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The Indians' Friends

Quakers and Native Americans in the Seventeenth Century

JAMES D. LE SHANA

On July 24, 1683, an English subject in the New World wrote an enthusiastic letter to Lord North in which he described his experiences with the native population. He told of trade with the Indians and the purchase of land, two common objectives of Europeans at this time. "A Fair we have had, and weekly markets," he explained,

...to which the ancient lowly inhabitants come to sell their produce to their profit and our accommodation. I have also bought lands of the Natives, treated them largely, and settled a firm and advantageous correspondence [sic.] with them, who are a careless, merry people yet in property strict with us, though a kind [of] community among themselves.

Nothing in this passage seems particularly surprising. However, the author continued his description of the Indians in a fashion that separates him from many of his countrymen. "In counsel", he wrote, the Indians appear "so deliberate, in speech short, grave and eloquent, young and old in their several class, that I have never seen in Europe any thing more wise, cautious and dexterous." He concluded his complementary comments on the Indians by remarking, "'tis as admirable to me as it may look incredible on that side of the water." Whether he viewed them as equal in every way or not, this Englishman admired and respected the Indians.¹

Far from standing alone, William Penn, the author of this letter to Lord North, represents a sub-group of English society often overlooked in

contemporary accounts of European and Indian relations, the Quakers. Normally, the Friends are lumped together in evaluation with the rest of the English colonizers or they are dismissed altogether as insignificant bystanders.² Although persecution curbed the growth of the Quaker movement after the Restoration in the 1660's, their activities were not crippled. To the contrary, this religious group reached its peak in numbers and influence in America during the colonial period, especially for the hundred years from 1660 to 1760.³

In their attitudes toward Native Americans, the Quakers bore similarities to other English groups involved in America, yet diverged in interesting and significant ways. Like their New England kin, Friends actively endeavored to missionize, colonize, and trade with Indians. However, they also held distinctive views of Native Americans, resulting in some unique practices and responses. Even though various individual non-Quaker examples of fair treatment and kindness may be cited, Friends as a group tended to maintain a keen appreciation and respect for the Indians and their various cultures.

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between Quakers and Native Americans during the second half of the seventeenth century, with a special emphasis on their missionary efforts. A secondary purpose is to add to the perspective that not all English colonizers, let alone all Europeans, thought and behaved alike. To accomplish these goals, a brief review of European contact with Indians will be followed by a more detailed analysis of Friends involvement. A survey of the Quaker interests in evange-

1. The term "careless" meant "care-free," connoting contentment rather than irresponsibility. For purposes of quotation in this essay, the seventeenth-century style of capitalizing and abbreviating many words has been contempORIZED for ease of reading. William Penn, "To Lord North," in Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds., *The Papers of William Penn*, Vol. II (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), pp. 414-415.

2. For scholarship on European and Native American relations in Colonial America see James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact Through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989); William Cronon, *Changes In The Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987); Bernard W. Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Edward P. Dozier, *The Pueblo Indians of North America*, (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1983); Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975).

3. These dates are somewhat arbitrary, but are close to the last date in which a Quaker was killed in Boston by the Puritans (1661) and when some of the Friends in power in Philadelphia resigned their political positions due to hostilities with Indians in the Western territories (1756).

lism, colonization, and trade relations will intertwine with a discussion of their particular views about and treatment of Indians.

European attitudes toward Indians depended on their motives for exploring and colonizing as well as their socio-religious backgrounds. French and English examples will illustrate. The early French interest in North America and its native inhabitants focused mainly on discovering gold and other riches. As a result, their interaction with Indians proved less colonial in nature than commercial, and the prospect of wealth through fishing, trapping, and trading made up for the paucity of gold. With the founding of Quebec in 1608, Catholic missions soon followed. The French viewed religion as a valuable tool in maintaining territorial control and trade advantages with Indians. However, in order to win Christian converts, Jesuit missionaries attempted to avoid making them "Frenchmen" first. They developed "flying missions" in which the Jesuits lived with seminomadic Indian hunters and traders, learned their language, and then endeavored to replace traditional native beliefs with their own. While the Jesuits claimed success in these efforts, many Indians simply incorporated French Catholicism, with its rituals and icons, into their symbolic and pantheistic world view.⁴

