

WILLIAM PENN'S DEBTS TO JOHN OWEN
AND MOSES AMYRAUT ON QUESTIONS OF TRUTH,
GRACE, AND RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

Stephen W. Angell

Earlham School of Religion, Richmond, IN, USA

ABSTRACT

William Penn studied at Oxford University and at Saumur at a time when two giants in the field of theology and statesmanship among Reformed Protestants, namely, John Owen and Moses Amyraut, were alive. This essay seeks to work toward a comparative and contrastive assessment of the influences of both Amyraut and Owen upon the young Penn and particularly with questions of truth, grace, and responses to religious pluralism in the thought of these three men.

KEYWORDS

William Penn, Moses Amyraut, John Owen, truth, grace, religious toleration, natural.

It has been of great interest to William Penn's biographers that he studied at Oxford University and at Saumur in the Loire Valley in France at a time when two giants in the field of theology and statesmanship among Reformed Protestants, namely, John Owen and Moses Amyraut, were alive.¹ This essay seeks to work toward a comparative and contrastive assessment of the influences of both Amyraut and Owen upon the young Penn and will particularly concern itself with questions of truth, grace, and responses to religious pluralism in the thought of these three men.

The eminent Owen, who had served as vice chancellor (effectively, the chief administrator)² of Oxford until 1657 and as dean of Christ Church at Oxford until March 1660, subsequently lived unobtrusively in Stadham. Attempts to convince Owen to conform to restored Anglican orthodoxy were unavailing, and in the wake of the 1661 Fifth Monarchists' revolt led by Thomas Venner, weapons were seized from Owen's home.³ Penn matriculated at Owen's old college, Christ Church in Oxford, in October 1660, after the Restoration. He came to know Owen through unofficial lectures that he was giving during these early Restoration

years. Biographers have adjudged that Penn's puritan activities, such as attendance at Owen's lectures and participation in unauthorised worship, were responsible for his suspension from Oxford in 1662; for example, Penn wrote retrospectively in 1673 that he had 'been a great Sufferer' for his religion while 'at the University'.⁴ Whatever punishment was administered to young Penn by the University was magnified by his father, William Penn, Sr, who subjected him, on the former's inglorious return home, to a 'whipping, beating, and [temporarily a] turning out of doors'.⁵ Diarist Samuel Pepys noted that the elder Penn had discovered, in one of his son's pockets, a letter by Owen to his son, leading the father to the conclusion that 'his son [was] much perverted in his opinion' by Owen.⁶ This suggests a close relationship between Owen and the younger Penn.

His father seized on a plan to send his son to France, for the proper education available to up-and-coming gentlemen on the Continent, and the junior Penn apparently consented. Penn spent some time in Paris, but most of his time was spent at the Saumur Academy in the Loire river valley. Penn apparently spent over a year at Saumur, arriving early in 1663 and departing in the summer of 1664, arriving back in London in August of that year.⁷ Moses Amyraut (1596-1664) had been a towering presence at Saumur for three-and-a-half decades by the time Penn arrived there. The learned Amyraut was a teacher of Reformed pastors and intellectuals from France, Switzerland, and elsewhere in Europe, much in the mould of his revered John Calvin. He was also a well-published theologian who survived a heresy trial administered by fellow Calvinists at a 1637 synod, at which he was acquitted of the charges levelled against him.⁸ Even though Amyraut was controversial, his biographer Brian Armstrong notes that 'seldom did one leave Saumur and turn against' Amyraut's theology.⁹

Amyraut was elderly by the time of Penn's arrival at Saumur. There apparently is some question as to how active the aged Amyraut would have been in life at Saumur at that time. Herbert G. Wood is one who judged that Amyraut's retirement would have been almost entirely complete by 1662, due in large part to a major accident he suffered in 1657, an accident that resulted in torn ligaments and a dislocated hip. Amyraut's identification in a 1660 publication as Saumur's 'Late Professor of Divinity' may suggest that he had ceased lecturing by the 1660s.¹⁰

On the other hand, early Quaker historian William Sewel alleges that Penn himself informed him that he had lived 'with the famous preacher Moyses Amyraut'.¹¹ Much depends on what Penn meant by living with Amyraut. If Penn meant simply that he lived in the same community with an ailing Amyraut at Saumur, then this recollection may confirm Wood's observation.

Wood's conjecture seems likely to me. If Wood is correct that Amyraut had largely withdrawn from previous responsibilities at Saumur, then Penn's references to him in Penn's corpus should show less personal familiarity than Penn's references to Owen would show, the latter with whom he did have a close relationship.

In any event, one purpose of this essay is to show that there is a basis in Penn's work for a more systematic examination and comparison of his debts to these two great mentors, Owen and Amyraut, than anything that has been attempted by his

biographers thus far. I will not claim to provide this full, systematic examination and comparison in one short essay, but I do wish to trace out some of the lines that such an examination will need to follow.

QUAKERS AND PENN ON OWEN

John Owen was well known to Quakers long before Penn's convincement to Quakerism in 1667, or indeed, before Penn became acquainted with Owen in 1660. George Fox, who met Owen at least once, rather quietly took issue with Owen's positions on the Scriptures, Trinity, original sin, and the sacraments in Fox's 1659 *Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded*.¹² In the same year, Owen issued a blast against Quaker views of the Scripture and the Light of Christ, in a work published in Latin, *Pro Sacris Scripturis: Exercitationes adversus fanaticos*. Oxford Masters degree holder and Quaker Samuel Fisher replied to this latter work by Owen; Fisher adopted a dismissive and vituperative stance toward Owen in *Rusticus ad Academicos*. According to Fisher, when Owen disputed the Quakers' doctrine of the Light, he did 'not more than evidently contradict both the Truth and thy silly self, who art yet so senseless as not to see it'.¹³ Penn included *Rusticus* in his listing of tracts written by Quakers to defend themselves against 'the unfair dealing of our publick enemies'.¹⁴

Owen's disputes with Quakers were not always on abstract matters of Christian doctrine, but sometimes got wrapped up in matters of practical piety. Thus, in an encounter he had with Quakers at St Mary's, Quakers reasoned that they would continue to wear their hats during a time of prayer because Owen had not doffed his own while saying the Lord's Prayer.¹⁵

