laws of Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut which influenced the Duke of York's law code for New York. Gail McKnight Beekman, comp., *Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania* (New York, 1976), I, 18.

²⁹ "Some Account," *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania*, 210, 215. Penn knew that John Fenwick had been censored by Friends for his misleading propaganda. Even so, Penn painted a laudatory picture of the new land.

then the wrong kind of settler would come. Colonists who migrated under Lord's direction and with the right characteristics would incline God to favor the colony, and the resulting society would have peace, plenty, and piety.

Quaker beliefs set definite limits to the claims Penn could make about his Holy Experiment. The Charter was granted just before what would be the last wave of widespread persecution of Quakers in England.³⁰ Any hint from Penn that the new land would offer an escape from persecution and promise an easier kind of religious environment compromised Quaker standards. A Friend was not to seek persecution, but he or she was also not to run away.³¹ For example, the London Meeting for Sufferings assisted Mennonites driven out of Switzerland by the Swiss Calvinists to come to Pennsylvania. But in the early eighteenth century, it refused to sponsor emigration from Danzig by Quakers undergoing persecution.³² The difference was that the Mennonites were expelled, but the Danzigers had the option to remain and keep the standard of the Lord visible.

Penn also could not promise that the new land would increase piety. In 1680 Quakers in England did not assert that their practice of the faith was superficial, that seclusion was necessary to preserve virtue, and that crossing the Atlantic made for piety. They could witness the steady

³⁰ William Wayne Spurrier, "Persecution of the Quakers in England 1650-1714," Ph D. diss. (University of North Carolina, 1974), 129-130.

³¹ William C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, England, 1961), 402. The argument is not that Friends were unaware of religious persecution or the advantages of toleration, but that the meetings made clear that fleeing persecution was an illegitimate grounds for migrating. Frederick Tolles relied heavily upon Thomas Tryon's 1684 *Planter's Speech* to determine motives for emigration. One should be cautious in relying upon Tryon because of his statement "The *Motives* of our Retreating to these Habitations, I apprehend (measuring your Sentiments by my own) to have been. . . ." A few Friends would have sympathized with Tryon's mixture of Jacob Boehme, Pythagorean sentiments, and mysticism, but many others would not. Tryon was a utopian who advocated abstinence from alcoholic beverages, vegetarianism, kind treatment of animals, and a dress code in which doctors and magistrates wore white, but everyone else, undyed homespun. *Planter's Plea*, 5. Frederick Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House* (New York, 1963), 33-35. William Sewel wrote in 1683 that those "who change their country, and run across the sea, that they may escape persecution" would not find a "happy outcome." Quoted in William I. Hull, *William Penn and the Dutch Quaker Migration* (1935, reprinted Baltimore, 1970), 384.

³² London Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings, Book of Cases, 8/18/1700, 59-60, *PMHB* II (1878), 122-123

growth in numbers in spite of previous persecutions.³³ Friends in 1680, unlike Puritans in 1630, were not in despair. Their religious goals for England—an end to tithes and other legal impediments, toleration, and equal rights—seemed attainable. The prominence of well-born converts like Penn and Robert Barclay, and their influence with the King and the Duke of York, boded well for the future.

Penn favored Whig politics, but he was in no position to attack the prerogative, the character of the monarch, and the non-religious policies of the government. He, unlike the founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, had not obtained his Charter in a surreptitious manner and he could not escape the scrutiny in the English government. He might despair of the moral fibre of English society on occasion, but he never claimed that Quakers could escape the desolating hand of God by migrating. After all, the closest approximation to the true Church of Christ—the Society of Friends—was already flourishing in England.³⁴

Above all that Penn could say to persuade Friends to migrate to the new world was tell of his good will, emphasize the amount of land, describe a few features of the government, stress his belief in the Lord's underwriting of the enterprise, suggest coming only in obedience to God within, and challenge them to help create a radically different society. Those "fit" for plantations were "Men of universal Spirits, that have any eye to the Good of Posterity, and that both understand and delight to promote good Discipline and just Government among a plain and well intending people."³⁵ That is, Penn offered a chance for able settlers to benefit themselves and future generations by creating a new society characterized by liberty, justice, and morality. The religious underpinning of the colony reinforced these features. Prospective settlers had to emulate Penn in seeking confirmation of the "holy experiment." In short, Pennsylvania was presented not as a scientific investigation; it was an experience of worship and divine guidance, a meeting in the wilderness.

³³ Richard Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 93.

³⁴ William Penn, "To the Children of Light in this Generation," *Select Works* (London, 1825), 175-179.

³⁵ Penn, William, *Some Account*, 35.

Two problems in this interpretation need now to be addressed. To what extent was Penn on what we might call a temporary religious high? After all, he was in the first flush of excitement at receiving the Charter, designing a constitution, and recruiting settlers. Are there indications in Penn's thought before and after 1680 that the holy example was a major theme and not a temporary aberration? Secondly, supposing for the moment that this was not a temporary aberration for Penn, we should determine whether anyone besides Penn believed in the holy experiment?