In contrast to the French, the English agenda in the New World focused on the acquisition of territory for farming and colonization. Although they valued trade, they desired to dominate both the land and the people they found on it. Many of the English viewed Indians as obstructions to colonization or else failed to consider them at all. Native Americans moved much and worked little, disqualifying them from the right to own their land. As John Cotton, the colonial minister, explained, "in a vacant soil he that taketh possession of it, and bestoweth culture and husbandry upon it, his right it is."⁵ Most colonists thus rationalized the conquest of New England through disease and force, disregarding Indian ownership and claims. Native American customs and behaviors received similar rejection by most English missionaries. They believed that they first needed to civilize the "savages" before they could convert them, establishing English order and industry through Indian schools, "praying towns," and Biblical instruction. As promoters of a word-based system of Christianity, dependent upon the transmission of written and spoken ideas, they found it difficult to convert Indians without first making them linguistically and also culturally, "Englishmen." According to current scholarship, this soteriological imperative of civilizing Indians before "Christianizing" them characterized all English missionary efforts. However, this perspective ignores the contribution of Quakers.⁶

4. See Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, pp. 72-80; and James Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, pp. 71-127.

5. John Cotton quoted in William Cronon, *Changes In The Land*, pp. 56-57.

The role of Quaker missionaries in European and Indian relations remains an important area of analysis commonly neglected by historians.⁷ In contrast to their countrymen and women from England, the Quakers provide a glimpse of an active religious group, intent on promoting their brand of Christianity while demonstrating cultural respect and genuine kindness. One explanation for this oversight of Quakers by scholars relates to a common misperception that Friends avoid evangelism. Echoing others, historian James Axtell reasoned that "the Quakers did not believe in proselyting" unless by quiet example. Elton Trueblood described well this "popular conception" in which "Quakers are an exceedingly mild and harmless people, largely given to silence, totally unaggressive, with a religion that is neither evangelical in content nor evangelistic in practice."⁸ To follow this logic, if Quakers eschewed evangelism in general, they certainly would not have tried to convert Indians.

Contrary to the myth of the quiet and non-evangelistic Quaker, the evidence indicates that Friends in early America, especially in the seventeenth century, demonstrated great concern for the souls of others. "Whoever preaches the gospel," wrote Quaker theologian, Robert Barclay, "is really an evangelist." He also emphasized clearly the evangelistic goal of Friends when he stated in his Apology, "We desire therefore all that come among us to be proselyted." In Trueblood's words, "All tried to make converts and they tried all the time."⁹ Starting with the founder of the Friends movement, George Fox, the Quakers attempted to evangelize a lost world. Fox experienced his own "conversion" in 1647, which led to a desire to help others spiritually. He encountered personally the "Light of Christ" and immediately began sharing with others the spiritual answers he found in

6. See Bernard W. Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility*, p. 116; James Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, pp. 131-135; and Charles M. Segal and David C. Stineback, *Puritans, Indians, and Manifest Destiny* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), pp. 141-179.

7. For scholarship on colonial Quakerism see Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers In The American Colonies* (New York, 1911); James Bowden, *The History of the Society of Friends in America*, Vol. I and II (New York: Arno Press, 1972); Frederick B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960); Carla Gardina Pestana, *Quakers and Baptists in Colonial Massachusetts* (New York, 1991); Jonathan M. Chu, *Neighbors, Friends, or Madmen: The Puritan Adjustment to Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts Bay* (Westport, Conn., 1985); Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley* (New York, 1988); and Arthur J. Worrall, *Quakers in the Colonial Northeast* (Hanover, N. H., 1980). For Quaker relations with Indians, the definitive work remains Rayner Wickersham Kelsey, *Friends and the Indians, 1655-1917* (Philadelphia: The Associated Executive Committee of Friends on Indian Affairs, 1917).

8. James Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, p. 275; D. Elton Trueblood, *The People Called Quakers*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 1.

9. Robert Barclay, *An Apology For The True Christian Divinity Being An Explanation And Vindication Of The Principles And Doctrines Of The People Called Quakers* (Philadelphia: Friends' Book Store, 1908), pp. 309 and 340; and D. Elton Trueblood, *The People Called Quakers*, p. 5.

Jesus. "I was sent to turn people from darkness to the Light," he wrote in his *Journal*,

...that they might receive Christ Jesus; for to as many as should receive Him in His Light, I saw He would give power to become the sons of God; which power I had obtained by receiving Christ.¹⁰

In describing his call to ministry, Fox wrote in evangelistic terms similar to other Protestant missionaries. He aspired to lead people to "receive" Christ Jesus.