One famous interaction between Quakers and Owen came in 1654, when the first Quaker missionaries, Elizabeth Leavens (Holmes) and Elizabeth Fletcher, witnessed to Oxford. Leavens and Fletcher were greatly abused by Oxford students, thrown against a gravestone until Fletcher spit blood, tied together, and almost drowned under a pump, and thrown into a jail. Owen, in his role as vice chancellor, bore responsibility for the subsequent decision to whip Leavens and Fletcher from Oxford because they were profaning the word of God, and presumably also had the responsibility to oversee the behaviour of Oxford students, who were not disciplined for their actions.¹⁶ Samuel Fisher alluded to this incident when he asserted to Owen that if Quakers could 'have dissembled as ye do for fear of mans Fury, they might have escaped many, if not all those furious Fallings of your bloody mad-brain'd Parish Professors upon their Pates, and have saved Oxford and Cambridge that Labour and Pains, they more like Fiends than Friends of Truth'.¹⁷ Owen's role in this incident caused Penn to make one of his rare critical remarks about his mentor: 'It is worthy of our Observation, that this aggravated Inhumanity, (at which a gallant Roman would blush) was acted under the Vice Chancellorship, of Doctor John Owen'.¹⁸

It was Owen's voluminous theological writings that were of particular interest to Penn and many theologians then and since. In this regard, opinions of Owen

vary substantially. Some Reformed theologians see John Owen, at least on the issue of God's grace, to the right of Amyraut (and presumably Penn, too, although the latter is not addressed specifically). Thus, Alan Clifford judges that Owen endorsed Theodore 'Beza's variety of scholasticism', which was to the right of Amyraut's 'moderate Calvinism'. Indeed, in some of his works, such as his 1655 tract, *Vindiciae evangelicae*, Owen criticised Amyraut's 'middle way' on the issue of imputed grace.¹⁹ However, a different approach to Owen's thought is taken by Hugh Barbour, who doubts that any monolithic characterization will suffice for this prolific and highly influential theologian. Barbour contrasts the spiritual Puritanism of Owen's 1681 tract, *Phronema Tou Pneumatos, or the Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*, with the more doctrinaire Calvinism of the same author's *Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (1669). *Phronema*, in Barbour's view, represents 'the side of Owen that Penn must have loved at Oxford'.²⁰

Penn makes numerous references to Owen in his works, and they have far more of the flavour of a younger man's gracious compliments to a mentor (good form in the gentlemanly circles that Penn often travelled in), than the confrontation of a theologian who could be quite critical of Quakers. Of the (at least) 16 references to Owen in Penn's corpus,²¹ to whom Penn refers at one point as 'the great Doctor of Independency',²² and to whom, despite Penn's scruples against using honorifics for theological authorities,²³ Penn repeatedly refers as 'Dr. Owen',²⁴ a large number of these references express appreciation for Owen's theology and enlist his writings on behalf of Quaker principles.

There is one contention of Owen's that Penn returns to again and again in order to bolster his presentation of Quakerism. In Penn's view, Owen, like Quakers, believed that the Holy Spirit is the only fit interpreter of Scripture. In *The Counterfeit Christian Detected, and the Real Quaker Justified*, a 1674 debate tract directed against the Baptist Thomas Hicks, Penn puts his point this way: 'But inasmuch as thou chargest me with denying the Scripture's Authority, and then railest...because I place it upon the Testimony of the Light and Spirit of God in the Conscience; Hear what Dr. John Owen says, "The only Publick, Authentick and Infallible Interpreter of the Holy Scripture, is He who is the Author of them, from the Breathing of whose Spirit it derives all it's VERITY, PERSPICUITY, and AUTHORITY."' ²⁵ Penn plucked an important passage from Owen's writings, indeed from the very same writing directed against Quakers that had been so strenuously criticised by Fisher. In so doing, he hoped to demonstrate that Owen represents a kind of spiritual Puritanism that helped to make the outbreak of Quakerism possible. However, he is only partially successful in this aim.

In the passage that Penn quotes from Owen, the latter is criticizing the Catholic view of papal authority.²⁶ Quakers sometimes complained that Protestants would disallow Quaker criticisms of Protestants that were substantially the same as the criticisms that Protestants were making against Catholics. Penn himself makes that kind of observation in respect to Owen's writings.²⁷

I have previously shown that Penn sometimes changed the meaning of authorities from whom he quoted by selective translation.²⁸ This is another instance of

that, although the way that Penn changes the meaning is quite subtle. My Earlham colleagues Michael Birkel and Stephen Heiny have kindly provided a translation for the entire sentence of Owen's, from which Penn liked to quote the first part:

Our theologians have posited that the only public, authentic, and infallible interpreter of the holy scriptures, is the author of them, from whose inspiration they receive all their truth, clearness, and authority, namely, the Holy Spirit, in part speaking in these scriptures themselves, and explaining his intent clearly and plainly, and revealing it (that intent) through analogy of the whole of divine doctrine, or the truth handed down in them, in all parts or places where he might seem to have spoken more obscurely, in part injecting spiritual light into our own minds, by which we are led into all necessary truth made clear in word, and accordingly as it (the judge, meaning the papacy) has not been designated by Christ so this visible judge is of no use, which they so grandly (or pompously) preach.²⁹

In this entire sentence, it is clear that Owen is asserting not only that the Holy Spirit is the interpreter of Scriptures, but he also wants to specify how the Holy Spirit helps us to accomplish this task. In part, he states, the Holy Spirit speaks through the Scriptures themselves, illuminating the uncertain parts through reference to the clearer parts. This scripturalism is what Owen appears to make reference to in his inclusion of the phrase 'analogy of...divine doctrine', shorthand for word studies and thematic comparisons between biblical passages with similar themes, in the sentence translated above.³⁰ In part, Owen states, in a more mystical vein, the Holy Spirit also does this by infusing 'spiritual light into [our] own minds, by which we are led into all necessary truth made clear in word'.