In April, 1681 Penn insisted that twenty years before, at Oxford, he had had an "opening of Joy," that is, an epiphany, at the prospects in America.³⁶ This experience need not have included his own work in colonization, but a feeling for the flourishing of religion in the New World. Penn's sense of God's direction in colonization, but not his eschatological emphasis, appears soon after his involvement with New Jersey. In a pamphlet written in 1676 he instructed settlers for West Jersey to "weigh the thing before the Lord, and not headily or rashly conclude on any such remove."³⁷ In London in 1682 he advised Quaker Elizabeth Woodhouse, in regard to migrating to Pennsylvania,

act in subjection, & rather in the Cross then forwardness: & if thou hast a true drawing, & art satisfied in thy selfe to goe, goe, & the lord be with thee: else stay, but I beseech thee be cool & patient & contented with gods will.³⁸

The messianic utopianism expressed in letters to Janney, Turner, and Harrison, not present before 1681, continued to be emphasized throughout Penn's first visit to America. Writing to Thomas Taylor in April and July, 1683, and to John Alloway on Nov. 29, Penn proclaimed divine providence, the example to the nations, and the making of the wilderness into a garden, of the desert a green field.³⁹ The promise/fulfillment metaphors employed in England seemed to be coming true in Pennsylvania. Jasper Batt, a Friend, had written a long

³⁶ *PWP*, II, 88-89.

³⁷ "Epistle of Penn, Lawre and Lucas, Respecting West Jersey, 1676," *Narratives*, 185; the same language is in "A Further Account of the Province of Pennsylvania" (1968) *Narratives*, 278.

³⁸ *PWP*, II, 245.

³⁹ *PWP*, II, 376, 418-419, 503-504.

critique of Penn's *Frame* arguing that it would not be sufficient to keep ungodly people out of power. Penn's reply was characteristic. The patent was founded upon civil freedom, but "if these Freeman and the Heirs fear God the Entalement will be to David's Stock; if not, how can I or mine help it?" Remember David's stock is the house of Jesse, the ancestry in Matthew of Jesus; the prophecy recalls Penn's earlier letter. Penn had informed Batt that he received Pennsylvania from the Lord and his experience in the new land vindicated his feeling that it was the Lord's place.⁴⁰ None of the letters that Penn composed in America before returning to England in August, 1684, show disillusionment or questioning of his religious insights.

How widely was Penn's vision shared? The former Swedes and Dutch settlers in the Delaware Valley remained unmoved. But at least a modified form of the vision seems to have permeated Quaker circles, which stressed the religious foundation, insisted on the necessity of clearness before migrating, and saw a special role for Pennsylvania. In 1682 William Loddington addressed *Plantation Work the Work of This Generation* to Quaker critics of Friends migrating to Pennsylvania. Loddington argued that God had at distinct seasons provided a special task for religious men and that this generation's "calling" was to settle America. God had first inclined the "king's heart" to give the Charter to conscientious people and had at the same time brought a respite from persecution so that this "special Service" could be done. Quakers agreed that it was laudable for a minister to follow a motion from God to spread the gospel across the seas; Loddington insisted that it was equally praiseworthy for a planter to follow a similar inclination in migrating. No one should leave England to flee persecution, escape trouble, and create wealth. Nor should one assume that there were no temptations in a virgin land. Settling in America was a "high and holy Calling" designed to promote "Truth" in the New World, to spread the "Light" to the "poor lost Indians."⁴¹ Loddington did not label Pennsylvania a new Jerusalem but he did link the spread of Christianity to the West with the eventual end of the world.

Thomas Budd's 1685 *Good News From Pennsylvania and New Jersey*

⁴⁰ *PWP*, II, 346-348.

⁴¹ Loddington, William *Plantation Work*, 3, 6, 8, 11-13.

trumpeted the availability of religious liberty and warned that no one should come to America by his own volition, but only after quietly waiting for the Lord's counsel. Budd, like Penn, witnessed God's "Fatherly Care" in bringing people safely through "your *Spiritual Travel* towards the *Land of Promise*." Budd's language conflated images of pilgrimage/migration and Pennsylvania/salvation.

The Eyes of many are on us, some for Good, and some for Evil; therefore my earnest Prayers are to the Lord, That he would preserve us, and give us *Wisdom*, that we may be governed aright before him, and that he would give a good Understanding to those that are in Authority amongst us, that his Law may go forth of *Sion*, and his Word from *Jerusalem*.⁴²

The sense of expectation and God's special involvement which appeared in Loddington and Budd's pamphlets also can be found in letters. William and Jane Yardley tried to migrate to Pennsylvania in 1682, but at first delays occasioned by bad weather stopped their ship. They looked upon such hindrances as "accidental" and were "satisfied [the] Lord's ordering hand is with us." Seeking to reassure William Penn of the quality of the settlers, Hugh Roberts spoke of the "many hundreds [who] came here in the integrity of their harts & a true sense of what they did," i.e., under the leading of the Lord.⁴³ One fascinating letter from a West New Jersey settler acknowledged that he had not been certain before leaving England. But now in West Jersey he had gracious experiences of the Lord which confirmed the rightness of his decision.⁴⁴ The Jersey settler, like Penn, felt no compunction against merging economic and religious considerations.