Like Fox, Quaker missionaries in the New World aimed to evangelize and spread the Gospel. Expelled from Plymouth in 1657, Christopher Holder and John Copeland went toward Salem. Along the way they held meetings and won converts. As they later recalled,

Having obtained mercy from God, and being baptized into his covenant Christ Jesus, [we] preached freely unto them the things we had seen and heard, and our hands had handled, which as an engrafted word took place in them, such as never can be rooted out.¹¹

Typical of other Quaker missionaries, Holder and Copeland believed that their "hearers" soon became their "fellow-sufferers."¹² The success of many Quaker evangelistic efforts helps to account for the legislation passed against them in most of the colonies. Within 10 years of its founding, the Society of Friends in England and America grew to 50,000 adherents. From 1655 to 1662, at least sixty missionaries traveled across the Atlantic.¹³ A minute from a Friends Meeting in Skipton in 1660, describes the vast spread of their missionary activities. "We have received certain information from Friends in London of the great work and service of the Lord beyond the seas," they recorded,

...in several parts and regions, as Germany, America, Virginia, and many other places as Florence, Mantua, Palatine, Tuscany, Italy, Rome, Turkey, Jerusalem, France, Geneva, Norway, Barbados, Bermuda, Antigua, Surinam, Newfoundland, through all which Friends have passed in the service of the Lord, and divers other places, countries, islands, and nations.¹⁴

10. Rufus M. Jones, ed., *The Journal of George Fox* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1976), p. 102. See also Walter R. Williams, *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism* (Newberg, Oregon: The Barclay Press, 1987), p. 1.

11. James Bowden, *The History of the Society of Friends in America*, Vol. I, pp. 87-88.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Frederick B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, p. 9.

14. Skipton Meeting Minute, quoted in Walter R. Williams, *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism*, p.60.

Quaker missionaries traveled extensively, demonstrating their commitment to the priority of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In addition to a desire to evangelize colonists, the early Friends exhibited a focused concern to win native converts. The above minute from the Skipton Meeting continued by referring to the "many nations of the Indians" in which Quakers "had service for the Lord...published His Name and declared the everlasting Gospel of peace unto them that have been afar off, that they might be brought nigh unto God." Rather than simply trying to reach Englishmen with their message, Friends attempted to proselytize Indians.¹⁵

When George Fox visited the colonies in 1672, he initiated a number of missionary encounters with Indians and typically reported a positive reception. On one such occasion on the eastern shore of Chesapeake Bay, Fox held an evangelistic meeting to which he invited "the Indian emperor and his kings." When his intended guests arrived, Fox recorded "two good opportunities" with them. They not only "heard the word of the Lord willingly," they also "confessed to it." Thus, Fox believed his listeners assented to the truth of his message and could become his fellow Christian laborers. "What I spoke to them," he wrote, "I desired them to speak to their people,"

...to let them know that God was raising up His tabernacle of witness in their wilderness-country, and was setting up His standard and glorious ensign of righteousness. They carried themselves very courteously and lovingly, and inquired where the next meeting would be, saying that they would come to it.¹⁶

The records fail to indicate whether or not these Indians heard Fox preach again. What is certain is that many others did.

Fox's missionary trip to America lasted for two years, during which time he traveled widely and met with many Indians. Accompanied by other Quaker missionaries, he sometimes hired Indians to transport his group in their canoes and often used them as guides. He went out of his way to visit Indian encampments and enjoyed the overnight hospitality of Indian hosts. Near Rhode Island he spoke to "about a hundred" Indians, and in North Carolina he even met with "one of the Indian priests." Considering the frequency of contact he had with Indians, combined with his bold personality and compulsion to preach, it is not hard to imagine that many of them heard Fox proclaim the gospel message. He penned in his *Journal* that he and some companions "passed through many Indian towns, and over some rivers and bogs" near Delaware Bay. As they "came among the Indians" they

15. *Ibid.*

16. Rufus M. Jones, ed., *The Journal of George Fox*, pp. 499-500.

continually “declared the day of the Lord to them.” Though Fox failed to proselytize all of his Indian hearers, he believed that many responded favorably and some became “convinced.” Some of the conversions occurred in Maryland, where he met with another Indian “emperor” and “two others of the chief men” among them. “I spoke to them by an interpreter,” Fox explained,

...they heard the Truth attentively, and were very loving. A blessed meeting this was, of great service both for convincing and for establishing in the Truth those that were convinced of it. Blessed be the Lord, who causeth His blessed Truth to spread!¹⁷

Fox felt that at least some of his Indian listeners became Christian believers.