With a single exception, which we are about to examine, Penn never quotes from this careful explanation by Owen of the mode of operation of the Holy Spirit. He quotes often from this passage up to the phrase 'namely, the Holy Spirit', but, generally, nothing thereafter. The single exception comes from part of his extensive 1673 commentary in the John Faldo controversy. (Faldo was, like Owen, a minister to the Independents.) This passage comes from the conclusion to Part I of Penn's book; in Part I, Penn's major theme is 'the importance of depending upon the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and Light for proper interpretation of the Scriptures'.³¹ Penn attempts a thoroughgoing attack of Protestant scripturalism here, expressing great scepticism, for example, that one can ever demonstrate 'the harmony of the Scriptures, ...since there are very deep and obscure Places, and sometimes seeming Contradictions, and that in highest Points'. Penn observes of Faldo and his fellow Independents:

But if (thus driven) they answer in the Words of J. Owen, That the only Publick, Authentick, and Infallible Interpreter of the Holy Scripture is HE, who is the AUTHOR of them, from the Breathing of whose Spirit it derives all it's Verity, Perspicuity, and Authority, (Exerc. 2, 7, 9. against the Quakers): Entreat their Patience to stand one Question more, and thou hast done, viz. If the Verity, Perspicuity and Authority of the Scriptures depend upon the Breathing of the Holy Spirit; or as he expresses it a little farther, the Infusing a Spiritual Light into our Hearts; Then, Whether People ought not to have Recourse unto the Holy Spirit

and Light, as the only Interpreter, Judge and Rule, what Scripture remains of Force to our Day; and how, and which Way such Scripture is to be understood?³²

So Penn accepted Owen's mystical explanation as to how the Holy Spirit works, but he also rejected Owen's scripturalism which was meant to stand in careful balance with the mysticism. Thus he omitted the part of Owen's sentence (one can almost see the ellipsis)³³ where Owen carefully explained that one way that the Holy Spirit works through us is by allowing us to gain a sense of the more obscure parts of Scripture by the clearer parts. Penn denies us any sense of the balance between scripturalism and mysticism sought by Owen; given that Owen's criticisms of Quakers have to do with what he saw as their faulty principles in interpreting Scripture,³⁴ it is doubtful that Owen would have been surprised by his former pupil's misleading treatment of his writings. Since much of Penn's complaints against Faldo have to do with the latter's misquotation of Quakers,³⁵ it is ironic that Penn engages in much the same practice of misquotation, however subtly, in his own treatment of Owen's writings.

PENN ON AMYRAUT

By crossing the English Channel, Penn entered a world that was far more unfamiliar to most mid- and late-seventeenth-century English Quakers. Within the context of the Digital Quaker Collection, there is no reference to Amyraut outside the context of Penn's life and thought. As we have already seen, this is a very different kind of engagement with the Quaker world than the oppositional stance to Quakerism that John Owen frequently found himself in.

I have found only four mentions of Amyraut (Penn referred to him as 'Amiraldus' or 'Amaraldus', Latinised versions of his name) in Penn's entire corpus (five, if the two editions of *No Cross, No Crown* are counted separately), and only two of these seem to have significance. In *No Cross, No Crown*, Penn includes Amyraut in a long list of theologians who are commonly cited without honorifics, in his thoroughgoing attempt to demonstrate that the use of titles is unnecessary.³⁶ In a 1674 letter to John Collinges on the subject of Quakers' objections to orthodox Trinitarian theology, Amyraut is included as part of another list of theologians that Penn borrowed from a work by Owen; these theologians are said to have supported the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity that Penn and Quakers disputed.³⁷

The other two references to Amyraut, both of which occur in debate tracts, are more substantive and deserve more searching analysis. In Penn's third book, a 1668 tract entitled *The Guide Mistaken*, he composed a reply to Independent-turned-conformist Anglican priest Jonathan Clapham, who argued for a national English Church to include everyone, except atheists, polytheists, heathen, Jews, Muslims, Catholics, Socinians, and Quakers. According to Barbour, the majority of Penn's *Guide* 'was worthy of the scholarly and tolerant Calvinists', such as Amyraut, cited in the work.³⁸ In the work itself, Penn recalled fondly 'that time I once employ'd in a Conversation with Books', a reference that surely meant to encompass his Saumur sojourn. He contrasted the 'raw and undigested' writing of

Clapham to the 'Learning, Gravity, and Reason of Du Plessy[-Mornay], Grotius, Amiralduis, &c. who in their Time were truly Honorable'.

Penn's final mention of Amyraut was in the *Christian Quaker*, a debate tract that Penn co-authored with George Whitehead, and another in Quakers' continuing controversy with Thomas Hicks. There Penn wrote:

That Men, in all Ages, have had a Belief of God, and some knowledge of him, tho' not upon equal Discovery, must be granted from that Account that all Story gives of Mankind in Matters of Religion; several have fully performed this: Of old, Justin Martyr, Clemens Alexandrinus, Augustine, and others; of latter Times, Du Plessy[-Mornay], Grotius, Amiralduis, [and] L. Herbert.³⁹

Penn realised that the universalist dimension of Quakerism (that the saving Light of Christ was operable both before the life of the historical Jesus of Nazareth, a central contention of *Christian Quaker*, and among contemporary humans like the seventeenth-century American Indians who had never heard the gospel preached, an issue that he confronted in founding Pennsylvania) needed a strong grounding in natural religion. Moses Amyraut, founder of the Saumur academy at which Penn had studied, among other advocates of a generous and liberal Christianity, was one who had developed the theoretical foundations for such a claim. Penn was properly critical of his debate opponents, Clapham and Hicks, who had not read nor wrestled with this extensive and extremely thoughtful philosophical literature. In both of these passages, Penn was highly consistent in the authorities among the moderate Reformed tradition that persons who would discuss this topic knowledgeably would need to confront. For space reasons, we will pass by most analysis of Penn's near contemporaries other than Amyraut.⁴⁰

Undoubtedly Amyraut influenced Penn on method, ensuring the latter's healthy regard for reason in matters of religion, among other things,⁴¹ but how Amyraut influenced Penn on matters of theological content will take more inquiry.