The earliest of the German migrants shared the Quaker beliefs in the necessity of waiting for God's direction before moving and the promise of the land. On February 5, 1684 the Quaker Men's Meeting in

⁴² Thomas Budd, *Good Order Established in Pennsylvania and New Jersey* (1685, reprinted New York, 1971, 4th ed.), 73-76.

⁴³ William and Jane Yardley to James Harrison, July 21, 1682. See also *PWP*, II, 561-564. Hugh Roberts' explanation for the Keithian separation was that the schismatics migrated for the wrong reasons: fear of persecution, dissatisfaction with their brethren, and a self-seeking ambition. Hugh Roberts to William Penn, n.d. *PMHB*, XVIII (1894), 207.

⁴⁴ *An Abstract of some Few of the Many (Later and Former) Testimonies, from the Inhabitants of New Jersey and Other Eminent Persons, who have Wrote particularly concerning that Place* (London, 1681), pp. 17-18, 16, 20.

Harlingen in Frieland issued a certificate of removal for an emigrating settler and addressed "The Church of God in Philadelphia" as follows:

the Eyes of many nations are turned towards you in expectation whether your government and making of lawes and also the execution of the same will agree with the Testimonies of the faithful Servants of the Lord in this age whose pfeffion concerning those Pticulars formerly hath bin published to the World.⁴⁵

The "Eyes of many nations" reference recalls Isaiah's prophecies on the role of Jerusalem and Mt. Zion (chapters 2 and 11) which Penn had drawn upon in his 1681 letters to Robert Turner and James Harrison.

Stephen Crisp and his Dutch Quaker wife Gertrud Dericks wrote to Penn on May 4, 1684 explaining the delicate balance between human activities and God's initiative in shaping Pennsylvania:

And this I must tell thee, which thou also knowest, that the highest capacity of natural wit and parts will not, and cannot, perform what thou hast to do, viz. to propagate and advance the interest and profit of the government and plantation, and at the same time to give the interest of Truth and testimony of the holy name of God, its due preference in all things; for to make the wilderness sing forth the praise of God is a skill beyond the wisdom of this world. It is greatly in man's power to make a wilderness into fruitful fields according to the common course of God's providence, who gives wisdom and strength to the industrious; but then, how he who is the Creator, may have his due honour and service thereby is only taught by the Spirit in them who singly wait upon him. . . .⁴⁶

The Crisps' letter captured the Quaker dilemma in the new world. The hard work of Penn and the colonists would, according to the normal order of providence, bring prosperity. However, the spiritual flowering of the new colony could not be built by the strength of men and women alone; only God could make Pennsylvania's "wilderness sing."

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting was the largest gathering of Friends in America. The epistle sent to London in March 1683/84 echoes Penn's

⁴⁵ William Hull, *William Penn and the Dutch Quaker Migration*, 380; Julius Sachse, ed. *Falckner's Curieuse Nachricht von Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1905), 79, 87, 95. The Falckner account uses the providential interpretation of history and emphasizes divine guidance before immigrating to Pennsylvania in a context which ignores both Penn and Quakers. See also Julius Sachse, ed., *Letters Relating to the Settlement of Germantown* (Philadelphia, 1903), 3, 6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 382-383; *Letters of Isaac Penington. . . and Others* (London, 1796), 116-117.

distinctive interpretation. (Even if Penn, who was at the Yearly Meeting, helped write the epistle, the sentiments had to be approved by all those attending.) The Lord “called us not hither in Vain, and this was the testimony of Life in o[u]r Living Assembly.” It might have been the great “harvast” of converts which made the meeting exult: “the Desert sounds, the wilderness rejoices A Visitation inwardly and outwardly is Come to America, God is Lord of all the Earth, & o^r setting of the sun will his name be famous.”⁴⁷ Notice the same play on sun found in Penn’s letter of 1681.

How long did Penn consider Pennsylvania and West Jersey distinctively holy, specially favored by the Lord? In a letter probably written in June, 1686, Penn instructed the Provincial Council using many of the same metaphors as in 1682, but in a strikingly different context. The members of the Council are obliged by their “Station”

to be the lights & Salt of the Province; to direct & Season thos that are under you, by your good example. Tis not wealth or trade that makes a goverment great. the noblest examples of Govern^t that Time has deliver’d down to us, had little of either they are preferr’d to our Imitation for their Sobriety, Peace, temperance, labour and equal administration: this I am Sure you may have in Poor Pennsilvania if you will; the climat is as fitt for it as any other in the world, & I Know tis expected at our hands: and lett me tell you, that it was the most Noble & prevaileing motive I had to take my lott in yt Solitary part of the world, where there was room & opertunity for tho excellent methods of life & Government.⁴⁸

The councilors are “lights” because of their position, not their piety. The “lights and Salt” they should bring is order, not salvation. The colony is not initiating Christ’s return, but is “Poor Pennsilvania” where a few peoples’ “Lewd & disorderly” conduct may bring God’s judgment. Pennsylvania is not Mt. Zion, but “Many eyes are upon you, & any miscarriage is aggrivatd to a Mountain; and ‘tis not a faith without works that will remove it.” If the Council is not inspired, the colony can expect “the faults & Judgements that attend & ruine other places. . . .” The fear of the ill-consequence of evil remains and also the sense of the closeness of God, but the utopian emphasis is gone.

