

Not Only Europe, Also America. William Penn: Governor of Pennsylvania and Friend of the Natives.

by Peter Van den Dungen

I am delighted that the 300th anniversary of the death of William Penn (1718), and the 325th anniversary of the publication of his plan for a European parliament (1693), is being remembered here today at the Sapienza University of Rome. I congratulate Professor Francesco Gui for initiating the event and express my gratitude for the kind invitation to participate.¹

I have been an admirer of Penn for many years. He is a pre-eminent figure in the history of peace – of peace thinking and peace-making – whose social and political ideas, philosophical and spiritual reflections, honest and upright personality, and active and very fruitful life can still inspire people today.

Penn is also an important figure in the history of both England and the USA; indeed, together with Benjamin Franklin, a century later, he is regarded as a founding father of the American republic. Penn and Franklin, from their

¹ A third, 350th anniversary should also be mentioned, viz. Penn's imprisonment (for blasphemy) in the Tower of London in December 1668 at the order of the Bishop of London. Invited by the latter to 'Recant... or be prisoner for life', Penn wrote in reply the immortal words – 'My prison shall be my grave before I will budge a jot; for I owe my conscience to no mortal man'. Kept in solitary confinement for months, Penn refused to recant and wrote one of his most profound works which became one of the classics of Quaker literature, *No Cross, No Crown*. Not only this work, but also the way in which he kept petitioning for his release, revealed 'his striking modernity of thought'. Following a series of meetings with one of the royal chaplains, Penn was released after eight months. Cf. Hans Fantel, *William Penn: Apostle of Dissent*. New York: William Morrow, 1974, pp. 97-108. He was imprisoned again two years later; the 350th anniversary of the famous and important trial of William Penn and William Mead in 1670 is likely to be widely celebrated in 2020, especially by the legal profession.

residence in Philadelphia, made America, and made it great.² Today, that country is in need of re-discovering their legacy. That is another good reason to remember William Penn today. The publication of a new major biography by professor Andrew Murphy could not have come at a better time.

An Essay Towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe

We are commemorating the 300th anniversary of the death of William Penn in 1718. The 300th anniversary of his birth was marked in 1944, in Pennsylvania, with an official and comprehensive documentary publication.³ It is not surprising that, in the middle of World War II, the chapter entitled 'William Penn and the Modern World' largely dealt with his views on war and peace and included a reprint of his *Essay towards the present and future peace of Europe*.⁴ The authors commented: 'Perhaps one of the best reasons for the Tercentenary Commemoration of William Penn, is to bring to the attention of a war-torn world his ideas for world peace... He thought in terms of a general international organization of sovereign states; not of a world federation. He was among the first to conceive and formulate a plan for world peace'.⁵ In their introductory comments on the *Essay*, the authors refer to 'the world parliament', 'a world authority', 'world organization', and 'government for the world'. Yet, Penn's proposal was not as ambitious as all that since it concerned the peace of Europe and proposed the establishment of a European parliament. This geographical, regional limitation can be explained partly by the circumstances which inspired him to write the *Essay* – the war which was then raging in Europe (War of the League of Augsburg, 1689-1697 also known as the Nine Years' War – mainly of protestant England & Holland and catholic Spain against France). It involved England in land and naval warfare against Louis XIV's France, with mounting loss of life as well as material destruction. As Peter Brock has noted in a chapter on 'Early Quaker Plans for World Peace' (i.e., those of William Penn and John Bellers): 'Of course the world, as they saw it, was

² Jeanne Henriette Louis & Jean-Olivier Heron aptly titled their book *William Penn et les quakers: Ils inventerent le Nouveau Monde*. Paris: Gallimard, 1990.

³ Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, William Penn Tercentenary Committee, Department of Public Instruction, and Pennsylvania Historical Commission, *Remember William Penn 1644-1944*, 1944, pp. 173 + pp. 78.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 124-138. In the same year, a 'Three Hundredth Anniversary' edition of the essay was published by the Friends' Peace and Service Committee in Philadelphia under the title *A Plan for A Parliament of Nations*, with an introduction by Esther Holmes Jones.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

confined to the states of Europe and their overseas colonies, with Russia and Turkey dimly observed on the peripheries of civilisation'.⁶

We do not know what Penn's plan for world peace – if he had been able to take a truly global vision – would have looked like. The authors go on to say that the *Essay* 'is probably the most important contribution ever made by a Quaker, or perhaps by any person, to the literature of that subject'. One can readily agree with the first part of that assertion – also Jacob ter Meulen referred to it as 'die bedeutendste Friedensschrift der Quaecker'⁷ in the chapter on William Penn in his great work on development of the idea of international organisation.⁸ His colleague Christian L. Lange, another leading historian of internationalism and the classical peace plans, wrote about the *Essay*: 'Envisage dans son ensemble, et meme dans le detail, il occupe une place eminente parmi les projets de paix. Penn appartient a la grande lignee des internationalistes de tous les temps ; il est l'egal des Cruce, des Bentham et des Kant ... En insistant sur l'idee federative, l'auteur se trouve tout pres du plus grand philosophe de son siecle, Baruch Spinoza, et sa conception de la paix rappelle aussi celle de ce philosophe.'⁹ Lange says that we do not know whether Penn was familiar with Spinoza's writings, or only his ideas when he was in the Netherlands in 1688 and visited the *Collegianten* with whom Spinoza had lived twenty years before.¹⁰ He continues: 'De grands esprits peuvent developper les memes idees independamment l'un de l'autre, et nous avons constate que Penn ne se refere qu'a l'ouvrage de William Temple la ou il insiste sur l'idee federative, realisee par les *Provinces-Unies*, comme l'un des elements d'une organisation internationale. C'est l'idee qui sera reprise plus tard avec tant de force par Kant'.¹¹

⁶ *The Quaker Peace Testimony 1660 to 1914*. York: Sessions Book Trust, 1990, pp. 75-86, at p. 75.