George Fox not only practiced Indian evangelism, he preached its importance to his fellow Friends. In his pivotal doctrinal statement to the Governor of Barbados, written at the outset of his journey to America in 1671, he noted that “Indians make up a very large part of the families in this island for whom an account will be required by Him Who comes to judge the quick and the dead, at the great day of judgment.”¹⁸ Ten years later he wrote to Quakers in Carolina, urging them to “have meetings with the Indian kings and their people, to preach the gospel of peace, of life, and of salvation to them.”¹⁹ Fox knew that many of his co-religionists traveled to America as colonists for reasons other than evangelism. In 1682 he wrote to Friends “that are gone, and are going over to plant, and make outward plantations.” Yet he entreated these Quaker planters to “invite all the Indians, and their kings” and “have meetings with them.” While Friends cultivated their own earthly plantations, Fox hoped that they would not neglect making “heavenly plantations” in the Indians’ hearts, “and so beget them to God, that they may serve and worship him, and spread his truth abroad.”²⁰ At least some Quakers heeded Fox’s instructions. Following his visit to Virginia, Fox wrote back to them concerning encouraging news.

I received letters giving me an account of the service some of you had with and amongst the Indian king and his council; and if you go over again to Carolina, you may inquire of Captain Batts, the governor, with whom I left

17. Quakers frequently used the term “convincement” for “conversion,” perhaps partly because they believed that God alone can convert or change a person’s heart. Rufus M. Jones, ed., *The Journal of George Fox*, pp. 482-535.

18. George Fox, “Letter to the Governor of Barbados,” in Walter R. Williams, *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism*, p. 76.

19. George Fox, “To Friends in Carolina,” *The Works of George Fox*, Vol. 8 (New York: AMS Press, 1975), p. 202.

20. George Fox, “An epistle to all planters, and such who are transporting themselves into foreign plantations in America,” *The Works of George Fox*, Vol. 8, p. 218.

a paper to be read to the [Indian] Emperor, and his thirty kings under him of the Tuscaroras.²¹

Although the contents of Fox's "paper" to the Indians remains a matter of speculation, his letter to the Virginian Quakers demonstrates his desire for on-going Indian contacts. He wrote, not to Friends adverse to ministry with Indians, but to ones who already attempted to fill their roles as missionaries to them.

As Englishmen, some Friends might have been expected to hope for cultural change among the Indians. In a letter to George Fox in 1686, John Archdale expressed pleasure that "some of the Indians" in Carolina "are so civilized as to come into English habits" which might serve as "a good preparation for the gospel." However, a strategic plan to reduce Indians to civility never became the stated objective of Friends. In fact, some Quakers thought that English behaviors needed to change prior to Indian conversions. "If any of them [from England] come to be sea-men or travel," wrote John Bellers, "they will be as so many missionaries...their regular lives will greatly strengthen the testimony of such as shall have a ministry, whilst the prophane [sic.] and vitious [sic.] lives of our present sea-men, etc., is one of the greatest scandals and obstacles to the Indians' conversion."²² Thomas Story, a well-traveled Quaker missionary, observed similarly the corrupting influences of English colonists who made "*pretense* to religion and knowledge, and yet are worse in *practice*." They taught Indians "immoralities," such as "drunkenness, swearing, and the like." William Penn noted the Indians' civility and sense of order, although untutored in English ways. "None speak but the aged, they having consulted the rest before," he observed in 1683. "Thus in selling me their land they ordered themselves; I must say...they are an extreordinary [sic.] people." This favorable view of Indian behavior prompted Josiah Coale to declare that he found many Indians "more sober and Christian-like" than some "Christians so-called."²³

Rather than preaching the need to civilize Indians prior to their conversion, the message of Friends focused simply on the belief that "there is no salvation in any other name, but by the name of Jesus."²⁴ Viewing Indians as

21. George Fox quoted in James Bowden, *The History of the Society of Friends in America*, Vol. I, p. 412. For interesting accounts of other early Quaker missionaries with Indians see *A Journal of the Life of Thomas Story* (New-Castle-Upon-Tyne: Isaac Thompson & Co., 1747), p. 155; and James Dickinson, "Journal of James Dickinson," in William Evans and Thomas Evans, eds., *The Friends' Library*, Vol. XII (Philadelphia, 1848), p. 390.

22. "John Archdale to George Fox," in James Bowden, *The History of the Society of Friends in America*, Vol. I, p. 416; and Ruth A. Fry, *John Bellers, 1654-1725, Quaker, Economist and Social Reformer* (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1935), pp. 151-152.

23. *A Journal of the Life of Thomas Story*, p. 155; William Penn, "To The Earl of Sunderland," Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds., *The Papers of William Penn*, Vol. II, p. 417; Josiah Coale quoted in Howard Brinton, *Friends For 300 Years*, p. 38.