⁴⁷ *PWP*, II, 528.

⁴⁸ William Penn to the Provincial Council [ca June, 1686], No. 206, *Micro.* 5:447; printed *PMHB*, XXXIII (1909), 306.

While Penn continued to advise prospective settlers to come only after experiencing clearness from the Lord, the messianic interpretation disappeared after the first visit. The closest approximation to the old feeling occurs in a letter written "To Friends in Pennsylvania" in February, 1704/1705, where, after complaining of settler ingratitude and non-support, Penn exclaimed:

I Could Make one Conclusion of this whole matter, and that is to Dispose all to the Crown. Soile as well as Governmt and be rid of them once for all and leave them to Inheritt the fruites of their owne sowings. But I must not forgett the hand that brought the Country to me, the Sealeing Engagements, and sealing of his goodness in those Solitary Countrys. . . . Love, feare and Solutude was my aime. . . . I am a Suffering and Mournful man.⁴⁹

Here the vision is muted. The emphasis is upon the burden, not the promise, and Pennsylvania's role in the salvation history of the world has been replaced by Penn's past experiences. The settlers deserve to be cast adrift, but his obedience to the Lord will keep a despondent Penn faithful.

After 1700 Penn sought to preserve for the settlers the religious and political rights he had hoped to make perpetual in 1681. But defensive maneuvering in England to guarantee no tithes, no established church, no militia, no oaths, and Quaker participation in government had none of the promise or excitement of building a new Jerusalem.⁵⁰ The Proprietor was under attack from the colonists, royal officials, the Church of England, and his creditors. In 1700 Penn insisted that as dissenters "we. . . come y^t [that] we might enjoe yt [the government] so farr of w[hi]ch would not be allowed us any share att home & w[hi]ch we so much needed to our security and happiness abroad."⁵¹ Even so, he soon began negotiations to sell the power to govern back to the Crown, reserving to the colonists their religious liberties. His willingness to allow a royal government meant that Penn had come to realize that his colony was little different from other English possessions.

⁴⁹ Abstract of a Letter to Friends in Pennsylvania, Feb. 26, 1704/5, Acc. no. 902, H.S.P. printed in Samuel Hazard, *Register* XII, 363. I am grateful to Jean Soderlund for calling my attention to this letter.

⁵⁰ J. W. Frost, "Religious Liberty in Early Pennsylvania," 435-448.

⁵¹ William Penn to William Penn, Jr., Jan. 2, 1700/01, Accession no. 1631, H.S.P.

By 1710 Penn was so exasperated at the conduct of the Assembly that he instructed Friends that either his supporters must prevail in the next election or he would cast Pennssylvania adrift. What is fascinating, particularly in view of his later reputation, is that Penn justified his proprietorship as bringing "Ease, Liberty, and Plenty," not providence and mission. Penn claimed to have offered the colony, in the *Frames of Government*, "The Amiable ways of Peace, Love, and Unity," but had received in return recriminations and bitter complaints of imaginary oppressions.

Friends, the Eyes of many are upon you, the People of many Nations in Europe look on that Country as a Land of Ease, and Quiet, wishing to themselves, in vain, the same blessings they conceive you may enjoy . . . Others have cause to believe you have hitherto Lived or might Live, the happiest of any in the Queen's Dominions.⁵²

This letter accused the colonists of ingratitude and suggested that the turbulence of the populace might provoke a just God to wrath.

For our purposes, the political and economic issues in this dispute are not important. Rather, Penn is reflecting upon his role in the founding and governing of Pennsylvania in a manner that will reappear throughout the colonial period. The images of William Penn, the *Frames of Government*, liberty, prosperity, and peace become the means by which the inhabitants of Pennsylvania will interpret their pattern of living to themselves and the world. If in 1681 the Holy Experiment equalled a new earth, by 1710 it represented a free land.

The image of William Penn as benign humanitarian was current in Pennsylvania throughout the colonial period, but its origins cannot now be precisely delineated. Penn's reputation as a man of wisdom and deep piety clearly preceded the founding of Pennsylvania. Penn projected in his promotional literature and in his reassurance to settlers already residing in the Delaware Valley an image of himself as a conscientious man guaranteeing political, religious, and economic rights. Even when the literature was not commissioned by the proprietor, his image was that of a "wise and God-fearing ruler."⁵³ Penn also enjoyed a good press

⁵² William Penn to "My Ould Friends," June 29, 1710. Microfilm 14:133. I am grateful to Marianne Wocke for calling my attention to this letter.