Lord Herbert of Cherbury's (1582–1648) *De Veritate* (1624) influentially posited five innate ideas at the core of all religion: that God exists; it is the duty of humans to worship him; the practice of morality and virtue is a central part of worship; humans must repent of their sins; and there exists an afterlife, during which humans will experience rewards or punishment from what they have done in this life.⁴² Herbert's five principles constituted a more straightforward universalist statement than any of Penn's other authorities. Herbert influenced Penn strongly, as he did numerous other figures of the dawning Enlightenment.⁴³ Yet Amyraut could get to the same place as Herbert, but by a more roundabout path. Amyraut wrote,

Since the one aid to life and the one impulse for the acquisition of supreme happiness depends on the knowledge of true religion, such as ought to be obtained from divine revelation, and since all true religion necessarily consists in some covenant which exists between God and men, then no one can doubt that it is of the highest importance that one diligently apply himself to the explication and understanding of the divine covenants.⁴⁴

Since most Reformed Protestant theology relied on God's covenants as recorded in the Old and New Testaments as a basic element of their thought structure, to see the concept of 'covenant' pop up in Amyraldianism should be no great surprise. But the first of these covenants is the Noachic covenant, in which God covenants absolutely with all humanity and does not require any condition for a human being to be part of the covenant.⁴⁵ This introduces a universalist element into Amyraldian theology. It is an element that Penn would subsequently enlarge in constructing his own theology. Immediately following the passage in *Christian Quaker* in which Penn names Herbert and Amyraut, among others, as sources of inspiration for his theology, Penn lays out the basic principles for his Scriptural interpretation:

As none knows the Things of Man, save the Spirit of Man, so the Things of God knows no Man, but the Spirit of God. Hence we may safely conclude, that the Creating Word that was with God, and was God, in whom was Life, and that Life the Light of Men, and who is the Quickning Spirit, was He, by whom God in all Ages hath revealed Himself; consequently, that Light or Spirit must have been the General Rule of Men's Knowledge, Faith and Obedience, with respect to God... Therefore the Light of Christ in the Conscience must needs have been the General Rule, &c. It was by this Law that Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Melchizedek, Abimilech, Job, Jethro, &c. walked and were accepted.⁴⁶

Penn saw this as the 'Law Natural' that existed from the beginning of creation, and this is the law that 'Noah and Abraham kept...and were Justified in it'.⁴⁷

Penn may not have abandoned Amyraldian theology after leaving Saumur and undergoing a conviction to Quakerism three years later, but he would come to expand greatly the universalistic aspects of it that were favourable to his newfound Quaker faith.

Probably the central aspect of Amyraut's theology, and the aspect most controversial to his fellow Reformed Protestants, was a re-reading of John Calvin's writings to support a more moderate theology than the hardened Calvinist orthodoxy that had prevailed by the 1630s. The classic statement of Calvinist orthodoxy had come at the 1619 Synod of Dort in Holland that had repudiated the views of Jacobus Arminius, and its features are often remembered under the acronym of one of Holland's chief exports, the TULIP: Total depravity of humankind; unconditional election; limited election (i.e. only for the elect); irresistible grace; and perseverance of the saints. What Amyraut found in Calvin's writings was a covenant that carried dual characteristics, a universal grace that was available to everyone and a more limited grace that indeed was efficacious only for the elect. Election was thus unlimited in one aspect, and still limited in another. As Amyraut worked out the implications of his complex theological system, it seemed to leave more room for human free will, and to make the concept of God's grace more meaningful.⁴⁸

This was not so foreign a system to seventeenth-century Quakerism in general with its roots in a spiritual Puritanism, nor to the thought of William Penn in particular. Some of Penn's heroes were moderates who had theological positions similar to Amyraut's, for example, John Hales, who attended the Synod of Dort,

after which he 'reportedly bid John Calvin good night, but he did not say good morning to Arminius'. Hales believed that predestination might profitably be taught, but would prefer to have it taught alongside more expansive doctrines of grace.⁴⁹ But, while Penn could be known to waver back and forth on his theological convictions, perhaps in part because of the diverse audiences he needed to address in his writing,⁵⁰ he ultimately settled into a very expansive view of grace. The universalism of *Christian Quaker* was reinforced in many of his later works, such as *Primitive Christianity Revived in the Faith and Practice of the Quakers* (1696), where he emphatically identified Light, Spirit, and Grace as equivalent concepts.⁵¹ At the end, the degree to which God's grace as extended to all human beings was unlimited is striking in Penn's work. The careful balancing between limited and unlimited views of atonement to be found in his mentor Amyraut's work is missing in Penn's writings.

OWEN, AMYRAUT, AND PENN ON RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

It is a contention of this essay that an appreciation of the theological beliefs of seventeenth-century public intellectuals is requisite prior to gaining a solid understanding of their political views. The remainder of this essay will examine these three men's responses to the religious pluralism that they found around them. This is part of what we may call the political 'software' of the seventeenth century; it may be an intellectual, even an abstract exercise, but it is a necessary one, because, among other things, as Penn and others pointed out, a successful and just settlement of these issues (as can be discerned by Penn's praise of Holland,⁵² widely thought to be the most advanced nation in dealing with this issue) was a vital part of insuring that politics and economies of nations (the political 'hardware') could function well.