⁷ 'The most significant Quaker writing on peace'. All translations from the German and the French are mine.

⁸ Jacob ter Meulen, *Der Gedanke der Internationalen Organisation in seiner Entwicklung 1300-1800*. Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1917, pp. 171-176, citation at p. 172.

⁹ 'Conceived in its totality, and even in its details, it occupies an eminent place among the projects for peace. Penn belongs to the great generation of internationalists of all time; he is the equal of a Cruce, a Bentham, a Kant... On insisting on the federative idea, the author finds himself very close to the greatest philosopher of his century, Baruch Spinoza, and his conception of peace also recalls that of the philosopher'.

¹⁰ The *Collegianten* were founded in 1619 among Arminian and Anabaptists in Holland and were refugees from the religious controversies among Calvinists and Arminians at the time. The name derived from their regular meetings (colleges); Spinoza was a member of their study groups in Leyden in the early 1660s. Everyone had liberty to speak, and also in some other regards their practises are reminiscent of Quakerism.

¹¹ 'Great minds may develop the same ideas, independently of one another, and we have seen that Penn only refers to the work by William Temple where he insists on the federal idea,

The suggestion that Penn's *Essay* could even be the most important writing by any person on the subject is debatable. Seventy years before Penn, Emeric Cruce, an obscure French monk, had published in Paris in 1623 a plan not for European but for world peace as indicated in the full title of his book: *Le Nouveau Cynee ou discours d'estat representant les occasions et moyens d'establir une paix generale, et la liberte du commerce par tout le monde*.¹²

In his *Essay*, Penn mentions all the countries in Europe that would be represented in the Parliament and provisionally suggests the number of delegates or votes that each country should have 'to allow for the inequality of the princes and states'. The 'Empire of Germany' is allocated the highest number, 12, followed by France and Spain with 10 each. At the end of this exercise he adds, 'and if the Turks and Muscovites are taken in, as seems but fit and just, they will make ten apiece more'.¹³ Cruce included in his plan for an international assembly also such countries as Persia, China and Japan, Ethiopia and Morocco, the East and West Indies, as well as monarchs from Africa and India, and 'the Great Mogul'. In his amazing and truly comprehensive plan for world peace, Cruce went well beyond the largely European and Christian world that was the subject of Penn's plan.¹⁴ One historian of the plans for world

realised in the United Provinces, as one of the elements of an international organisation. That is the idea that will later be taken up again strongly by Kant'. Christian L. Lange & August Schou, *Histoire de l'Internationalisme*. Vol. II. *De la Paix de Westphalie jusqu'au Congres de Vienne* (1815). Oslo: H. Aschehoug, 1954, p. 100.

¹² 'The New Cyneas or discourse of the occasions and means to establish a general peace, and the liberty of commerce throughout the whole world'. *The New Cyneas of Emeric Cruce*. Edited with an introduction and translated into English from the original French text of 1623 by Thomas Willing Balch. Philadelphia: Allen, Lane and Scott, 1909.

¹³ On this particular issue, Penn's friend John Bellers was more forthcoming. In the conclusion of his own plan for European peace he wrote, 'The *Muscovites* are Christians, and the *Mahometans* Men, and have the same faculties, and reason as other Men ... to beat their Brains out, to put sense into them, is a great Mistake, and would leave Europe too much in a state of War; whereas, the farther this civil Union is Possible to be Extended, the greater will be the Peace on Earth'. Cf. John Bellers, *Some Reasons for an European State. Facsimile of the original essay of 1710. Tercentenary edition*. With introductory essays and annotations by Roderick Pace & Peter van den Dungen. Valletta: Midsea Books, 2010, p. 20/84. Also see the present author's 'The plans for European peace by Quaker authors William Penn (1693) and John Bellers (1710)', in *Araucaria. Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofia, Politica y Humanidades*, vol. 16, no. 32, 2014, pp. 53-67, [online version at https://www.academia.edu/23510358/The plans for European peace by Quaker authors William Penn 1693 and John Bellers 1710](https://www.academia.edu/23510358/The_plans_for_European_peace_by_Quaker_authors_William_Penn_1693_and_John_Bellers_1710).

