

*William Penn's  
Holy Experiment*



The Quakers of Pennsylvania

# GEORGE FOX

1633  
Fenny Drayton  
Leicestershire



There is one ever Christ Jesus  
that can speak to thy condition

1643  
A church  
is the living members of a  
spiritual household  
of which Christ is the head



# *Part I: The Quakers*



- Religious Viewpoints
  - Primary Source: The Quaker Journal
  - The Format of the Quaker Journal
  - John Woolman's Journal
  - The Inner Light: 18<sup>th</sup> Century Accounts
  - The Voice of the Heart: 18<sup>th</sup> Century Accounts
  - The Meeting: 18<sup>th</sup> Century Accounts
- Lifestyle
- Practices

# *Religious Viewpoints*

- Founded in **England** --17th century by **George Fox**
- Quakers believed: God dwells in each person-- there is an **Inner Light** that guides us.
- Authority found NOT in the Bible or church hierarchy, but in the **Voice of the Heart**-- God's voice.
- Purpose of a religious gathering (called a **meeting** with God) was to commune jointly, **in silence**, with the **indwelling spirit**.
- Quaker **ideals** included **equality, social justice, peace, stewardship, integrity and simplicity.**



*Depiction of George Fox—Quaker Founder  
Speaking to a Crowd in New England*

# *The Quaker Journal*

- Knowledge of Quaker religious ideas comes principally from **Quaker journals**.
- The Quaker journal, like that of the Puritans, was a special form of autobiography.
- It **recorded God's presence in the world**.
  - The **Puritan journal**, however, was introspective and led to self examination. (It tried to answer the question, “**Am I saved?**”)
  - The Quaker one was written for publication. It had a **strong social emphasis** in its concern with **successful living in the community**.

# *The Format of the Quaker Journal*

- Divine revelations in childhood
- Uneasiness over youthful frivolity
- Period of search and conflict
- Convincement [Persuasion]
- Conversion
- Seasons of discouragement
- Entrance into the ministry
- Adoption of plain dress, plain speech, and simple living
- Curtailment of business
- Advocacy of social reform

*From: Perspectives in American Literature*

# *John Woolman's Journal*

- Few journals contain all these stages. Woolman's autobiography is a classic record of all the stages.
  - Jonathan Edwards offered mysticism and heaven (an other-worldly reading experience) [Gr Awakening preacher]
  - Ben Franklin offered a pattern of utilitarian living (a practical reading experience) [Deism]
  - John Woolman offered mystical insight and compassionate humanism (an other-worldly and practical reading experience) [Quaker]



1623 MARY FISHER 1698

one of the many women "publishers of the truth"

the world, East + West,  
was their Parish

1657



for God's Spirit  
dwelt in every man



# *Inner Light: 18<sup>th</sup> Century Account*



“I . . . was early convinced in my mind that true religion consisted in an inward life, wherein the heart does love and reverence God the Creator, and learns to exercise true justice and goodness . . . toward all men . . . .”

– *The Journal of John Woolman* (1774)



*Meeting of the Society of Friends--Quakers*

# *Voice of the Heart: 18<sup>th</sup> Century Accounts*

- We were taught by renewed experience to labour for an inward stillness; at no time to seek for words, but to live in the spirit of truth, and utter that to the people which truth opened in us.

– *The Journal of John Woolman* (1774)

- As our worship consisted not in words so neither in silences as silence, but in a holy dependence of the mind upon God . . . until words can be brought forth which are from God's spirit.