“men” rather than as people who failed as “Englishmen,” Quakers exhibited a belief that Christ intended the gospel message to be for all mankind. Indians stood as their spiritual peers in that they shared equally in need of the Savior. Fox explained that “Christ died for the tawnies [Indians]...as well as for you that are called white.”²⁵ Quakers thus demonstrated both a respect for Indians and a concern for their eternal souls. It rarely seemed to occur to early Friends that Indians who converted to Christianity through Quakers might need to give up their cultural heritage.

Fox and other Quaker missionaries attempted to start new churches or “Meetings” among the colonists and desired to develop them with the Indians. However, despite the emphasis on missions and proselytizing, no Indian Quaker churches appeared and few participated in established Meetings. As late as 1700, William Penn addressed Philadelphia Friends with a long-standing concern, “that Friends ought to be very careful in discharging a good conscience” toward Indians “for the good of their souls” so that “they might as frequent as may be come to Meetings on first days.” Penn hoped that the Indians would receive Christ and join the membership of the Meetings. The minuted Quaker response to Penn’s request suggests at least two fundamental barriers to fulfilling his vision, intermittent proximity and language problems. First of all, Friends recorded that “when the Indians come to town” they would speak with them and try to “get a Meeting amongst them.”²⁶ Apparently, the Quakers expected to contact the seminomadic Indians at some point for trade or other purposes, but not on a continuous basis as settled neighbors. Even friendly Indians maintained separate cultural practices and did not live with Friends. Similarly, no Quakers went to live among Indians for any length of time until the eighteenth century. The “flying missions” of the French employed no Quaker “pilots” and therefore no on-going ministry occurred with an Indian clan or tribe. Those Friends who relocated eventually to preach to Indians lived “near” them rather than “as” them or “with” them.²⁷ Each group thus seemed to prefer their own, familiar customs and social patterns.

Difficulties with language posed a second kind of hurdle for the conversion of Indians to Quaker Christianity. The Philadelphia Friends who answered Penn and discussed starting a Meeting with Indians reported their

24. George Fox, “To Friends In Carolina,” *The Works of George Fox*, Vol. 8, p. 37.

25. George Fox, “Gospel Family Order, Being a Short Discourse Concerning The Ordering of Families, Both of Whites, Blacks, and Indians,” in J. William Frost, *The Quaker Origins of Antislavery* (Norwood, Pennsylvania: Norwood Editions, 1980), p. 47.

26. “Philadelphia Monthly Meeting Minutes,” in J. William Frost, *The Quaker Origins of Antislavery*, p. 73.

27. Notice Walter R. Williams, *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism*, p. 162. For a more descriptive account of some Quaker missionaries who lived and worked with the Seneca in the late eighteenth century, see Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969).

need for "interpreters". Not everyone could speak effectively with Indians, and so they hoped that some "among Friends that can speak Indian well" would join them.²⁸ Certainly, Quaker Meetings without effective interpreters would hold little attraction for Indians, but a deeper problem of language relates to the transmission of complex spiritual ideas. Religion involves a set of sacred symbols or concepts, and effective communication of those ideas requires arriving at mutually understood meanings.²⁹ It may be that when Quakers spoke of their God, the Light of Christ, and salvation, some Indians failed to comprehend the theological abstractions. Whereas the French Jesuits, with their image-based Catholicism could more easily appeal to Indians and so produced at least the appearance of conversions, the English Quakers' non-ritualistic and word-based system of beliefs did not resonate with the Indians' spiritual framework. Those Indians that Fox "convinced" of the "truth" may have failed to fully grasp the meaning of his message or he may have misunderstood their response, confusing Indian graciousness with evangelistic success. With the help of skillful interpreters, some Indians may have understood enough of the Quakers' preaching to offer an informed response. In this case, presented with the option of jettisoning their religious and cultural traditions in favor of Friends' beliefs, even those Indians who appreciated Quakers may have rejected their religious system. Although Friends desired to proselytize Indians and treated them with kindness and respect, they simply failed to communicate clearly or persuasively the relevance and necessity of their Christ.

In common with other Europeans, colonial Quakers *attempted* to proselytize Native Americans in the late seventeenth century. They likewise pursued another English objective in the New World, colonization on land owned by Indians. The desire by Friends to acquire land and colonize appears evident almost from the beginning of the Quaker movement. Rufus Jones suggests that the concept of a Quaker colony began with George Fox. Josiah Coale, a Friend who traveled extensively among Indians in America, mentioned in a letter that Fox commissioned him to "treat with the Susquehanna Indians for the purchase of a strip of territory." Though Fox's request is not preserved, Coale's answer demonstrates that he hoped a group of Quakers would inhabit the land. "As concerning Friends buying a piece of land of the Susquehanna Indians," he responded, "I have spoken of it to them and told them what thou said concerning it, but their answer was that there is no land that is habitable or fit for situation beyond Baltimore's liberty [territory]." It is striking that Coale sent this letter in 1660, some

28. "Philadelphia Monthly Meeting Minutes," in J. William Frost, *The Quaker Origins of Antislavery*, p. 73.