¹⁴ This essential difference is overlooked by John Gittings who writes that in his *Essay* Penn 'set out a more detailed structure for the pan-European council vaguely sketched by Cruce'. *The Glorious Art of Peace. From the Iliad to Iraq*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 125. German A. De La Reza rightly highlights the most striking and novel feature of Cruce's plan when he

peace has commented: 'Penn cited as one of the benefits of his project that Christians would have greater security against the inroads of the Turk. Cruce had taken a broader view, for he not only had made a point of including the Turk in the league but had accorded second place to the emperor of the Turks, putting him even ahead of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. With Penn, one feels, the inclusion of the Turk in the league to enforce peace was merely suggested as a possibility which did not merit serious reflection'.¹⁵ Appearing during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), Cruce's scheme was so far ahead of its time that it was quickly, and for a long time, forgotten.¹⁶ We can safely assume that Penn had no knowledge of it.¹⁷

Two years after Cruce's book appeared, Paris also saw the publication of the founding work of modern international law: *Of the law of war and peace* by Hugo Grotius (1625). Penn referred to Grotius as a man of 'Universal Knowledge' and cited him frequently – however, not in his *Essay* and the assertion by J. William Frost that Penn's *Essay* 'drew directly on Grotius' is questionable.¹⁸ Penn was also influenced by Erasmus and shared his criticism of war and search for ways and means of avoiding it. However, it appears that Penn was unfamiliar with Erasmus's *Querela Pacis* (*The Complaint of Peace*, 1517) which can be regarded as the foundational work of modern pacifism and the

refers to it as 'The 1623 Plan for Global Governance', characterising it as the 'first plan of world peace' and stressing 'its primacy... in projecting a universal organization'. Cf. his article 'The 1623 Plan for Global Governance: the obscure history of its reception', in *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, vol. 58, no. 2, July-December 2015, online version at http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0034-73292015000200146. Francesca Russo likewise draws attention to the extra-European powers Cruce included in his 'internationalist' and 'cosmopolitan' scheme; cf. id., 'L'utopia della pacificazione internazionale nel *Nouveau Cynee* (1623) di Emeric Cruce' in *Polis: Revista de Stiinte Politice*, vol. 5, no. 2 (16), March-May 2017, online version at <http://revistapolis.ro/lutopia-della-pacificazione-internazionale-nel-nouveau-cynee-1623-di-meric-cruce/>.

¹⁵ Sylvester John Hemleben, *Plans for World Peace through Six Centuries*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943, p. 53. In the light of Penn's views on the Turk, brief though they are, Hemleben's rather dismissive comment seems unwarranted.

¹⁶ Cf. the present author's *The Hidden History of a Peace "Classic": Emeric Cruce's Le Nouveau Cynee*. London: Housmans, 1980, online version at https://www.academia.edu/23518196/The_Hidden_History_of_a_Peace_Classic_Emeric_Cruc%C3%A9s_Le_Nouveau_Cyn%C3%A9e.

¹⁷ In *William Penn: Politics and Conscience*, Mary Maples Dunn writes: 'In 1623 Emeric Cruce suggested that people of all known religions and nationalities be included in a universal system, but there is no indication that Penn was familiar with Cruce's work'. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, p. 167, n. 15. Likewise Lange: 'Je n'ai rien trouve permettant d'établir que Penn a connu « Le nouveau Cynee »' (I have not found anything which would suggest that Penn knew 'The new Cyneas'). Id., *Histoire de l'Internationalisme*, o.c., p. 95 n. 13.

¹⁸ 'William Penn: Quaker Humanist', in *Quaker Studies*, 16/2, 2012, pp. 174-189, at p. 180.

critique of war. If he had been, he would surely have referred to the humanist's devastating critique and condemnation of war, and praise of peace.¹⁹ Perhaps the most important plan for world peace appeared almost three centuries after Erasmus's *Complaint*, and one century after Penn's *Essay*: Immanuel Kant's equally slim but profound *Zum Ewigen Frieden/Towards Perpetual Peace* (1795). From the above it may be clear that 'the most important contribution' to the literature concerning plans for world peace has more than one claimant, both before the time Penn wrote his *Essay* and afterwards.

Only in the conclusion of his *Essay* does Penn indicate what seems to have been a main inspiration for his proposal for the 'Establishment of an European Diet, Parliament, or Estates'. He wrote, 'for the better understanding and perfection of the idea I here present to the sovereign princes and estates of Europe ... I must recommend to their perusals Sir William Temple's account of the United Provinces; which is an instance and answer upon practice to all the objections that can be advanced against the practicability of my proposal'. Penn argued that the difficulties involved in creating the United Provinces exceeded those for the realisation of his own scheme since the former concerned three, rather than two, degrees of sovereignty, viz. that of the several cities of each province; that of the provinces comprising those cities; and that of the states general themselves at The Hague. Temple's *Observations upon the United Provinces*, published in London in 1673, described in detail the institutions and the efficient political system prevailing in the Low Countries (then Britain's great economic and colonial rival) where he had been the English ambassador. His book enjoyed a considerable publishing success throughout northern Europe and was enormously influential. In 1677, only a few years after its publication, Penn was in Holland, together with Fox and Barclay.²⁰ As further testimony of the viability of his scheme, Penn also called to mind the design that was due 'to the wisdom, justice, and valour of Henry the Fourth of France' and he concluded his *Essay*: 'this great king's example tells us it is fit to be done; and Sir William Temple's history shows us by a surpassing instance that it may be done; and Europe, by her incomparable miseries, makes it now necessary to

¹⁹ See the present author's 'Erasmus: 16th century pioneer of peace education and a culture of peace', available at <https://civilisation3000.wordpress.com/?s=Erasmus>.