⁵³ *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West New Jersey, and Delaware, 1630-1707*, 250, 292, 314, 396, 457.

in England and on the continent during his lifetime, except from those who insisted that he was a Jesuit. Gerard Croese's 1696 account of Quakerism certainly was critical of that faith, but the author praised Penn's intelligence and devotion to religious liberty.⁵⁴ John Oldmixon's 1708 *British Empire in America* described Pennsylvania's Indians as "very civil and friendly to the English who never lost man, women, or child by them. . . . This friendship and civility of the Pennsylvania Indian are imputed to Mr. Penn, the Proprietary's extreme humanity and bounty to them."⁵⁵ William Sewel's 1722 multivolume history of Quakerism⁵⁶ served to solidify Penn's image and to reinforce Pennsylvania folklore. The only English language biography of Penn was Joseph Besse's 235-page introduction to the 1726 edition of the *Works of William Penn* (reprinted 1771). Besse really could be called an editor, not author, for there were only fifty pages of new text.⁵⁷ Pennsylvania and New Jersey together received four pages. Still, even these cursory remarks were favorable, for Besse not only included Penn's Letter to the Indians but commented upon the perfect amity established, and printed part of the law concerning religious freedom.

The role of Indians was a central ingredient in creating the Penn-Indian icon. The early promotional literature for Pennsylvania portrayed the Indians in glowing terms and, after Penn's visit, stressed the good relations prevailing. Penn devoted a substantial amount of his promotional literature to Indians and left no doubt that he considered their friendship a requisite for a successful colony. Conversion of Indians was frequently cited as a reason for settlement. Even a pietist like Francis Daniel Pastorius thought the Lenni Lenape sufficiently worthy that, even though they had not converted, they would, like the biblical inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, stand ahead of nominal Christians at the

⁵⁴ Gerard Croese, *General History of the Quakers* (London, 1696), Book II, 40-47, 159-161, 164, III, 263-365.

⁵⁵ John Oldmixon, *British Empire in America* (London, 1708), 167, quoted in John Watson, "The Indian Treaty," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1836), III, Part II, 159.

⁵⁶ William Sewel, *The History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of the Christian People, Called Quakers* (London, 1722), 576.

⁵⁷ *Works of William Penn* (London, 1726), I, 121-123, William I. Hull, *Eight First Biographies of William Penn*, Swarthmore College of Monographs on Quaker History, Number 3 (1936), 1-12.

day of judgment.⁵⁸ The speeches of Indians at negotiating sessions with governors of Pennsylvania after the proprietor's death show that the Indians respected Penn and they wished assurance that the settlers would continue his policies. The Indians informed Governor Keith in 1720 that Penn at his first council had promised "so much Love and Friendship, that he would not call them Brothers, because Brothers might differ; nor Children, because they might offend and require Correction; but he would reckon them as one Body, one Blood, one Heart, and one Head."⁵⁹ Even when the colonists engaged in nefarious activities against the Indians, both they and the Indians invoked the covenant between Penn and their ancestors as a symbol of the harmony of Pennsylvania. As late as 1780 John Gottlieb Heckewelder found Indians commemorating their friendly relations with Penn.⁶⁰

No matter what the actuality of the settlers's actions and attitudes to Penn, the image projected to the world was of the kind of man whose image could comfortably adorn the top of a city hall tower. Those in Pennsylvania who knew the history of the colony's tumultuous early years chose in later years to ignore the controversies. Caleb Pusey, who arrived in Pennsylvania in 1682 and became Penn's business partner, certainly had a vantage point to offer a different perspective. But he did not. When, sometime before his death in 1725, Pusey compiled the first history of Pennsylvania, his portrait of Penn drew upon that of Sewel and expanded it. Pusey presented Penn as the good friend of the Indians, the advocate of religious liberty, and the defender of colonial liberty.⁶¹ Pusey's history, drawn up at the request of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, was later used by Samuel Smith and Robert Proud in their published histories.⁶² Thomas Makin's 1729 *Description of Pennsylvania* provided additional favorable press coverage from a man

⁵⁸ "Circumstantial Geographical Description of Pennsylvania," in *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania*, 385. See also 230, 236, 292.

⁵⁹ "Presentation to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania of the Belt of Wampum," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia, 1858), VI, 256.

⁶⁰ John Watson, 148.

⁶¹ H.J. Cadbury and J.W. Frost, eds., "Caleb Pusey's Account of Pennsylvania," *Quaker History*, 64, No. 2 (Autumn, 1975), 40.

⁶² Robert Proud, *The History of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1797); Samuel Smith, *The History of the Colony of Nova-Caesaria, or New Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1765).

who was teaching school in Pennsylvania long before Penn paid his second visit.⁶³

The benevolent father-figure Penn was used to legitimate several features of provincial society: political liberty through the 1701 Frame of Government, religious liberty and pacifism through the laws. Christopher Saur's newspapers indoctrinated German immigrants with his vision of the colony and William Penn.⁶⁴ In January 1730/31 in response to Governor Patrick Gordon's praise of Penn for granting annual elections, the Assembly responded:

We hope the People of Pennsylvania will never be wanting to acknowledge the great Wisdom and singular Goodness of our late Honourable Proprietor, from whom we derive the Privilege of our annual Elections, as well as many other Immunities, which have so manifestly contributed to the Prosperity of the Province, and the Increase of our Inhabitants. . . .⁶⁵