29. See Clifford Geertz, "Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols," and "Religion As a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 88-114 and 128-132.

twelve years prior to Fox's visit to America. About this same time, William Penn also turned his attention to the New World. Writing in 1681 about his new Pennsylvania territory, he recalled, "This I can say, that I had an *opening of joy* as to these parts in the year 1661, at Oxford twenty years since."³⁰

Perhaps motivated by Fox's visit and impact, Quakers obtained possession of a large part of New Jersey the year after he returned to England in 1674, by a purchase made through John Fenwick and Edward Byllynge. When the province opened to settlers, the proprietors announced their purpose to "lay a foundation for after ages to understand their liberty as men and Christians, that they may not be brought into bondage but by their own consent; for we put the power in the people."³¹ In contrast to Puritan norms, the Quakers thus established the right of every man to worship without interruption or molestation. This freedom extended to Indians, as well. Perhaps the most well-known and successful Quaker colony is the one established by William Penn. In exchange for a large war debt owed to his father's estate, Charles II gave Penn a large tract of land in the New World. Known as "Penn's Woods" or Pennsylvania, this land grant would be the location for a "Holy Experiment" based on religious toleration for all, including Indians. In contrast to other English settlements, this new Quaker colony rested on the conviction that "liberty of conscience...must not be denied, even by those that are most scandalized at the ill use some seem to have made of such pretenses."³²

Almost from the moment he received his charter, Penn focused his attention on Indian affairs. His rights to the land came through the crown's claims of ownership based on conquest of the Dutch. But Penn realized the ethical problem of developing an English colony in Pennsylvania while attempting to respect the rights of the original inhabitants. On October 18, 1681, Penn dispatched a letter to the Lenni Lenape, or Delaware Indians, who lived within the bounds of his new territory. Penn opened his letter with, "My Friends," followed by words which pointed to their mutual accountability for right behavior. "There is a great God and power that hath made the world," he explained, "to whom you and I, and all people owe their being and well-being, and to whom you and I must one day give an account for all that we do in the world." It is significant that Penn consistently applied his maxims equally to the English and the Indians. They needed to "do good to one another." Penn then attempted to explain the

30. Rufus M. Jones, ed., *The Journal of George Fox*, pp. 515-516.

31. Quoted in Clifton E. Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 113.

32. "Penn and Liberty of Conscience, 1686," in Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *A Documentary History Of Religion In America: To the Civil War* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), p. 119.

reason for his interest in their land, and his desire to maintain friendly and peaceable relations.

Now this great God Hath been pleased to make me concerned in your part of the world, and the king of the country, where I live, hath given me a great province therein; but I desire to enjoy it *with your love and consent*, that we may always live together as neighbours and friends; else what would the great God do to us, who hath made us, not to devour and destroy one another, but to live soberly and kindly together in the world?³³

Penn prepared well for this initial letter. He knew that the Indians held legitimate grievances against previous white colonists. "I am very sensible of the unkindness and injustice that have been too much exercised towards you by the people of these parts of the world," he empathized, "but I am not such a man." Perhaps the Indians' pain and the transgressions toward them echoed in the hearts of early Friends like Penn who also suffered at the hands of Englishmen. Guided by Quaker principles, Penn aimed to treat Native Americans better than the proprietors of other colonies. He knew he would need to earn the trust of the Indians over time, expressing his desire to "win and gain [their] love and friendship by a kind, just, and peaceable life." Not only did he believe that God would hold him accountable for his behavior toward the Indians, but he also found motivation in his "great love and regard" for the Indians as a people.³⁴

Penn soon proved his effectiveness as both a gracious diplomat with the Indians and as a colonial strategist. On October 28, 1681, he sent orders with his cousin, Colonel Markham, to "buy the land of the true owners which I think is the Susquehanna people." In their dealings with the Indians, Penn and the Quakers gained a reputation for honesty and fairness. Yet Penn was no fool. He also instructed Markham to "treat speedily with the Indians for land before they are furnisht [sic.] by others with things that please them," adding that he should "take advice in this."³⁵ A few years later, during a personal visit to America, Penn initiated a famous Indian treaty that gained a legendary if somewhat confused status. Supposedly, he met with the Delawares under an old elm tree at the village of Schackamaxon. That he did meet with them at some time and establish a treaty around 1683 appears certain, but the exact location, date, and contents of the treaty are unclear. Benjamin West painted a huge, anachronistic picture commemorating it. Although no treaty document exists, a second significant treaty occurred in 1701 which reportedly echoed its terms. With pledges of recip-

33. "William Penn and the Indians, 1681," Edwin S. Gaustad, *A Documentary History Of Religion In America: To the Civil War*, pp. 123-124.