–Robert Barclay as quoted in *What Do Quakers Believe?*



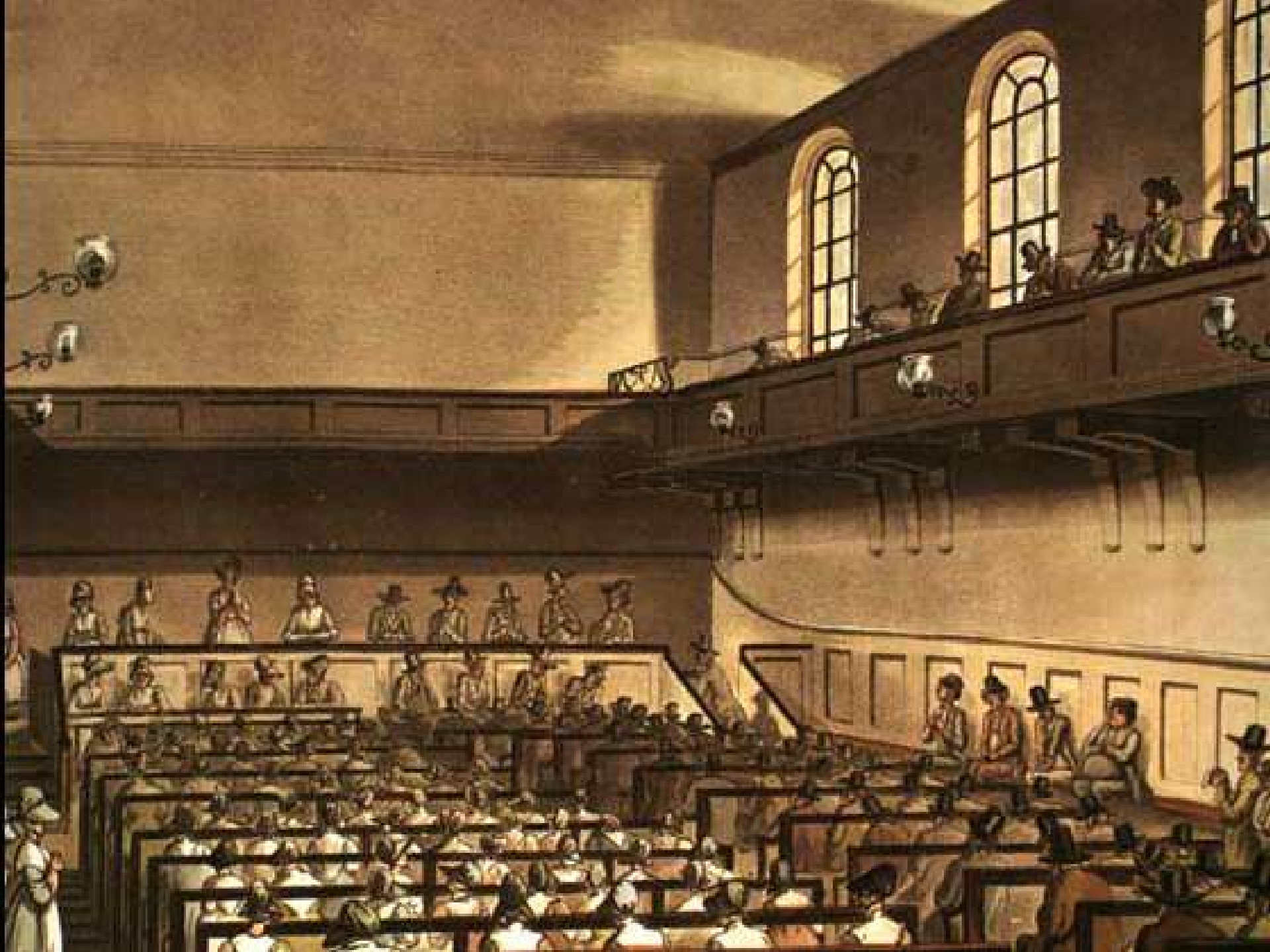
# *The Meeting: 18<sup>th</sup> Century Accounts*

- One day, being under a strong exercise of spirit, I stood up and said some words in a meeting; but not keeping close to the divine opening, I said more than was required of me.

– *The Journal of John Woolman* (1774)

- For when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them which touched my heart; and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up.