The speaker of the Assembly, Andrew Hamilton, declared in 1739 that the colony owed its flourishing state to the political and religious freedoms established by Penn.⁶⁶

When the Overseers of the Press of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting edited the manuscript journal of Thomas Chalkley between 1745 and 1748, preparing it for publication, they added a footnote praising Penn's fair dealings with the Indians and the resulting peace.⁶⁷ Actually, there was no need for the insertion. Chalkley at several other places in his journal drew upon the images of Penn, the Charter freedoms, the piety of the founders, and peace and prosperity.⁶⁸ The same symbols were employed in the journals of John Churchman, John Woolman, and Benjamin Stanton—all published after 1770.⁶⁹ Isaac Norris I was

⁶³ Thomas Makin, "Descripto Pennsylvaniae," printed in Robert Proud, I, 211-212, II, 361-365.

⁶⁴ William R. Steckel, "Pietist in Colonial Pennsylvania: Christopher Sauer, Printer 1738-1758," Ph.D. diss. (Stanford, 1950), 50, 109, 146.

⁶⁵ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, I, 414.

⁶⁶ *Votes of Assembly, Pennsylvania Archives*, 8th Series, III, 2506-2507.

⁶⁷ George Willauer, Jr., "Editorial Practices in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia: The Journal of Thomas Chalkley in Manuscript and Print," *PMHB* CVII, (1983), 227.

⁶⁸ *Journal of Thomas Chalkley in Friends Library*, eds., William Evans and Thomas Evans (Philadelphia, 1842), VI, 70-72, 78, 91, 109, 112.

⁶⁹ *Journal of John Churchman in Friends Library*, VI, 200-201, 235; *Journal of Daniel Stanton*, *ibid.*, XII, 166, 182.

described as having an almost worshipful veneration of William Penn. Isaac Norris II identified Penn with the 1701 Frame of Government and commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of that Frame with the biblical inscription "Proclaim Liberty through all the Land" on the statehouse bell.⁷⁰ Compiling citations from disparate sources about William Penn does not enable us to determine how widely the myth of Penn traveled in the years immediately following his death. An oral tradition seems to have been created. There are almost no extant Quaker sermons in Pennsylvania, and there were few occasions for the celebration of the Founding Fathers' vision. But sometime after 1720 Pennsylvania became a relatively harmonious society with a solid phalanx of Quakers. My guess, and there is no certain evidence, is that an image of Penn and the first settlers who were seen as exemplars of piety provided the symbols to create a unified Quaker party.⁷¹

The earliest pictorial representation of Penn and the Indians may be a wampum belt given to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1857. The Penn family believed the belt was given to William Penn under the treaty elm at Shackamaxon in 1682. The belt has two figures, one of whom appears to have his hat on, shaking hands.⁷² The first certain

⁷⁰ "William T. Parsons, "Isaac Norris II, The Speaker," Ph.D. diss. (University of Pennsylvania, 1955), 13, 17, 131-132, 294.

⁷¹ Alan Tully in "Politics and Ethnicity in Eighteenth-Century Pennsylvania," paper presented at the Conference on the Founding of Colonial Pennsylvania, October 1, 1982, commented that he found this interpretation plausible.

⁷² There is no documentary history of the belt before the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, there are questions about the belt that have never been raised. For example, the stylized head of a man with a hat on, assumed to be Penn, is used for all the figures in a belt owned by the New York State Museum and called the Washington Treaty Belt. It is possible that the "hatted" figure is Penn, and the difference in figures on the Historical Society's belt is to contrast Penn and an Indian. But it is also possible that the figure is generic and does not represent Penn at all. One more issue: if the figure is Penn and he does wear a hat, did the Indians recognize the significance of the difference in style between Penn and the other whites in his refusal to doff his hat? Since the Penn family believed that the belt was given to William Penn at a great treaty under the famous elm tree and historians are skeptical that there was such a treaty, the family traditions do not lend credibility. The wampum belt could have been given to the Penn family at a later date in a commemoration of William Penn's attitude. I am grateful to Professor Marshall Becker of West Chester University for sharing his knowledge of wampum belts with me. "Presentation to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania of the Belt of Wampum Delivered by the Indians to William Penn, at the Great Treaty under the Elm Tree, in 1682," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, VI (Philadelphia, 1858), 205-282; John F. Watson, "The Indian Treaty for the Lands now the Site of Philadelphia and the Adjacent County," and Peter S. DuPonceau and J.F. Fisher, "A Memoir on the History of the Celebrated Treaty made by William Penn with the Indians under the Elm Tree at Shackamaxon, in the year 1682," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia, 1836) Vol. III, Part II, 129-204.