²⁰ Cf. Jacques Tual, 'Peace in Europe in the 17th Century: Quaker Projects for a European Parliament', in Christiane d'Haussy, ed., *Les Artisans de la Paix. Culture et Religion dans les Pays Anglophones*. Reims: Presses Universitaires de Reims, 1996, pp. 79-92, at pp. 84-86. Tuel writes, 'it was undoubtedly ... Temple's *Observations*' that gave Penn his juridical model for a European Parliament. He continues that it, 'like the Dutch Federal Assembly was to be built on a three-tiered pyramid-shaped type of representation, the basis being cities or municipalities sending representatives to each provincial assembly.' My reading of Penn, as suggested above, is slightly different.

be done: that my share is only thinking of it at this juncture, and putting it into the common light for the peace and prosperity of Europe’.

In the genealogy of the classical plans for European peace Penn’s *Essay* occupies a special place – and one which was unknown until recent times. In 1993, peace historians celebrated the 300th anniversary of the *Essay* and commemorated the 250th anniversary of the death of the Abbe de Saint-Pierre (1658-1743).²¹ He was the author of a 3-volume *Projet pour Rendre la Paix Perpetuelle en Europe* (1713-1716), first published in English as *Project for Settling an Everlasting Peace in Europe* (1714). The most famous of several such plans that were published in the 18th century, it inspired Jean-Jacques Rousseau to publish an extract of it (1761). In 1993 it was revealed that the Abbe de Saint-Pierre was very strongly influenced by Penn and was indebted to him for many of his ideas. The careful detective work by Daniel Sabbagh, a French scholar, showed that the (extremely rare, hardly noticed, and anonymous) contemporary French translation of Penn’s *Essay* – entitled *Essai d’un Projet pour rendre la paix de l’Europe solide et durable*²² – had been made and published by none other than Saint-Pierre himself.²³

The classical peace plans have often been dismissed as utopian or visionary projects, and their authors as well-intentioned but naïve idealists. The special place in this regard of William Penn has been well summed up by the French historian Raymond Umbdenstock when he wrote: ‘As a theoretician he has this immense advantage over the other philosophers who have dared to deal with the same subject, viz. that he was, also, a doer. He created a state, Pennsylvania, and endowed her with a constitution. To organise politically and economically a territory which is 300 miles wide and 160 miles long, to found a city such as Philadelphia, and elaborate and apply a constitution – this is all

²¹ See the present author’s ‘The Abbe de Saint-Pierre and the English “Irenists” of the 18th Century (Penn, Bellers, and Bentham)’ in *International Journal on World Peace*, vol. XVII, no. 2, June 2000, pp. 5-31. It can also be seen at https://www.academia.edu/16123151/The_Abbe_de_Saint-Pierre_and_the_English_Irenists_of_the_18th_Century_Penn_Bellers_and_Bentham.

²² Essay of a project for securing a solid and lasting peace in Europe.

²³ Daniel Sabbagh, ‘William Penn and the Abbe de Saint-Pierre: The Missing Link. Preliminary Announcement’, unpublished paper, 1993, later published in French: ‘William Penn et l’Abbe de Saint-Pierre: Le Chainon Manquant’, in *Revue de synthese*, janvier-mars 1997, pp. 83-105, on-line version https://www.academia.edu/9538871/William_Penn_et_l_Abb%C3%A9_de_Saint-Pierre_Le_cha%C3%A9non_manquant. See also Sabbagh’s ‘Penn and Europe,’ in *The Friend*, 22 April 1994, p. 496. Earlier, the present author arranged for the publication of a facsimile of the rare French translation of Penn’s *Essay* (York: William Sessions/The Ebor Press, 1986) and had it sub-titled, ‘Fac-simile de l’exemplaire unique dans la Bibliotheque de l’Institut Nobel Norvegien a Oslo’. Since then, two more copies of the rare French edition have been discovered.

rather different from describing, as if in a long dream, the country called Utopia'.²⁴

The Holy Experiment

Indeed, Penn created and governed a country which resembled a Utopia – his 'Holy Experiment' in the New World that was Pennsylvania.²⁵ This has been referred to as the 'greatest factor in determining the historical importance of William Penn.' As William Wistar Comfort, a leading Quaker historian and biographer of Penn, has written: 'Without it he might have been remembered as a great force in securing religious toleration in the English-speaking world. Without it he would certainly have been one of the three or four greatest names in the history of Quakerism. But without it Pennsylvania would never have received its name or its character, nor would Penn have become one of humanity's signal benefactors. For it is only fair to remember that if Penn made Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania also made Penn a truly historical figure. When he secured Pennsylvania, he secured the greatest opportunity any single man ever had to found a state in which his own ideas should be realized'.²⁶ Comfort also reminds the reader that 'It must not be supposed that William Penn and his Friends descended upon America out of a clear sky. The Quakers had been interested in America for over twenty-five years ... they had been doing missionary work on foot and on horseback ... For the sake of these missionaries and early Quaker colonists, Friends in England had been urged as early as 1658' to support them. 'The Friends in England were decidedly America-minded for years before Penn had the opportunity to carry out his "holy experiment"'.²⁷

Its most remarkable feature was the harmonious relationship that was established, and maintained for some seventy years, between the Quaker

²⁴ Raymond Umbdenstock, *William Penn et les Precurseurs de Geneve de 1500 a 1815*. Saint-Dizier: Andre Brulliard, 1932, p. 141. An excellent source is Jean R. Soderlund, ed., *William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania 1680-1684. A Documentary History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983.