–Robert Barclay as quoted in *What Do Quakers Believe?*





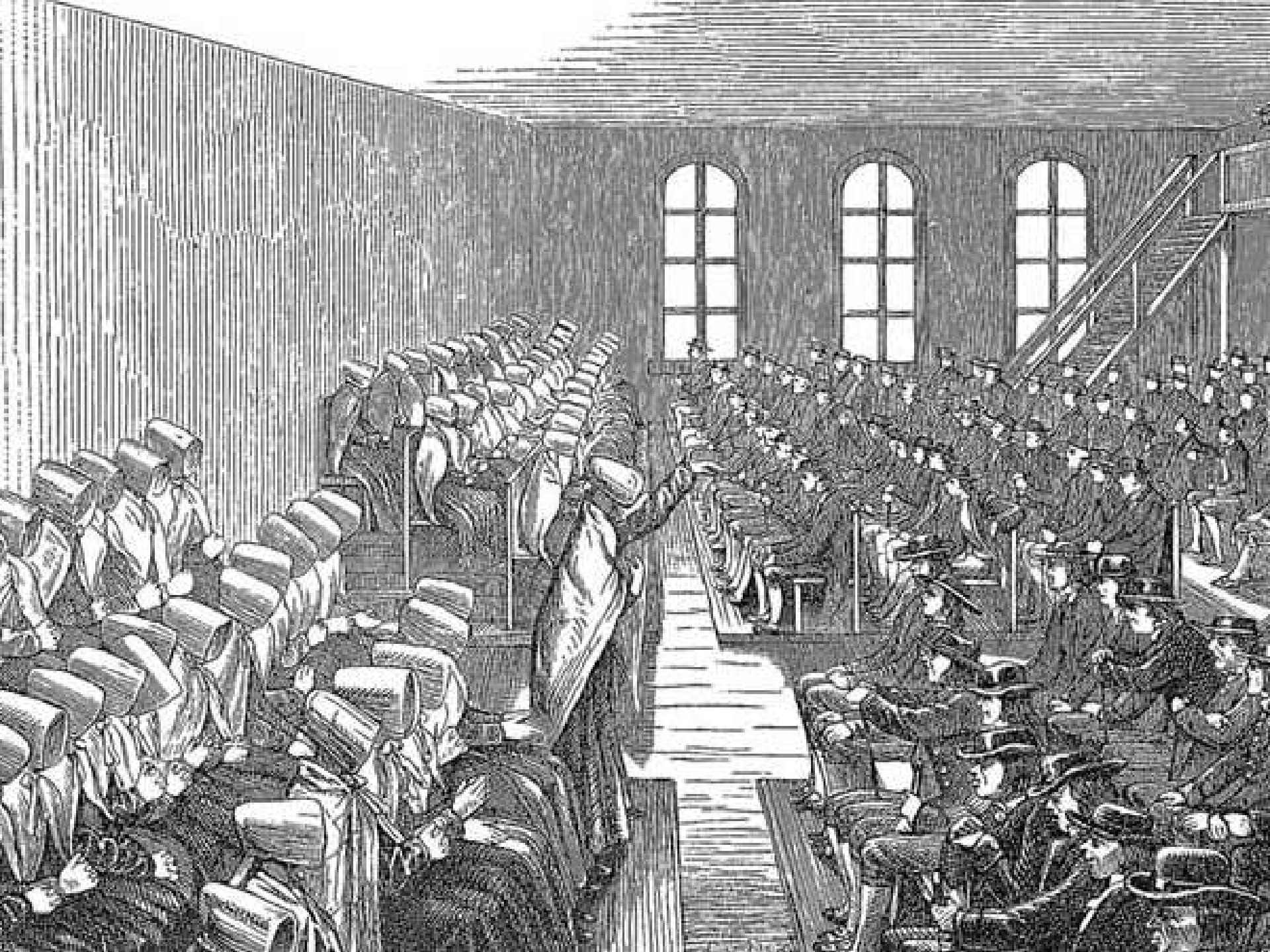
*Quaker Meeting*



# *Quaker Ideals: 18<sup>th</sup> Century Account*

- **Simplicity:** A way of life free from much entanglement appeared best for me, though the income might be small.
- **Social Justice:** With people who lived in ease on the hard labour of their slaves, I felt uneasy. . . . as I looked to the Lord, he inclined my heart to His testimony. I told the man that I believed the practice of continuing slavery to this people was not right.