34. *Ibid.*

35. William Penn, "Additional Instructions To William Markham," in Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds., *The Papers of William Penn*, Vol.II, p. 129.

rocal good will, it also provided for fair treatment in the courts. Voltaire called it the only Indian treaty never ratified by an oath and never broken. During Penn's lifetime, this claim appears to have validity. Even as late as 1731, the Pennsylvania Governor could write of Penn's treaty saying that he "made a strong chain of friendship" with the Indians "which has been kept bright to this day."³⁶

To the Iroquois, Penn was the beloved "Onas" and the Delaware called him brother "Miquon." Both names meant "feather," and since quills were used for writing they punned on his name.³⁷ Penn cultivated his relationship with the Indians through fair dealings and mutual trust. He attempted to learn some of the Indians' language and considered them "as the same flesh and blood with the Christians and the same as if the one body were to be divided into two parts."³⁸ These are not the words of the typical Englishman who viewed Native Americans as inherently inferior. Penn's combination of personal integrity, genuine respect, and proffered kindness helps to explain the great success of his Quaker experiment. In contrast to other colonies experiencing Indian warfare and outbursts of violence, Indians and Quakers in Pennsylvania shared good will for many years. According to the Pennsylvania Gazette in 1743, an Indian representative reaffirmed to the Governor that Indians continued to view the colonists in Pennsylvania as "one flesh and blood with themselves" by "virtue of the treaties subsisting." Therefore they could have "neither intention nor inclination to hurt them." By 1758, when Indian hostilities in the west became frequent, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting could still report its "thankfulness for the peculiar favour extended and continued to our Friends and Brethren in profession, none of whom have as we have yet heard been slain nor carried into captivity."³⁹ The fact that friendly relations broke down eventually in the eighteenth century between the Pennsylvania government and the Delaware Indians simply underscores the effectiveness of Penn and the early Friends.⁴⁰

36. Governor Patrick Gordon quoted in Francis Jennings, "Brother Miquon: Good Lord!" in Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds., *The World Of William Penn* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), p. 200. Quaker scholars often retell the story of Penn's treaty. For example see John Punshon, *Portrait In Grey: A Short History of the Quakers* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1986), p. 177; Elfrida Vipont, *The Story Of Quakerism: 1652-1952* (London: The Bannisdale Press, 1954), pp. 119-120; and Walter R. Williams, *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism*, p. 129.

37. See Francis Jennings, "Brother Miquon: Good Lord!" in Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds., *The World Of William Penn*, p. 198.

38. Quoted in Clifton E. Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 116.

39. *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Philadelphia, February 2, 1743; and "Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Minutes, 1758" in Francis Jennings, "Brother Miquon: Good Lord!" in Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds., *The World Of William Penn*, p. 207.

In addition to missionary efforts and colonization, a third major issue that commanded the attention of early Quakers in dealing with Indians, relates to trade and commerce. The great Quaker bankers of the eighteenth century, such as the Barclays, Lloyds, and Gurneys, had their roots in the textile businesses, merchant houses, trading centers, and infant industries of the seventeenth century. Quaker leaders encouraged Friends to participate diligently in commerce. Thomas Chalkley, author of one of the most widely published Quaker Journals, taught that "the tradesman and the merchant, do not understand by our Lord's Doctrine that they must neglect their calling, or grow idle in their business." Instead, they "must certainly work, and be industrious." George Fox observed that as a result of Quaker efforts, they "had more trade than any of their neighbours, and if there was any trading, they had a great part of it."⁴¹ The detractors of Friends also noted their trading and business talents. A popular book first published in 1684 stated:

They are generally merchants and mechanicks [sic.], and are observed to be very punctual in their dealings, men of few words in a bargain, modest and composed in their deportment, temperate in their lives and using great frugality in all things. In a word, they are singularly industrious, sparing no labour or pains to increase their wealth.⁴²

Although sometimes criticized for their business proclivity, even those outside of Quakerism recognized their commercial efforts and hard work. Friends also developed a reputation for honesty and truthfulness in their business transactions. Early books of Church Discipline urged Quakers to demonstrate integrity in their commercial dealings. All those who "trade by sea or land," Friends instructed,

...and buy, bargain or contract beyond their abilities, and such as keep not their words, promises, or engagements [sic.] in their dealings or do not pay or satisfy their just debts according to time agreed on, these being a reproach to the truth and a manifest injury and injustice.⁴³

40. Perhaps the most infamous case of injustice became known as the "Walking Purchase," in which the Delaware Indians lost a large tract of land to the Proprietors in 1737. See Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 126-127.