pictorial representation of Penn and the Indians was on a medallion made in England about 1731. Penn is pictured shaking hands with an Indian under the motto "By Deeds of Peace."⁷³ Since the medal was struck for a prominent Quaker, it seems likely that the symbol was already widely known even before Voltaire wrote. (The alternative explanation that the medal was cast to publicize Penn would be plausible if a large quantity had been distributed). The next pictorial representation of Penn and the Indians came during the French and Indian War. When war broke out between the Delaware Indians and the colonists following Braddock's defeat in 1755, Quakers blamed the uprising upon the abuse of the Indians by the proprietors—in particular, the infamous Walking Purchase. Quakers and other sectarian pacifists created the Friendly Association to re-establish harmony with the Indians. The Association, one of whose members was the Quaker silversmith Joseph Richardson, issued a gorget (a piece of armor covering the throat) with a picture of Penn at a council fire offering a peace pipe to an Indian.⁷⁴ There was also a coin-like medal with a picture of George



⁷³ Silver medal is pictured in Nicholas Wainwright, *One Hundred and Fifty Years of Collecting* (Philadelphia, 1974), 3.

⁷⁴ Mary Gandy Fales, *Joseph Richardson and Family: Philadelphia Silversmiths* (Middletown, Conn., 1974), 141-142.

II on one side and a Quaker presumably Penn, though clothed in mid-eighteenth century plain dress, shaking hands with an Indian. The coins or medallions were given to the Indians as a way of influencing them to make peace. They also conveyed to the Indians the Friendly Association's role as mediator of grievances. The image reaffirmed the Quaker belief that benevolence and justice were the ways to re-establish harmony and that traditional Quaker policy had guaranteed this. The coins were a pointed rebuke to the sons of the Proprietor for departing from their father's principles.

The most famous pictorial representation of Penn and the Indians came in the 1771 painting of *Penn's Treaty with the Indians* now hanging at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Thomas Penn signed the commission to the artist, but the project was probably initiated by Thomas' wife, Julianna. Julianna Penn had an appreciation of the value of public relations gestures and would have understood the political implications of the picture and the popular engravings that soon followed.⁷⁵ She also saw wisdom in bestowing patronage on a native son, Chester County's Benjamin West. Those who had previously followed Franklin in seeking repudiation of the Charter and creation of a royal colony after 1763 could see a picture representing proprietary benevolence. In 1771 both Quakers in Pennsylvania and the Penn family in England favored conciliation of colonial grievances with the royal government. The invitation in the painting was plain: those who believed in peaceful, trusting relationships could rally behind the proprietors and the Society of Friends. As Julianna and Thomas Penn were aware, preserving Pennsylvania as a legacy for their children required political astuteness. Among certain groups the picture was an immediate success, but it would not serve to unify Pennsylvania until the nineteenth century, when Quakers and proprietors had lost all political significance.

The frequency of references to Penn in the minutes of the Assembly became more common in the 1740s with the beginnings of the debate between the governors and the representatives over defense and the proper interpretation of the 1701 Frame of Government's clauses concerning liberty of conscience. During the crisis of the 1750s the

⁷⁵ Charles Seller, "The Beginning A Monument to Probity, Candor, and Peace," in *Symbols of Peace William Penn's Treaty With the Indians* (Philadelphia, 1976)

Assembly and the Society of Friends both invoked Penn, although for different purposes.⁷⁶ After the war, when Franklin and others attacked the Charter, they commissioned a revisionist history of Pennsylvania which contained a diatribe against all proprietors.⁷⁷ Influential weighty Friends like the Pembertons and political Friends like Isaac Norris II broke with Franklin over his drive to royalize the colony. The Quakers' petition to the Assembly requesting repeal of the Charter was very carefully phrased to affirm the privileges bestowed by William Penn. They were, they wrote "confiding in his Royal Clemency and Favour for the Continuance and Confirmation. . . of those inestimable Religious and Civil Liberties and Privileges, which encouraged our Forefathers, at their own Expence, to settle and improve this Colony"⁷⁸ Alan Tully argues that the election of 1765 prompted many traditional supporters of the dominant Quaker Party to favor continuation of the proprietary government. Even when the voters were unhappy with the policies of Thomas Penn, the Charter and *Frame of Government* proved more attractive than the prospect of changing Pennsylvania into a royal colony.⁷⁹

From 1765 until the Revolution, the Society of Friends and the conservative leaders of the Quaker Party used the image of Penn to oppose disorder. Penn and the Charter guaranteed that Quakers should not become dissenters in the colony they created. Penn served as advocate for peace with Indians. He stood as a symbol of the value of cooperation with the English government. He was cited by Friends seeking to justify participation in government, reforms in society, and more Quaker schools. And, of course, he was a symbol of lost innocence. As Pennsylvania became more complex and problems with Indians, slavery, and the Paxton boys more pressing, as an inequality in wealth mounted and simplicity seemingly evaporated, Penn and his

⁷⁶ For references to Penn and the charter in the Assembly, see *Votes of Assembly, Pennsylvania Archives*, Series VIII, II, 1308, 1666-1667, 1704, III, 2535, 2542-2545, 2551, 2555, V, 4217, 4219, VI, 4389-91, VIII, 7327-28, 7335, Henry Cross, *An Answer to an Invidious Pamphlet intitled A Brief State of the Province of Pennsylvania* (London, 1755), 29, C Henry Smith, *Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania* (Norristown, Pa., 1929), 366.