Religious toleration was not an easy concept for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europeans to embrace, because they were torn between a desire for religious unity, or concord, that would embrace the entire nation, or even all of Christendom, and a desire that whatever forceful actions that would result from attempts to achieve concord in the face of a growing religious pluralism not include suppression of their own freedom to follow their religious conscience. The step required to move from not wanting oneself to be persecuted or to suffer because of one's own religious choices, to embracing a religious pluralism that seemed quite impossibly chaotic, was a mighty leap, too great a leap for most Europeans of that time period. In general, the more far-reaching toleration edicts, such as the 1578 Peace of Antwerp, were quickly 'terminated by the intolerance of both sides'.⁵³ In his lifetime, Penn analogously would witness the 1685 revocation of the historic Edict of Nantes.⁵⁴

Marco Turchetti has traced this painful process in post-Reformation France, noting that what we today embrace as religious toleration emanated from a small circle of intellectuals surrounding Sebastian Castellio, who protested against the treatment of anti-Trinitarian Michael Servetus, persecuted and imprisoned by the

Catholic Inquisition, and subsequently burned at the stake in Calvin's Geneva. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Catholics did not accept the presence of Protestants in their midst, constantly devising plans for their conversion back to Catholicism, but then again 'neither Calvin...nor Beza...ever developed a coherent doctrine of tolerance'. Turchetti pleads for historians to place greater emphasis on the reality, that, for the French during these two centuries, tolerance for Protestants, even after the 1598 Edict of Nantes, 'was always limited temporally and spatially: it was to be confined to certain regions of the kingdom for a limited time'.⁵⁵

William Penn may have helped European and Euro-American societies to move beyond this grudging, time-limited concept of tolerance, and may have made creative, searching use of the multitude of humanist and philosophical resources available to him, especially in the aftermath of the Renaissance.⁵⁶ Yet Penn's tolerance also had limits, although more expansive than the vast majority of his contemporaries. Penn took varying views of what turned out to be the religion of his good friend the Duke of York, later James II, Catholicism; anti-Catholic activists have at least once reprinted Penn's 1670 *Seasonable Caveat Against Popery*, written in the context of a horrified Penn overseeing the religious customs of the Irish Catholic peasantry while superintending his father's estates in Ireland. Its unconvincing argumentation relies on contrasting the worst of Catholicism with the best of Protestantism. Still, while Penn sets as his purpose to 'militate for Truth against the dark suggestions of Papal superstition', he also disclaimed any intention to rouse the persecuting power of government against Catholics, because 'I profess myself a Friend to an universal Tolleration of Faith and Worship'. Penn's works of the mid-1680s, such as *Perswasive to Moderation*, written after James II had assumed the throne, were far more favourable to Catholicism than his work of a decade-and-a-half earlier, placing Catholicism and Protestant dissent on equal footing as regards the need of toleration. Catholics in Pennsylvania were permitted freedom for worship but also were subject to some rarely enforced civil disabilities.⁵⁷

The treatment of Islam provides a strong contrast between Amyraut's and Penn's thought. In his *Treatise Concerning Religions*, Amyraut devotes an entire chapter to his attempt to demonstrate that Mohammed was 'the greatest and most abominable Deceiver, that ever liv'd upon the Earth',⁵⁸ furious that any non-Christian would attempt to incorporate central figures of Christianity such as Jesus and Mary in the way that Muslims have. There is no counterpart to this in Penn's work, either in length or in passion. Penn makes more than a dozen references to the 'Turk', as Muslims were commonly known in seventeenth-century Europe (where, indeed, large parts of Eastern Europe were occupied by the Ottoman Empire). When Penn used the term 'Turk', he usually meant to signify an honest non-Christian of religious understanding, one, however, who is superior in morals to a hypocritical Christian.⁵⁹ Penn does make one brief, unfavourable, and dispassionate comparison of Mohammed to Jesus.⁶⁰

John Owen's support for toleration began in the 1640s, when he doubted that a Presbyterian model of church government would suffice for the new English

Commonwealth. In a 1646 sermon, Owen preached that 'a peaceable dissent in some smaller things', such as whether one should have presbyterial or congregationalist government, ought not 'distance off affections, nor [bring about] a breach of Christian unity'. He cautioned against using opprobrious terms to characterise others of different opinions. 'The horrid names of Heretick, Schismatic, Sectary, and the like, have never had any influence or force upon my judgement, nor otherwise moved me, unlesse it were unto retaliation; so I am perswaded it is also with others'.⁶¹ In a discourse on toleration published together with his sermon on the occasion of the 1649 execution of Charles I, Owen was deeply sceptical that punishment of religious dissenters could have any positive purpose: 'Corporall punishments for simple error, were found out to help build the Tower of Babel'.⁶² He did, however, believe that the magistrate had a role in ensuring the availability of proper Christian worship, and in suppressing false worship (here he instanced Catholic masses) and preventing church disturbances.

We ought not overlook the ambivalence of the tolerationist discourse of Owen and other Independent churchmen; during the 1640s, Separatists such as Roger Williams (and forerunners of Quakers such as Familists) viewed the Independents as no more tolerant than the Anglicans or the Presbyterians.⁶³ Penn, of course, was acutely aware of such nuances, especially after his Quaker conviction, posing this plaintive rhetorical question in 1669 from his prison cell in the Tower of London: Had Owen (and six other Puritan and Anglican theologians) 'disarm'd the Romanists of these inhumane weapons' of religious persecution, only to have them used 'against your inoffensive Country-men?'⁶⁴

Owen wrote, in Latin, an attack on the Quaker view of continuing revelation, which he published in 1659; this was the work Samuel Fisher was responding to in *Rusticus ad Academicos*. His disinclination to extend religious toleration to Quakers seems, however, to have been more evident in his actions (the aforementioned banishment of Fletcher and Leavens from Oxford in 1654) than in any particular writing.⁶⁵ Penn's meeting with Owen in the aftermath of the Restoration, however, was in the context that both were nonconformists susceptible to persecution; and while Owen's role as an Independent meant that comprehension tended to be a viable possibility for him whereas it was less foreseeable for the more liturgically radical Quakers, something that irked Penn in his controversies with Richard Baxter,⁶⁶ in the end, toleration for Quakers and the other dissenters came at the same time, in the 1680s, with the proclamations of James II that many Protestants scorned, and more finally with the 1689 Act of Toleration that dissenting Protestants accepted.⁶⁷ That meant, during their period of active acquaintance prior to 1662, and in any possible subsequent relation up to the time of Owen's death in 1683, both men were fellow sufferers in terms of embracing a punishable nonconformity.