41. "A Journal, or Historical Account, of the Life, Travels, and Christian Experiences, of the Antient, Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, Thomas Chalkley" in *A Collection of the Works of Thomas Chalkley* (Philadelphia, 1749), pp. 97-98; and George Fox quoted in Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (New York: The Norton Library, 1963), p. 46.

42. Giovanni Paolo Marana in Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, p. 47.

Local elders attempted to enforce these instructions through direct confrontation and brought notice of infractions to the Quaker Meetings. Fox recorded that, "people came to see Friends' honesty and truthfulness" and knew that "for conscience sake towards God, they would not cozen [sic.] and cheat them."⁴⁴

Those people who came to trust and "deal with" Friends included the Indians.

As has been mentioned, some of the most important trade agreements between the Quakers and Indians involved the acquisition of land. When Penn made his treaties with the Delaware Indians, he secured them with gifts of European articles. These presents included customary items such as knives, axes, fishhooks, needles, blankets, stockings, and coats. By 1685, Penn calculated that his spending on exchanges with Indians already totaled £1,200 in presents and purchase money for a small section of southeastern Pennsylvania.⁴⁵ Despite the potential for lucrative earnings, Penn and other Quakers spurned trading one typical European commodity with Indians, alcohol. Penn believed that "the Dutch, Sweeds and English learned them drunkenness" in which state they "kill and burn one another." Although he knew that some natives loved rum and would readily accept it, he thought that it produced "mischief" for Indians and colonists alike. Quakers in North Carolina ordered Friends not to "barter, or exchange [sic.] directly or indirectly to the Indians rum, brandy, or any other strong liquors." They opposed selling alcohol to Indians "since the settlements of these countries," so that they would not contribute to their "abuse and hurt."⁴⁶ Although interested in trade with Indians and desirous of financial gain, early Quakers in general refused to sacrifice principles for profits. Many discovered that respect for Indians and friendly relations ensured the basis for further advantageous trade. Friends exchanged English manufactured goods for Indian furs, yielding handsome returns. Penn came to depend upon trade with Indians to defray the costs of his colonial enterprise, and in 1703 he proposed monopolizing the fur trade in lieu of taxes. His Quaker secretary, James Logan, refused even to approach the Quaker-dominated Pennsylvania Assembly with his request. "The merchants will never bear it," he flatly stated, "contrivance and management may give thee a share with the rest, but more is not to be depended upon."⁴⁷ By 1717, Logan himself became a "great dealer in furs and skins" and confided to a friend that

43. *The Book of Discipline for the People Called Quakers for North Carolina* (Quaker Collection, Guilford College Library, Greensboro, North Carolina: Handwritten copy, 1755), p. 16.

44. George Fox in Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, p. 59.

45. See Francis Jennings, "Brother Miquon: Good Lord!" in Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds., *The World Of William Penn*, p. 198.

46. William Penn, "To The Earl Of Sunderland," in Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds., *The Papers of William Penn*, Vol. II, p. 416; and *The Book of Discipline for the People Called Quakers for North Carolina*, p. 17.

he "looked upon it as a particular Providence" that God "led [him] into the Indian trade."⁴⁸

The early Quakers deserve acknowledgment as a distinctive sub-group among English colonists in their treatment of Native Americans. Contrary to the view that Friends observed Indian relations in the New World as passive bystanders, the evidence indicates that they participated as concerned Christians and active traders. During the late seventeenth century, Quakers excelled in converting their countrymen and attempted also to evangelize the Indians. While they failed to proselytize many Indians, the Friends found success in colonization and trade relations. Woven into the fabric of their dealings with the Indians were threads of respect, kindness, and honesty that seemed to separate them from at least some Europeans. Penn, and many other Quaker colonists, encountered Indians they considered "admirable," treating them with a degree of equality as "the same flesh and blood" and finding reciprocal appreciation. In contrast with the trail of treachery, condescension, and brutality left by other Europeans, colonial Quakers established a legacy of friendship toward Indians, if not Indian Friends.

47. James Logan quoted in Francis Jennings, "Brother Miquon: Good Lord!," in Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds., *The World Of William Penn*, p. 196.

48. James Logan quoted in Frederick B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, p. 62.