²⁵ Penn's most recent biographer has commented, 'It seems unlikely that we will ever know precisely what Penn meant when he used this famous phrase. But it is also worth noting that the term "holy experiment" occurs just one time, in a piece of private correspondence'. Andrew R. Murphy, *William Penn: A Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 363.

²⁶ *William Penn and Our Liberties*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1976, pp. 59-60. First published in 1947, Comfort's book was re-issued in 1976 as part of the US bicentennial commemoration. As Edwin Bronner notes in his introduction, Comfort 'makes it clear that many of the ideas incorporated into the [US] Articles of Confederation, and later the [US] Constitution, had been practiced in Pennsylvania for a century before the new nation came into being' (p. VIII).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

colonists and the native Americans. Penn's deep sense of humanity made him see the natives as his brothers and sisters, who were also children of God. Before travelling to America, in letters addressed and delivered by his commissioners (who were sent to prepare the ground) to local chiefs in 1681 and 1682, Penn expressed his loving sentiments and his resolution 'to live justly, peaceably, and friendly' with them. The fair and just purchase of land from the native Americans was only one of many ways in which the behaviour of Penn and the Quakers differed markedly from that of other colonisers (principally the Dutch and the Swedes). Most remarkable of all, not least from the perspective of the natives, was the fact that Penn and his fellow Quakers came unarmed and concluded genuine treaties of peace and friendship. One of the first, and the most famous, was the Treaty of Shackamaxon known also as William Penn's Treaty with the Indians and immortalised in Benjamin West's 1771 iconic painting and Edward Hicks's imitations and variations in the 1830s and 1840s.²⁸

According to tradition, the Treaty was concluded under a majestic elm tree soon after Penn arrived in Pennsylvania and when he met the Lenape Indians in the riverside town of Shackamaxon – 'now Kensington, Philadelphia, where Penn lived for a time, early in 1683, in the house of Thomas Fairman, the surveyor, and where by uncertain tradition, without record evidence, Penn is alleged to have held treaties with the Indians'.²⁹ However, 'Careful historical scholarship from an early date made clear that there never had been a "Great Treaty", but rather a series of meetings, some with Penn, some with his agents, yet all based upon an affectionate respect for aboriginal rights and welfare.' The legendary event became famous throughout the world and inspired Voltaire's comment that 'it was the only treaty made by the settlers with the Indians that was never sworn to, and the only one that was never broken'. Voltaire's *Letters Concerning the English Nation* was first published in English in London in 1733 and in French (*Lettres philosophiques*) the following year. The first four letters are entitled 'On the Quakers' – 'a sect to whom the ordinary Englishman of that day paid scant attention, but not the renowned French critic... Thanks to Voltaire's recognition, Quakers came into an honourable status all their own'.³⁰ 'Voltaire heaped praise on Penn who, he wrote, "might, with reason, boast of

²⁸ Cf. *Symbols of Peace: William Penn's Treaty with the Indians*. Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1976, Exhibition Catalogue.

²⁹ Albert Cook Myers, ed., *William Penn's Own Account of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians*. Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Middle Atlantic Press, Revised (Tercentenary) Edition 1983, p. 23 n. 4.

³⁰ Quoted in *Symbols of Peace*, o.c., unpaginated.

having brought down upon earth the Golden Age, which in all probability, never had any real existence but in his dominions”³¹

Theodore Ruysen, the French historian of internationalism, notes that Voltaire, who often spoke about the Quakers, ‘pendant les années d’exil qu’il dut passer en Angleterre (1725-1729), entra en relations avec les quakers et assista même à une au moins de leurs réunions religieuses ; il leur a consacré les quatre premières de ses *Lettres philosophiques* publiées en 1734, et il est manifeste ... que cette religion sans prêtres, sans sacrements, quasi sans dogmes, mais de haute tenue morale, a gagné sa sympathie’.³²

We are well informed about Penn’s meetings with the Indians because of *William Penn’s Own Account of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians* that he wrote in 1683, ten months after his first arrival in America.³³ In a foreword to the tercentenary edition, John E. Pomfret wrote: ‘In reading the *Account*, one recognizes immediately that William Penn was an extraordinarily acute observer, interested in all facets of Indian behaviour, thinking, and culture. He sat in council with the Indians many times and, in less than a year, he had mastered their language. His comments are of value to anthropologists today’.³⁴ Penn himself wrote, ‘I have made it my business to understand it [the language], that I might not want an Interpreter on any occasion: And I must say, that I know not a Language spoken in Europe, that hath words of more sweetness or greatness, in Accent and Emphasis, than theirs’.³⁵

The significance of the practice, unique at the time, of racial equality and of peaceful and harmonious relations between two very different cultures, was

³¹ Cited in David Galloway, ‘The practical visionary and his essay which served as a landmark for the post-war European order’, in Council of the European Union, General Secretariat, ed., *Europe – giving shape to an idea*. London: Anthem Press, 2009, pp. 76-79, at p. 77.