Amyraut's political context was a complex one, working as he must in the limited space for toleration that had resulted from the Edict of Nantes. It is clear that Amyraut did not want to merge the Reformed Church with the Catholic Church; he expressed a clear difference with Theophile Brachet de la Milletiere's

advocacy of church union with Catholics, and he based his disagreement with de la Milletiere on the fundamental Protestant issues of justification.⁶⁸ On the other hand, Amyraut was a formidable and irenic presence on the theological scene. He did seek to 'make easier a much needed union with other Protestants, notably the Lutherans' and to 'remove some difficulties encountered in the controversy with Roman Catholics'.⁶⁹ It is clear that Catholics generally appreciated Amyraut's irenicism. He was visited frequently by Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin, who apparently esteemed him highly.⁷⁰ The monarch, and presumably other Catholics, especially appreciated his 1650 work denouncing the execution of Charles I (husband of the late French king's sister).⁷¹ Amyraut's determined irenicism meant that he came under the most ferocious attack in his own French Reformed camp, where he had to fend off repeated accusations of heresy, who interpreted his lowering the level of inter-sectarian controversy as 'loosening...doctrinal soundness' and paving the way for 'inroads...of Romanism'.⁷² Amyraut's best witness for religious toleration, like Penn's, often fell in the practical realm.

It is true that much of Amyraut's and Penn's best work falls into the realm of constructive theology, using natural theological arguments based on reason. Both men saw value in Lord Herbert of Cherbury's work on the common elements of all religion. Amyraut calls his slightly altered list of Herbert's five essentials 'certain verities in Religion so evident, that the greatest part of mankind assents to them unanimously'.⁷³ For Penn, the best place to see a parallel project is in his *Address to Protestants*, published during the crisis of the Popish Plot, and designed to provide what was effectively a comprehension, or concord, of all Protestants, including Quakers, based on a common set of faith and morals, but a different liturgy for all. (Non-Quakers resolutely ignored this work of Penn's.) In it, Penn exalts the use of reason in religion, and not once, but three times, gives slightly differing and quite Christian lists of what he saw as the essentials of religion that all Protestants might agree upon.⁷⁴

CONCLUSION

Penn received important mentoring from two theological giants in the Reformed Protestant camp. Both Owen and Amyraut were bold and unafraid of innovation, and also unafraid of the theological attacks, the accusations of heresy, that came with the territory of theological innovation. From the evidence in Penn's writings, it is possible that he learned more spirituality from Owen and more theological and historical methods from Amyraut and the Salmurians. He appears to have been closer personally to Owen than to Amyraut, if one were to judge by the warmth of the references in Penn's corpus, although the fact that one of his teachers was living and the other dead by the time Penn published his writings may have had something to do with the way he addressed them in the writings. Far more can be done along the lines of this comparison and contrast; Owen, Amyraut, and Penn were all voluminous writers, and a comparison and contrast executed by someone with a thorough knowledge of the bulk of all three men's work would surely be instructive. However, enough has been shown here to

demonstrate that Penn utilised each of his mentors' works appreciatively and critically, and that he paid attention (again, sometimes critically) to their actions as well as their words. What resulted in Penn's life and writings was more than mere synthesis of Owen and Amyraut, but he clearly was deeply indebted to both of these intellectually curious and expansive mentors from the broad world of Reformed Protestantism.

NOTES

1. See, e.g., Peare, C.O., *William Penn: A Biography*, Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott, 1957, pp. 34-42; and Endy Jr, M.B., *William Penn and Early Quakerism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973, pp. 96-100.
2. 'The Role of the Vice-Chancellor', online: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/vc/position> (accessed November 24, 2011).
3. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, s.v. Greaves, R., 'Owen, John (1616-1683)', XLIII, pp. 222, 227. All further ODNB references are to this edition.
4. Penn, W., letter to Mary Pennyman, 22/9/1673, in Penn, W., *A Collection of the Works of William Penn in Two Volumes*, London: J. Sowle, 1726, I, p. 159. Further references will be to *Works*.
5. Penn, W., 'His Travels in Holland and Germany', in *Works*, I, p. 92.
6. Endy, *Penn and Early Quakerism*, pp. 96-97; Peare, *Penn: A Biography*, pp. 26, 36-37.
7. 'A William Penn Chronology, 1644-1679', in M.M. Dunn and R.S. Dunn (eds.), *The Papers of William Penn*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981, I, p. 24; Peare, *Penn: A Biography*, pp. 39, 41-42.
8. Armstrong, B.G., *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969. See also *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press, s.v. 'Amyraut, Moise (1596-16[6]4)', pp. 54-55; and Clifford, A.C., 'The Case for Amyraldianism', in A.C. Clifford (ed.), *Christ for the World: Affirming Amyraldianism*, Oswestry, Shropshire: Charenton Reformed Publishing, 2007, pp. 11-12; Morris, K.R., 'Theological Sources of William Penn's Concept of Religious Toleration', *Journal of Church and State* 35/1 (1993), pp. 83-111.
9. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, pp. 73.
10. Wood, H.G., 'Penn's Christian Quaker', in H.H. Brinton (ed.), *Children of Light: In Honor of Rufus M. Jones*, New York: Macmillan, 1938, pp. 6-7; Clifford, 'A Quick Look at Amyraut', in Clifford (ed.), *Christ for the World*, pp. 37-43.
11. Sewel, W., *History of the Rise, Increase and Progress of the Christian People Called Quakers*, Burlington, NJ: Isaac Collins, 1774, p. 539.
12. Fox, G., 'Journal', in *The Works of George Fox*, Philadelphia and New York: Marcus T.C. Gould, Isaac T. Hopper, 1831, I, p. 300; and Fox, 'Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded', in *Works*, III, pp. 420-21. Fox was responding to Owen's *The Primer: Or, An easie way to teach Children the true reading of English with a necessary catechisme, to instruct youth in the grounds of Christian religion*, London: Company of Stationers, 1652.
13. Fisher, S., 'Rusticus ad Academicos', in *Testimony of Truth Exalted*, London: 1679, p. 193.
14. And Penn also listed Owen as one of those that *Rusticus* was meant to confute. 'Reason against Railing' (1673), in *Works*, II, p. 560.
15. ODNB, 'John Owen', p. 224.
16. Croese, G., *General History of the Quakers*, London: John Dunton, 1696, p. 108; Sewel, *History of the... Quakers*, p. 105.
17. Fisher, *Testimony of Truth Exalted*, p. 252; ODNB, Villani, S., 'Fisher, Samuel (bap. 1604, d. 1665)', XIX, p. 717.