– *The Journal of John Woolman* (1774)



# *Simplicity: The Quaker Wedding Service*

- In an atmosphere of quiet and reverence during the period of worship, the couple rise. Taking each other by the hand, they make their promises.
- When the couple are seated again, the marriage certificate is brought for them to sign. Then someone assigned to do so reads the certificate aloud. The meeting then continues . . . .
- The meeting closes by shaking of hands. All present are asked to sign the wedding certificate as witnesses to the marriage. — Quaker Wedding Practices



# *Lifestyle*



- Quakers closely resembled the Puritans.
  - They lived and worshipped as a strongly **communal people**.
  - They insisted upon **living orderly lives of thrift and self denial**.
  - They believed that every person had a **calling from God to lead a productive life of work**.
- These habits helped make them **prosperous merchants**.



*Depiction of Quaker Meeting*



*Philadelphia Quaker Meeting House Today*

# *Quaker Practices*

- Believed that they could achieve a **state of perfection** in this life.
- This meant applying Jesus' **Sermon on the Mount** in the most literal sense.
  - **Aided the poor.**
  - **FIRST to attack** the practice of slavery.
  - Believed in **complete equality** between men and women.
- Their belief in equality led to:
  - **Plain clothes and plain language**
  - **Refusal to show deference** by removing their hats, bowing, or other conventional manners.

## *Quaker Practices (cont.)*



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- They refused to bear arms or to provide tax support for war activities--Pacifists
- They kept peace with the Indians through honest and opening dealings.
- They established fixed prices to escape unpleasant haggling and bargaining.
- They initiated programs of prison reform and nonviolent care of the mentally ill.





*William Penn and the Indians in Pennsylvania  
Quakers were fair in their dealings with local Indian tribes*

# *Part II: William Penn*

- Early Life
- Conversion
- Religious Leader



# *Early Life of William Penn*



- Born in London in 1644.
- Father, Sir William Penn--admiral in the British navy.
- As a child, Penn was religiously inclined.
  - Rebelled against father's Anglicanism
  - Followed the Puritans
  - Expelled from Cambridge in 1662 for his views
- For a time, he led the life of a young aristocrat.
  - Traveled.
  - Studied law.
  - Fought in naval battles.
  - Put down a mutiny on his father's Irish estates.
  - Experienced the horrors of the Great Plague.



*Penn as a young man*

# *Penn's Conversion*

- In 1666, converted to the Society of Friends (the Quakers).
- Quakers (mostly poor and illiterate) thus acquired a prominent member of the educated aristocracy.
  - Provided the literary talent, political contacts, and legal skill to fight for the Quaker's religious freedom.
  - He produced pamphlets, tracts, and books:
    - Attacking the persecution of the Quakers
    - Calling for religious freedom
    - Explaining the Quaker faith

Q U A K E R S, in N E W - E N G L A N D,  
for the Worshipping of God.

- 22 have been Banished upon pain of Death.
- 03 have been M A R T Y R E D.
- 03 have had their Right-Ears cut.
- 01 hath been burned in the Hand with the letter H.
- 31 Persons have received 650 Stripes.
- 01 was beat while his Body was like a jelly.
- Several were beat with Pitched Ropes.
- Five Appeals made to *England*, were denied by the Rulers of *Boston*.
- One thousand forty four pounds worth of Goods hath been taken from them (being poor men) for meeting together in the fear of the Lord, and for keeping the Commands of Christ.
- One now lyeeth in Iron-fetters, condemned to dye.

Whereof

A L S O

Some CONSIDERATIONS, presented to the K I N G, which is  
in Answer to a Petition and Address which was presented

*Quakers Persecuted in New England*

# *Penn as Religious Leader*

- Throughout the 1660's and 1670's, Penn was in and out of English jails.
  - He successfully argued cases in defense of religious liberties.
  - He undertook missionary journeys to Holland and Germany.
  - He made lasting friendships that would help later in the growth of Pennsylvania.
- In 1681, Penn secured from the king the proprietary grant of Pennsylvania.