³² ‘During the years of exile in England (1725-1729) he established contact with the Quakers and attended at least one of their religious meetings; he devoted the first four of his *Philosophical Letters*, published in 1734, to them, and it is obvious... that this religion without priests, without sacraments, virtually without dogmas, but of high moral standing, earned his sympathy’. Cf. *Les Sources doctrinales de l’internationalisme. Tome second: De la Paix de Westphalie à la Révolution Française*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958, p. 104. In a section on the Quakers in America and William Penn, Ruysen writes, ‘Il est peu de pages plus émouvantes dans l’histoire de la colonisation’ [In the history of colonisation there are few pages that are more moving], *ibidem*, p. 98.

³³ *William Penn’s Own Account*, o.c. In his short Introduction, Myers provides details of the publishing history of the *Account*, pp. 13-17.

³⁴ O.c., pp. 7-11, at p. 9. ‘Apparently the proprietor was a quick study, for the following spring he was said to “speak their language fairly fluently,” and his lively interest in Indians prompted frequent visits to their settlements’. Cf. James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiations on the Pennsylvania Frontier*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1999, p. 62.

³⁵ *William Penn’s Own Account*, o.c., pp. 22-23.

noticed not only by later generations but also by contemporaries. It is telling that, as leading Quaker historian William I. Hull has observed, 'The first biographies of Penn, in seven languages and seven lands, unanimously extol his relations with the Indians as one of his greatest achievements and as one of the outstanding facts on the credit side of human history'.³⁶ Among the distinguishing features of this relationship was the fair purchase of land; the provision that in case of dispute between Indians and settlers the trial jury must include six natives; and forbidding the sale of strong liquor to the Indians. It is sobering to reflect on the fate of the native Americans who subsequently were almost exterminated in their own continent, surviving in miserable reservations.³⁷

It is ironic and deeply saddening that much of the violence in the world today is committed in the name of religion; it brings to mind Penn's comment on 'the irreligiousness of the religions'.³⁸ This was of course what Penn and the early Quakers experienced when they were persecuted as religious dissenters in England and which led them to seek a place of refuge in the New World which would offer religious toleration, not just for Quakers in Britain but for adherents of all creeds in Europe as well. Penn wrote, like Erasmus two centuries before him, and Tolstoy two centuries after him, that it is 'A gross and general mistake about the nature of Christ's church and kingdom, which is not an outward or worldly kingdom that can be set up by man and sustained by coercive laws, but it consists of the reign of God in the souls of men; it is a spiritual kingdom, and none but spiritual weapons are to be used to reclaim those who are ignorant or disobedient'.³⁹

Constitution or Frame of Government for Pennsylvania

What Penn strove for but could not realise in England, viz. religious freedom and popular rights, he achieved in Pennsylvania following the Charter that he received from King Charles II in 1681 and which made Penn the colony's first Governor and Proprietor. Then it took him more than a year to draft a constitution or Frame of Government for Pennsylvania. Many principles of

³⁶ Quoted in *Remember William Penn*, o.c., p. 111.

³⁷ A recent study of the policies towards Native Americans of all US presidents found that those of even the highest ranking ones – George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt – were insensitive or worse. Most historians, as well as Native American leaders, have praised Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Cf. Walter G. Moss, 'Which Presidents – If Any – Did Right by Native Americans?' in *History News Network*, 7 October 2018, at <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/170123>

³⁸ Quoted in *Remember William Penn*, o.c., p. 20.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Pennsylvania's government had been foreshadowed in a constitution for West New Jersey in the drafting of which Penn had played a major role in 1676. As the principal trustee appointed to administer the interests of two Quakers who had been granted West New Jersey, he drew up a constitution known as 'The Concessions and Agreements of the Proprietors, Freeholders and Inhabitants of West New Jersey in America.' Comfort writes: 'Nowhere else in all the world could there be found [anything] comparable in liberality, tolerance and the protection of individual rights. – Penn did not mistake the historical importance of this document' and Comfort quotes at length what Penn wrote in a letter to Richard Hartshorne in the same year. '... we put the power in the people... all these men to meet as an assembly, there to make and repeal laws, to choose a governor, or commissioner, and twelve assistants to execute the laws... so every man is capable to choose or to be chosen.' Comfort points out, 'Only one who knows the state of civil oppression and religious persecution in England at the time can fully appreciate the historical significance of such words. As Bancroft observes, Penn "dared to cherish the noble idea of man's capacity for self-government and right to it"'.⁴⁰ He continues: 'The Concessions of 1676 antedate similar liberal provisions for Pennsylvania by five years. The "Holy Experiment" thus came near to being performed in New Jersey'. The next year Penn visited Holland and Germany and learnt of the persecution of dissenting groups who, like the Quakers in England, 'were ripe for the suggestion of American colonization'.

In 1682 Penn wrote his famous Frame of Government for Pennsylvania; it limited the power of government and guaranteed many fundamental liberties. It enshrined the fundamental right of religious liberty, an assembly elected by the people to make laws, trial by jury, a penal system designed to reform rather than punish (the only capital crimes being murder and treason). It was subsequently adopted by the Pennsylvania Assembly as the New Charter and formed the model for most state governments in the United States.

Penn's 'religious tolerance and political liberalism are reflected in his *Essay*... and in the constitution drawn up during his last stay in Pennsylvania from 1699 until 1701, which became the model for the Declaration of Independence of 1776'.⁴¹ 'In his insistence that constitutions should not be regarded as sacrosanct... Penn anticipated Thomas Jefferson by a hundred years. And he showed that he meant what he said by agreeing to several successive overhauls of the constitution of Pennsylvania. The last revision, called the Charter of Privileges, was signed by Penn in 1701, just before he left

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 65-66.