18. William Penn, 'Serious Apology for the Principles and Practices of the People call'd Quakers', in *Works*, II, p. 82.

19. Clifford, 'The Case for Amyraldianism', in Clifford (ed.), *Christ for the World*, pp. 13, 17; ODNB, s.v., 'John Owen', XLIII, p. 223; Endy, *Penn and Early Quakerism*, p. 98.

20. Barbour, H., *William Penn on Religion and Ethics: The Emergence of Liberal Quakerism*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), I, p. 16 n. 23. Barbour was influenced by Sippell, T., *Werdendes Quaekertum*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1937, in his views of Owen. Maurice Creasey has also highlighted the spiritual side of Owens see his ' "Inward" and "Outward": A Study of Early Quaker Language', in *Collected Essays of Maurice Creasey, 1912–2004*, ed. D. Johns, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011, pp. 347–48.

21. A computer search for John Owen in the Digital Quaker Collection (esr.earlham.edu/dqc) returns 16 'hits' from 7 different titles that were included in Penn's collected works (1726 edn).

22. 'Invalidity of John Faldo's Vindication', in *Works*, II, p. 373.

23. 'No Cross, No Crown', in *Works*, I, p. 324.

24. See, e.g., *Works*, I, pp. 270, 600, 603, 605; II, p. 455.

25. *Works*, II, p. 592; see also I, pp. 600, 603, 605; II, p. 376. This is probably Penn's translation of Owen's Latin (see n. 29 below). 'Exercitationes adversus fanaticos', in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. J. Russell, London: Richard Baynes, 1826, IV, p. 558. Penn gives the footnote 'exercit, 2.7' which correctly provides chapter and section in which this sentence can be found. See also Howson, Barry H., 'The Puritan Hermeneutics of John Owen: A Recommendation', *Westminster Theological Journal* 63/2 (2001), p. 360, online: http://www.johnowen.org/media/howson_owen_hermeneutics.pdf (accessed 10 January 2011).

26. Communication from Michael Birkel, 9 May 2011; Howson, 'Puritan Hermeneutics', p. 360.

27. Penn, *Innocency with her Open Face*, in Barbour (ed.), *Penn on Religion and Ethics*, I, p. 241.

28. Angell, S.W., 'Religious Toleration, Truth and Reason in the Thought of William Penn: A Study of *An Address to Protestants upon the Present Conjuncture*' (MA thesis, Earlham School of Religion, 1982), pp. 56–57; Angell, S.W., and Barbour, H., 'An Address to Protestants', in Barbour (ed.), *Penn on Religion and Ethics*, II, pp. 463–64.

29. 'Unicum, publicum, authenticum et infallibilem sacrarum Scripturarem interpretem, esse ipsum earum Authorem; e cuius afflatu, veritatem perspicuitatem et auctoritatem suam omnem habent, spiritum nempe sanctum, partim in ipsis Scripturis loquentem, mentemque suam clare et dilucide exponentem, eamque per totius divinae, seu veritatis in illis traditae analogiam, in omnibus partibus seu locis, ubi eum obscurius locutum fuisse videri possit, revelantem, partim lucem spiritualem in mentes nostras immittentem, qua in omnem necessariam veritatem in verbo patefactam ducamur; ac proinde, uti revera a Christo non est designatus, ita nulli usui esse iudicem illum visibilem, quem ita magnifice praedicant'. Owen, J., 'Exercitationes adversus fanaticos', in *The Works of John Owen*, IV, p. 558.

30. Howsam, 'Puritan Hermeneutics', pp. 355, 360, 373. See also Johnson, H.W., 'The "Analogy of Faith" and Exegetical Methodology: A Preliminary Discussion on Relationships', *Journal of Evangelical Theological Studies* 31/1 (1988), pp. 69–80. Penn does not address the issue of the 'analogy of divine doctrine' or (more commonly) 'analogy of faith' directly, but his seventeenth-century Quaker contemporaries objected to this Puritan principle on the grounds that ordinary human understanding was being used to constrain possible interpretations of Scripture; see, e.g., Barclay, R., 'Anarchy of the Ranters', in *Truth Triumphant*, Philadelphia: Benjamin C. Stanton, 1831, I, p. 462.

31. Bronner, E.B., and Fraser, D., *William Penn's Published Writings, 1660–1726: An Interpretive Bibliography*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986, in *Papers of William Penn*, V, p. 168.

32. Penn, 'Invalidity of John Faldo's Vindication of his Book', in *Works*, II, pp. 376ff.

33. If we map Penn's commentary on Owen from the Faldo dispute directly onto the Birkel–Heiny translation of Owen given above, Penn's quotation from Owen would look like this: 'The only public, authentic, and infallible interpreter of the holy scriptures, is the author of them, from whose inspiration they receive all their truth, clearness, and authority, namely, the Holy Spirit, ...in part injecting spiritual light into our own minds'. Hugh Barbour writes that 'given the intensity of even the Faldo debate, I think Penn can be forgiven his ellipses'. Personal communication with author, May 2011.

34. Howson, 'Puritan Hermeneutics', pp. 362–64.

35. Bronner and Fraser, *Papers of William Penn*, V, pp. 168.

36. For the mention of Amyraut in the second edition of *No Cross, No Crown*, see *Works*, I, p. 324. For the first edition, consult Barbour, *Penn on Religion and Ethics*, p. 49.

37. Dunn *et al.*, *Papers of William Penn*, I, pp. 272, 274 n. 17.

38. Barbour (ed.), *Penn on Religion and Ethics*, pp. 185–86.

39. *Works*, I, p. 592. Penn's second edition adds Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth to this list, but Cudworth's main work of relevance (*A True Intellectual System of the Universe*) was published only in 1678, five years after the publication of the first edition of *Christian Quaker*.