*Penn as a Quaker*



# Part III: Pennsylvania

- Proprietorship
- Governor v. Legislature
- Prosperity
- Unexpected Results

*[Handwritten letter on aged paper]*

Know that  
I am glad to hear that you are well  
and all things prospering in your affairs, you do you  
will not forget me by the way, I desire to  
if it comes to the point of time, I am  
to know, at all times, if you have  
to invade any right, justice, or  
law, or the rights of any man  
Inhabitants to keep their rights  
of justice, and not pass, without  
if any man be injured, he  
as soon as he can, but if he will  
come in, and I will not  
civilly into the town, if  
your friends of the  
King, and the  
Raiders, and  
I will not  
for 40 years, but  
say, if there be  
to come, but  
to come, but  
of the  
of the  
of the  
of the  
of the  
of the

Philadelphia 29th 1757  
For Joseph Willson & John  
Waller - 1757

# *Proprietorship—founding Pennsylvania (Penn's Woods)*

- When Penn acquired his grant, he began a promotional campaign throughout northern Europe.
  - His “Frame of Government” made provision for an assembly and a council --both elective.
  - Civil rights, including religious liberty, were guaranteed to all.
  - Land was offered at fixed prices, with an annual quitrent thereafter.



*Penn's Charter for Pennsylvania*

# *Governor v. Legislature*



- Penn **assumed incorrectly** that:
  - Social custom would make wealthy men the majority in the legislature.
  - **Quaker unity would bind them in loyalty to his leadership.**
- He was sadly disillusioned.
  - As governor--constantly battling with the legislature. **Quakers did not make peaceful legislators.**
  - There were times when he sought to sell his proprietorship.

# *Prosperity in Pennsylvania*

- Despite its political turbulence, **Pennsylvania** was **extremely prosperous**.
  - **Rich farmlands** attracted settlers who produced abundant **food for export**.
  - **Experienced merchants** from London and the colonies quickly **settled in Philadelphia**.
  - By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, **Philadelphia** was the **third most important commercial city** in the **British empire**, after London and Bristol.

# *Unexpected Results*

- The Quakers had thought themselves headed in one direction and found themselves going in another.
  - A frugal people, they worked hard and became wealthy.
  - Believers in equality, their success created an aristocracy.
  - They expected Quaker unity, but found themselves divided.
  - Their focus on religious freedom brought swarms of Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Catholics into Pennsylvania and reduced them to a minority.

# *Part IV: Withdrawal from Politics*

- Pacifism
- Concessions
- The French and Indian War
- Withdrawal



# *Pacifism*



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- The **most serious problem** facing the Quakers was created by their **pacifism**.
  - During the numerous wars of this era, **Pennsylvania authorities refused to provide funds or soldiers.**
  - In following the Biblical precept “Thou shalt not kill,” did they have the right to endanger the lives of non-Quakers?



of our skill contrived + composed  
s government



of  
sacred in its institution + en

# *Concessions*



- In light of this dilemma...
- All but one of the deputy governors who ruled in Penn's absence was carefully chosen from among non-Quakers--free to make compromises that Quakers could not.
- In the long run, Quakers found that they had made so many concessions – in business, government, education, social relations, and even dress and recreation – that their very existence seemed doomed.

# *French and Indian War*

- Quakers faced by the greatest of all military challenges: **the French and Indian War**.
- Their dilemma had become irresolvable.
  - If they remained participants in the government, they would have to **pay for and support a war**.
  - This they **could not do!**



# *Withdrawal from Public Life*

- 1756--Quakers withdrew almost entirely from public life.
  - Became an isolated “special people” cut off from the main current of American life.
  - Attention was directed to private philanthropy instead of public office.
- Even in the American Revolution, they remained peaceful.
  - Accused of being Tories.
  - Most stood their ground and remained faithful to their ideals.
  - A few broke from Quaker pacifism and created the Free Quakers—many of these participated in the American Revolution

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