⁷⁷ Richard Jackson and Benjamin Franklin, *Ethnicity, Religion, and Politics in Early America* (Philadelphia, 1812, first ed., 1759), 3, 14, 18, 45.

⁷⁸ *Votes of Assembly*, VIII, 5605-5606.

⁷⁹ Alan Tully, "Ethnicity, Religion, and Politics in Early America," *PMHB* (this issue), James Hutson, *Pennsylvania Politics, 1746-1770* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1972).

generation came to symbolize the good old days.⁸⁰ By affirming Penn's worth, Quakers also pronounced the pattern of the colony as good. In the protection of minorities, the meeting was radical. But in supporting the existing political structure of the colony and a deferential ideal of society, the meeting was conservative. The Charter and William Penn were useful because they could defend both outcasts and obligarchs.

* * * *

The gap between Penn's apocalyptic vision and his eighteenth-century reputation is not unbridgeable. He spelled out his audacious vision in 1681 in private communications to a few Quakers, but his published advertisements were far more prosaic. Still he was disappointed. Philadelphia did not become a new Jerusalem; Quakers proved to be extraordinarily contentious; the original settlers of Delaware and the Friends did not get along; and Penn failed to create a politically harmonious and orderly society. Yet Pennsylvania did provide, as Penn promised, religious freedom, economic opportunity, political rights, and peace. People did not suffer for their consciences and they were not forced to contribute to an established church. Even those who disagreed with Penn's government supported his emphasis upon hard work and morality. Friends in America in 1682 and 1701 experienced the beauty of his religious life, and no one questioned the depth of his spirituality. To his contemporaries Penn appeared a remarkable man. Pennsylvania in 1682 seemed a notable achievement; in 1750 it still seemed extraordinary to Voltaire and providential to Quakers. The icon rested upon solid achievements.

In the eighteenth century the colonists fused memories of Penn, the Indians, the piety of early Friends, the liberties of the Frame, religious toleration, and peace into symbols of Pennsylvania's heritage and destiny. The images could be used to call the population to reform or to defend the status quo against attackers. Antislavery rhetoric from the Germantown protest of 1688 to John Woolman's *Journal* contrasted the professions of purity with the realities of bondage.⁸¹ John Churchman's 1748 address on defense to the Assembly invoked Penn, Indians, lib-

⁸⁰ *Votes of Assembly*, V, 4217-4219, VII, 5759, VIII, 7327-7329, C. Henry Smith, *Mennonite Immigration*, 285-286.

⁸¹ J. W. Frost, ed., *Quaker Origins of Antislavery* (Pennsylvania, 1980), 69, 102-105, Ralph Sandiford, *A Brief Examination of the Practice of the Time* (Philadelphia, 1729, reprint 1969), Preface, 9, 23, 72, Benjamin Lay, *All Slavekeepers . . . Apostate* (Philadelphia, 1737, reprint 1969), 61-62, 103, 140, Phillips P. Moulton, ed., *Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman* (New York, 1971), 207.

erty of conscience, peace, and providence.⁸² The revival of Quakerism in the 1750s drew upon an image of what the colony and the Society of Friends had been and should become. Periodically throughout the eighteenth century—especially in times of crisis—metaphors of the wilderness and the garden, the city upon a hill, the example to the nations reappeared. So far as I can tell, the belief in God's special care of Pennsylvania as symbolized by William Penn remained the possession of Quakers and German sectaries.

So in 1776 and 1789, who was using the icon correctly? The Quakers who praised Penn, the patriots who ignored him, or the French who embraced him? Penn might have approved of the fledgling movements that began both revolutions by seeking to strengthen and extend liberty through non-violent means.⁸³ Pennsylvania Quakers also supported this early phase of the American Revolution. However, Penn, like his Quaker successors, opposed wars—particularly those that destroyed minority rights. Penn would have described the American and French Revolutions as part of the first four kingdoms pictured by Daniel — works undertaken in the will of man rather than the grace of God. The American revolutionaries were correct in their distrust of Penn; his myth could not be stretched to support a war. After a successful revolution, Pennsylvania would become a Keystone State, but it could no longer remain a holy experience, a peaceable kingdom.

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⁸² *Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, 80

⁸³ In 1775 one feeble attempt was made to use Penn's writings to persuade Friends to support the agitation against England. A pamphlet entitled *Argumentum ad Hominem Being an Extract from a Piece Intituled, England's Present Interest Considered* sought to prove that Penn thought "a declaration and publick vindication of the people's natural and legal right to liberty and property inviolate, was not inconsistent with the judgment, or contrary to the practice of this universally approved, wise, learned, prudent and pious man. . . ." The pamphlet quoted Penn's defenses of fundamental rights of Englishmen property, liberty of person, voting and people's influence upon the judiciary. If the pamphlet had appeared in 1765 or 1771, it might have had influence. But in 1775 the issues were war and revolution and Penn could not be quoted to support these. In 1776 the Meeting for Sufferings reprinted Penn's *To the Children of Light in this Generation* as a means of persuading Friends to say clear of the Revolution

