



3.3 THE MIDDLE COLONIES: WILLIAM PENN’S HOLY EXPERIMENT

THE QUAKERS Religious Viewpoint	<p>Founded in England in the 17th century by George Fox, the QUAKERS (also known as the Society of Friends) had a different RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINT from that of the Anglicans or Puritans. They believed that God dwells in each person, that there is an INNER LIGHT that guides us. Authority was to be found, not in the Bible or church hierarchy, but in the VOICE OF THE HEART, which is God’s voice. The 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.</p>
Lifestyle	<p>In their LIFESTYLE, Quakers closely resembled the Puritans. Despite their belief that each person listened individually to the voice of God within, a belief with individualistic tendencies, they lived and worshipped as a communal people. They insisted upon living orderly, METHODICAL LIVES of thrift and self-denial. Every man should have a CALLING, a productive life of work in this world. Even when in jail, Quakers busily worked at crafts. These habits helped make them PROSPEROUS MERCHANTS, leading to the comment that they were men with “one foot in the meeting house and the other in the counting house.”</p>
Practices	<p>Quakers believed that they could achieve a STATE OF PERFECTION in this life. This meant applying the Sermon on the Mount in the most literal sense. They AIDED THE POOR, were the first to ATTACK SLAVERY, and believed in complete EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN. Their belief in equality led to plain clothes and plain language and the refusal to show deference by removing their hats, bowing, or exhibiting other conventional manners.</p> <p>In addition, they REFUSED TO BEAR ARMS or to provide tax support for war activities, kept PEACE WITH THE INDIANS through honest and opening dealings, established FIXED PRICES to escape unpleasant haggling and bargaining, and initiated programs of PRISON REFORM and nonviolent care of the mentally ill.</p>
SETTLEMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA William Penn	<p>WILLIAM PENN was born in London in 1644. His father, Sir William Penn, was an admiral in the British navy. Even as a child, he was religiously inclined. He rebelled against his father’s Anglicanism, FOLLOWED THE PURITANS, and was expelled from Cambridge in 1662 for his views. For a time, he led the life of a YOUNG ARISTOCRAT. He traveled, studied law, fought in naval battles, put down a mutiny on his father’s Irish estates, and experienced the horrors of the Great Plague.</p>
Proprietorship	<p>In 1666, Penn converted to the Society of Friends (Quakers). The religious group (mostly poor and illiterate) thus acquired a prominent member of the educated aristocracy. He provided the literary talent, political contacts, and legal skill to FIGHT FOR THE QUAKER’S RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. For many years, he produced pamphlets, tracts, and books attacking the persecution of the Quakers, calling for religious freedom, and explaining the Quaker faith.</p> <p>Throughout the 1660’s and 1670’s, Penn was in and out of English jails. He successfully argued cases in defense of religious liberties undertook missionary journeys to Holland and Germany, and made lasting friendships that would help later in the growth of Pennsylvania. In 1681, he secured from the king the PROPRIETARY GRANT of Pennsylvania.</p> <p>When Penn acquired his grant, he began a PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN throughout northern Europe. He had much to offer. His “Frame of Government” made provision for an ASSEMBLY AND A COUNCIL which were both elective. Civil rights, including RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, were guaranteed to all. LAND was offered at fixed prices, with an annual quitrent thereafter.</p>

<p>Governor v. Legislature</p>	<p>Penn assumed incorrectly that social custom would make wealthy men the majority in the legislature and that Quaker unity would bind them in loyalty to his leadership. He was sadly disillusioned. As GOVERNOR, he was constantly BATTLING WITH THE LEGISLATURE. Quakers, as it turned out, did not make peaceful legislators. There were times when he sought, in despair, to sell his proprietorship.</p>
<p>Prosperity</p>	<p>Despite its political turbulence, Pennsylvania was EXTREMELY PROSPEROUS. Its rich farmlands attracted settlers who produced abundant food for export. Experienced merchants from London and the colonies quickly settled in Philadelphia. By the mid-18th century, PHILADELPHIA was the THIRD MOST IMPORTANT COMMERCIAL CITY IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE, after London and Bristol.</p>
<p>Unexpected Results</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>PACIFISM</p>	<p>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?</p>
<p>Concessions</p>	<p>In light of this dilemma, it is understandable that all but one of the deputy governors who ruled the colony in Penn's absence was carefully chosen from among non-Quakers. Such men were 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.</p>
<p>Withdrawal from Politics</p>	<p>When in this frame of mind, the Quakers were 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. In 1756, the Quakers WITHDREW almost entirely from public life. They became an isolated "special people" cut off from the main current of American life. Their attention was directed to private philanthropy instead of public office. Even in the American Revolution, they remained peaceful. Because of that, they were accused of being Tories. But they stood their ground and remained FAITHFUL TO THEIR IDEALS.</p>
<p>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</p>	<p><u>Also applicable to the Quakers:</u> Historians have observed that the English colonists who came to America experienced soaring expectations, frustration, disaster or near disaster, and then slow adjustment to the grinding realities of life on the wilderness edge of the North American continent. Trace this pattern as it occurred in the settlement of Pennsylvania. What compromise did the Quakers make to insure their survival as a community?</p> <p>How did Quaker principles shape the establishment of Pennsylvania? Was William Penn's Holy Experiment a success or failure? Explain your answer.</p> <p>Discuss the Quaker concept of pacifism. In your opinion, is there ever a just war? Are there times when non-violence doesn't work? Does violence ever bring peace? Are there limits to the effectiveness of non-violence in resolving conflict? Under what circumstances is the use of violence justified?</p> <p>If your options were expanded to include Pennsylvania, where would you rather have lived (Virginia, Massachusetts, or Pennsylvania)? Explain your answer.</p>