⁴¹ Quoted in 'William Penn', in *Europe – giving shape to an idea*, o.c., pp. 68-79, at p. 69.

America for the last time. It proved so satisfactory to the people that it remained in force for seventy-five years until 1776. It granted the Pennsylvania Assembly powers that other English colonies in North America would not achieve until much later. When the Charter of Privileges was half a century old, the Assembly ordered a bell installed in the tower of the State House (the building that would one day be called Independence Hall) in honour of its jubilee'.⁴²

The First Plan for a Union of the American Colonies (1696)

Just as Penn really was the first to propose, in some detail, a European parliament, so he was the first to propose, only a few years later, a union of the British colonies in America. However, his scheme for the latter was extremely concise, taking up no more than two pages (as compared to seventy for the European parliament). It is interesting to note that both proposals were inspired by the same war that England was then engaged in against France, in Europe and in North America. In England, the Board of Trade, newly created to superintend all colonial affairs (the 'Board of Commissioners for Promoting the Trade of the Colonies in America'), was discussing the establishment of a unified command in America of military contingents for the defence of New York's exposed frontier. Penn appeared before the Board, pleading that if military quotas were to be demanded of the colonies, these should be determined by the colonies themselves – through their representatives meeting 'in one common assembly'. The Board then invited him to present 'a scheme more fully in writing'. The outcome was his 'Brief and plain scheme how the English colonies in the north parts of America ... may be made more useful to the Crown and one another's peace and safety with a universal concurrence'. It was written in 1696 and first published two years later (by Charles Davenant in his *Discourses on the Public Revenues and on the Trade of England*).

It seems that the Board was not impressed, and it took no action. This is not surprising since Penn went beyond the Board's request and submitted a

⁴² Frederick B. Tolles & E. Gordon Alderfer, eds., *The Witness of William Penn*. New York: Octagon Books, 1980, pp. 108-109. See also Robert N. C. Nix & Mary M. Schweitzer, 'Pennsylvania's Contributions to the Writing and the Ratification of the Constitution', in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 112, no. 1, January 1988, pp. 3-24. On Penn and the Quakers' invention of mechanisms to amend constitutions see Jane E. Calvert, 'The Quaker Contributions of John Dickinson to the Creation of the American Republic', pp. 277-304 in Daniel L. Dreisbach & Mark David Hall, eds., *Faith and the Founders of the American Republic*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. Calvert writes that Dickinson was 'the best and most prominent representative of traditional political Quakerism since William Penn' and 'the most eloquent ... spokesman for the theory of Quaker constitutionalism', p. 281. He drafted the first version of the Articles of Confederation in June 1776.

blueprint for a permanent union of the colonies that, as he explained to the Board, 'was principally for adjusting the differences that might arise between any of those colonies in civil matters, not military'. This was not the scheme the Board had expected or needed. Indeed, the issue of military contingents was only one of four matters that Penn mentioned that would be brought before the proposed assembly; its business would be 'to hear and adjust all matters of complaint or difference between province and province'. The other matters concerned extradition of debtors and criminals who had fled to another colony, and commercial disputes between colonies. The military issue was addressed very briefly in the concluding proposal, viz. 'That in times of war the King's High Commissioner shall be general or chief commander of the several quotas upon service against the common enemy ... for the good and benefit of the whole'.⁴³

The key features of his proposed union of the ten colonies in the New World – which he concisely addressed in seven points – can be quickly summarised: they would meet once a year ('and oftener if need be, during the war'); every province was to appoint two well qualified persons as their representatives or deputies, the Congress thus consisting of twenty persons; the King's Commissioner 'for that purpose specially appointed shall have the chair and preside the Congress'; the venue 'in all probability' would be New York 'both because it is near the center of the colonies and it is a frontier' (a border colony, having a common boundary with enemy territory, i.e., French Canada).⁴⁴

Hans Fantel writes: 'While Penn was pondering the need for the joint defense of the colonies, his thoughts reverted to the ideas he had formulated in his proposal for a federation of Europe. Now he projected a federation of the American colonies, and he submitted such a proposal to the British government in ... 1697'. Given the great discrepancies between Penn's proposals for European and American union, the assumption that the former inspired the latter can be questioned. So, too, the belief that he envisaged a United States of America. As mentioned above, the Board of Trade did not react to Penn's proposal. Fantel continues, 'The British just missed their chance to put a central American Congress under their own aegis. The idea of a United States of America, loyally proposed by Penn, was thus submerged for almost a century, until it was picked up again in Penn's own city of Philadelphia by a decidedly

⁴³ Cf. *The Witness of William Penn*, o.c., pp. 135-137 where Penn's concise plan is reprinted and commented on. It is also reprinted in *Remember William Penn*, o.c., pp. 143-144 under the heading 'A pioneer of Union'.