40. Philippe Duplessis-Mornay (1549–1623) was author of *Traité sur la vérité de la religion chrétienne* (1581), which examined Greek and Roman authors in order to confirm truths of the Christian religion, and he also founded the Saumur academy in 1589; Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) was author of *De veritate religionis christianae* (1627) designed to facilitate Christian doctrinal understanding across sectarian lines. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, s.v. Turchetti, M., 'Duplessis-Mornay, Phillippe (1549-1623)', online: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t172.e0439>;

The Oxford Dictionary of the Renaissance, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, s.v. Campbell, G., 'Grotius, Hugo (1583–1645)', p. 363; *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd edn, s.v. 'Herbert, Edward (1582–1648)', pp. 756–57.

41. Barbour, *Penn on Religion and Ethics*, pp. 209, 218 n. 14.

42. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd edn, s.v. 'Herbert, Edward (1582–1648)', pp. 756–57.

43. Angell, 'Religious Toleration, Truth and Reason in the Thought of William Penn', pp. 113–16.

44. *Theses Salmurienses*, I, p. 212, quoted in Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, p. 140.

45. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, p. 143.

46. *Works*, I, p. 592.

47. 'Urim and Thummim' (1674), in *Works*, I, p. 627. Here I am in agreement with Herbert G. Wood, who wrote that 'If Amyraut would not have gone all the way with Penn in his estimate of Gentile Divinity, it seems that he set him on the right road... Penn's estimate of the extent and spiritual value of Gentile enlightenment is more generous and less cautious than Amyraut's... If Amyraut set the door ajar for the admission of a few selected pious heathen to the Christian fellowship, Penn appears to have thrown it wide open'. Wood, 'Penn's Christian Quaker', pp. 11, 13, 14.

48. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, pp. 158–221; Clifford, *Christ for the World*, pp. 18–20, *passim*.

49. Hales was praised by Penn in *An Address to Protestants*. ODNB, s.v. Greenslade, B., 'Hales, John (1584–1656)', XXIV, p. 551; Angell, 'Religious Toleration, Truth, and Reason in the Thought of Penn', pp. 53–57.

50. Angell, S.W., 'William Penn, Puritan Moderate', in M.L. Birkel and J.W. Newman, (eds.), *The Lamb's War: Quaker Essays to Honor Hugh Barbour*, Richmond, IN: Earlham College Press, 1992, p. 76.

51. Barbour, *Penn on Religion and Ethics*, II, pp. 617–18.

52. 'Holland, that Bog of the World, neither Sea nor dry Land, now the Rival of tallest Monarchs...by her own superlative Clemency and Industry; for one was the Effect of the other: She cherished her People, whatsoever were their Opinions, as the reasonable Stock of the Country, the Heads and Hands of her Trade and Wealth; and making them easy in the main Point, their Conscience, she became Great by them; this made her fill with People, and they filled her with Riches and Strength'. 'Perswasive to Moderation in Church Dissenters', in *Works*, II, p. 730.

53. Bainton, R.H., *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1952, p. 177.

54. Penn, however, made scant reference to this event in his published works and letters. He did rebuke Anglican clergyman for being 'extremely scandal'd and scared at the Severity upon Protestants in France' while wreaking similar injustices on dissenters in their own country: 'Good Advice to the Church of England, Roman Catholick, and Protestant Dissenter', (1687) in *Works*, II, p. 752.

55. Turchetti, M., 'Religious Concord and Political Tolerance in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22/1 (1991), pp. 18, 19, 20.

56. Barbour, H., 'William Penn, Model of Protestant Liberalism', *Church History* 48.2 (1979), pp. 156-73.

57. Barbour, *Penn on Religion and Ethics*, pp. 400-412; Bronner and Fraser, *Papers of William Penn*, V, pp. 316-19. The Quaker bibliographer Joseph Smith and WorldCat list an 1852 republication by Robert Macbeth of the Darlington Protestant Alliance. Penn republished it himself in 1700.

58. Moses Amyraut, *A Treatise Concerning Religions*, London: M. Simons, 1660, p. 341.

59. *Works*, I, p. 920; II, pp. 300, 660, 724.

60. 'Mahomet became great in his Followers, yet we will not allow that Greatness to his Goodness. The case vastly differs; one's Kingdom was of this World, the others not; one gained his Interest over the Hearts of Men, by the Purity, Patience, Humility, Mercy, and Charity of his Doctrine, the other by Factions, and Force. It is true, the Christians in general are much degenerated, to the Scandal of Religion.' 'Visitation to the Jews', *Works*, II, p. 851.

61. Owen, J., *A Vision of Unchangeable Free Mercy, in sending the means of grace to undeserved sinners*, London: Philemon Stephens, 1646, pp. 53, 54.

62. Owen, J., *A Sermon preached to the Honourable House of Commons...January 31*, London: Matthew Simmons, 1649, p. 95.

63. Zakai, A., 'Religious Toleration and its Enemies: The Independent Divines and the Issue of Toleration during the English Civil War', *Albion* 21/1 (1989), pp. 1-33.

64. Penn, *Innocency with her Open Face*, I, p. 241.

65. Owen, *A Sermon preached to the Honourable House of Commons, ...January 31, passim*; cf. ODNB, s.v. 'John Owen', XLIII, p. 224.

66. Dunn *et al.*, *Papers of William Penn*, I, pp. 340-52; more generally, see Angell, 'Penn, Puritan Moderate', pp. 81-84.

67. Barbour, H., and Frost, J.W., *The Quakers*, 2nd edn, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1994, p. 70.

68. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, pp. 96-97, 228-29.

69. Nicole, R., *Moyse Amyraut: A Bibliography*, New York: Garland Publishing, 1981, p. 17.

70. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, p. 72.

71. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, pp. 115-16.

72. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, pp. 88ff.; Nicole, *Amyraut*, p. 20.

73. Amyraut, *Treatise*, p. 158.

74. Angell and Barbour, 'An Address to Protestants', pp. 447-78.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Stephen W. Angell is Leatherock Professor of Quaker Studies at the Earlham School of Religion. His most recent book, co-edited with Harold D. Weaver and Paul Kriese, is *Black Fire: African American Quakers on Spirituality and Human Rights* (Quaker Press of Friends General Conference, 2011).

Mailing address: Earlham School of Religion, 228 College Avenue, Richmond, IN 47374, USA.