⁴⁴ Cf. *The Witness of William Penn*, o.c., pp. 135-137.

disloyal group of radicals and revolutionaries'.⁴⁵ If Penn had been as foresighted as is suggested here one might have expected a longer and more detailed proposal for a union of the American colonies. As one Penn scholar has noted, 'There is no means of learning whether any of the men who made proposals in the eighteenth century for uniting the colonies ever saw Penn's proposals'.⁴⁶

Postscript – A Personal note

As a non-Quaker (or member of the Religious Society of Friends as the Quakers are formally called), allow me to make a few comments regarding my personal discovery of William Penn and the Quakers. I became politically aware in the 1960s during the war in Vietnam (which the Vietnamese quite rightly refer to as the American War). That war stimulated the development, slowly at first, and initially only in a few countries, of peace research, peace studies, conflict resolution studies – in universities and independent institutions. About fifty years ago, when I was searching for a graduate programme in peace studies, I learnt of the Department of Peace Science founded by professor Walter Isard at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. He was a Quaker from the same city. I also came across the writings of professor Kenneth Boulding, an eminent English economist who had migrated to the USA and who was a co-founder of the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor (and editor of its eponymous journal, the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*). He was a Quaker, too. Soon I discovered that virtually every initiative in this new field had Quaker origins. Having grown up in Belgium, as a Catholic, I had never heard of Quakers before.

The Peace Science programme in Philadelphia was heavily based on quantitative methodologies and required advanced mathematical knowledge which I did not possess. As a result, I ended up at the Department of War Studies at King's College, University of London where I pursued research on the history of peace and theories on the abolition of war; most of my fellow

⁴⁵ Fantel, *William Penn*, o.c., p. 235.

⁴⁶ Edwin B. Bronner, *William Penn. 17th Century Founding Father. Selections from His Political Writings*. Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications (Pendle Hill Pamphlet 204), 1975, p. 15. In his comment on Penn's proposal for a European Parliament, Bronner states that 'this document ... has had an influence upon those who have prepared twentieth century constitutions for international organizations' without, however, elaborating (p. 17). On the possible influence of Penn's *Essay* on later developments in international organisation, see the present author's comments in the introduction to the facsimile of the first edition of the *Essay* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1983, pp. VII-XXXVII, esp. pp. XXIII-XXVI. This can also be seen at <https://www.academia.edu/34076652/Introduction>.

students were military historians and defence experts. During this time, the early 1970s, the Quakers in the UK launched an appeal for the establishment of a chair in peace studies at a British university. Whereas students had been able to study war at a number of university departments for many years (and of course also at military academies), there was no equivalent department for studying peace. The Quaker appeal proved very successful and in 1973 the country's first (and so far, still only) chair in peace studies was inaugurated at the University of Bradford.⁴⁷ I was fortunate to join the department a few years later. It has been my academic home until retirement and I owe a great debt of gratitude to the Quakers for having made it possible to earn a living studying and teaching peace.

Since their emergence in England in the middle of the 17th century, the Quakers have played a pre-eminent role in the promotion of peace (peace thinking and peace-making) so much so that for a long time it was assumed that anyone who was a pacifist in Britain was a Quaker. When, at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, an organised peace movement emerged in Britain, it 'was in large part a Quaker creation, and Quakers remained its most devoted adherents. The Victorian political leader, Richard Cobden, rightly called Friends "the soul of the peace movement" in Britain'.⁴⁸ The identification of Quakers and peace has continued up to the present day; as mentioned already, following World War 2 and the birth of the atomic age, Quakers were pioneers in the emerging field of peace research and conflict resolution.

The pursuit of peace has a long and fascinating history – in which William Penn represents a glorious chapter – but, sadly, the history of peace is little known and there are hardly any peace museums to tell this story. By contrast, the history of war is well documented, not least in the countless war and military museums that exist in most countries. There is a small Peace Museum in Bradford⁴⁹; like the Department of Peace Studies in the same city, the

⁴⁷ For a concise history of Bradford Peace Studies, see the present author's 'Past: History of Peace Studies', in *Peace & Conflict Research at Bradford. Peace Studies 40th Anniversary. Annual Report 2013/14. Special Edition*, pp. 4-5. The report can also be read at <https://www.bradford.ac.uk/social-sciences/media/socialsciences/peacestudies/Peace-Studies-Annual-Report-2014-Final.pdf>. One of the aims of the Oxford Network of Peace Studies is to raise £ 4 million for the permanent endowment of a Chair in Peace Studies at Oxford University. Cf. www.politics.ox.ac.uk/cis/cis-research-oxford-network-of-peace-studies-oxpeace.html.

⁴⁸ Peter Brock, *Varieties of Pacifism: A Survey from Antiquity to the Outset of the Twentieth Century*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998, p. 52. Martin Ceadel, the leading historian of the British peace movement, calls the Quakers 'the world's most influential pacifist sect'. *Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 19.

⁴⁹ Cf. <https://peacemuseum.org.uk>.

initiative and funding originated with Quakers. The museum was created following the first International Conference of Peace Museums that was held in Bradford in 1992 and that was sponsored by the small 'Give Peace a Chance' Quaker Trust. The conference also resulted in the creation of the International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP), an NGO that celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2017.⁵⁰ As a trustee of the Peace Museum, and General Coordinator of INMP during its first 25 years, I am again greatly indebted to the Quakers.

⁵⁰ For a history of INMP, see the special issue of its newsletter (no. 18, March 2017) celebrating its 25th anniversary: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/16g6Z4eAlFuyUpXPKIjWY2Ebiidy4GYpc8/view> or <https://www.vredesmuseum.nl/download/inmp.pdf> and <https://honormonument.org/2017/02/27/the-international-network-of-museums-for-peace-inmp/>.