

WILLIAM PENN: QUAKER HUMANIST

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ABSTRACT

There is a tradition of Christian humanism from Erasmus, Grotius, Mornay, and Amyraut that Penn probably learnt at Saumur and that served as an undercurrent to the rest of his life. While it is impossible definitively to prove direct influence, the similarities between Amyraut's ideas and Penn's later perspectives make the possibility of influence likely.

KEYWORDS

William Penn, humanism, Amyraut, Saumur, Grotius, Mornay.

I. INTRODUCTION

During the American Revolution, the Quaker whalers from Nantucket, attempting to be neutral, suffered from depredations from both warring sides. In response, after peace came in 1783, a group of them, led by William Rotch, decided to emigrate to Europe. They first approached the British government, which greeted them hostilely, refusing to allow them to bring their ships because of conflicts with the navigation laws. So Rotch turned to the French royal government that welcomed them. Several families of Friends then moved to France and settled in Dunkirk just in time for the Revolution. When Rotch appeared before the National Assembly, he was favourably received. The Quakers as pacifists had long refused to celebrate military victories by placing candles in their windows. In 1797 during the war with Austria and England and after French victories, Quakers feared retribution of having windows broken or worse as had happened to them, even in Philadelphia during that revolution. Seeking to avoid violence from the radicals, Rotch asked the Mayor if there was anyone to whom he could appeal for safety and was directed to the Commissioner sent from Paris to rally popular sentiment. The man assured Rotch that the Friends would not be disturbed because

We are now about establishing a Government on the same principles that William Penn and the Quakers established in Pennsylvania—and I find there are a few Quakers in this Town, whose religious principles do not admit of any public rejoicing, and I desire they may not be molested.¹

My former colleague Edith Philips is one of many scholars who have written on the influence of the Friends, either in myth or reality, upon French philosophes, beginning with Voltaire who lived for a time with an English Quaker family.² The examples of William Penn and the religious freedoms and prosperity of colonial Pennsylvania remained a potent symbol to contrast with French life during the eighteenth century.

This article is looking the other way, at the influence of the theologians of the Academy of Saumur, particularly Moïse Amyraut, on Penn and through him on the English struggle for religious liberty and, equally important, on Pennsylvania. My thesis is that there was an impact upon the young William Penn who left his study at Saumur a Christian humanist.³ His conversion to Quakerism subordinated his humanism, but it was always present and emerged with greater prominence after 1680. So this paper will discuss what we know of the young Penn, then describe what he probably learned at Saumur, and show its congruence with a few of his writings.⁴

The Penn who came to Saumur should be seen as a religiously inclined but unformed young man. He was very bright, with a good memory, and was seeking to affirm Christianity intellectually, but was aware even in childhood that religious experience was also requisite. So he was searching to understand whether Christianity was the true religion and how to incorporate into his theological knowledge his spiritual leaning. He had enrolled in 1660 in Christ Church College, Oxford, recently purged of its Puritan faculty and now under the leadership of royalist, Anglican, and intolerant John Fell. Penn was soon, to use his term, 'banished' from Oxford; we would say expelled although there is no official record as to why, and there are differing accounts. Thomas Clarkson in the first real biography of Penn, written in 1813, said young William had engaged in a student riot over compulsory wearing of the surplice, allegedly a popish remnant. We know for certain that Penn had been meeting with John Owen, whether for study or worship or both is uncertain.⁵ Owen had been Cromwell's Vice-Chancellor at Oxford, refused to conform after the Restoration of Charles II, and so had been removed and now resided close by, though he was not allowed to preach. Owen was one of the most important Independent ministers, an impressive scholar with voluminous writings. Owen was a Calvinist and now favoured a broadly based Church of England with bishops but also including Independents and Presbyterians. During the Commonwealth, he had written against Quakers and did not favour a broad toleration of all sects or Roman Catholics. Owen was also unlikely to have recommended to Penn that he study with Amyraut, who had written against the English Independents and who was suspected of having Arminian leanings.⁶

The man who decided what young William would do was his father, the Admiral, now Sir William Penn. Sir William had risen from sea captain to Admiral

under Cromwell, participated in victories against the Dutch, and then had been in charge of the ships in an expedition against Spanish Hispaniola. After its failure—although Jamaica had been conquered as a consolation prize—Penn had been sent to the Tower, perhaps also because of contacts with Charles II, although he was later released. The Admiral, returned to high favour with the Restoration of Charles II, sent his son first to Oxford and later to Lincoln's Inn in hopes of making him a courtier. Neither the son nor later historians have maintained that the Admiral, his wife, younger brother or sister were particularly religious, and it is doubtful that his father, who sent William to France as part of a grand tour, intended him to study theology. Initially, Penn followed his father's wishes and was presented at the French court, disarmed a drunken man who challenged him to a duel, and may have toured with Robert Spencer, later Lord Sunderland.

How William learned of and decided to study at Saumur he never tells us, but he spent over a year there and returned to London in August 1664 at the request of his father because of the impending Dutch War. According to Samuel Pepys the diarist, Penn now wore fashionable French dress and had an 'affected manner of speech and gait'. Pepys attended dinner parties, played cards, and went to the theatre with William and made no allusions to any singular piety shown by the young man.⁷ After William spent time studying law, the Admiral sent his son to Ireland to supervise his estates, and while there William helped put down a rebellion and sought to become a soldier. His father refused permission. Instead, Penn went to worship with Friends and to hear Thomas Loe, whom he had heard preach in his home years before. Penn became a Quaker in 1667. Now he experienced persecution, including being arrested, and wrote his first statements for religious toleration. Soon released, he was ordered home by an irate father who disowned him.

Penn never directly credits his education at Oxford, Lincoln's Inn, or the Saumur Academy with influencing him, but only the first two did he denounce in strong terms.⁸ His silence even to acknowledge Saumur's impact can be explained as stemming from his Quaker beliefs. Penn, like other Friends, insisted that he became a Quaker because of a direct experience of God of which the first glimmers came when he was eleven. To have credited education, particularly from a Calvinist Academy, or any kind of 'head' learning or human wisdom would have appeared to make his faith dependent upon something other than God. For the same reason, his theological tracts rarely mentioned other Quaker authors he had read, except when quoting them to show how some opponent was mistaken. Quakerism was not, for Penn, human-made, but was a response to a personal revelation from God and confirmed by the Scriptures.

Penn's study at Saumur should have biased him against the Quakers. Amyraut detested the enthusiastic sects that had sprung up during the English Civil War, whose leaders had killed the king. He argued that the Holy Spirit could inspire an interpretation of Scripture but immediate revelation had ceased after the apostolic age.⁹ There was no Inward Light of Christ as the Quakers claimed. The belief that 'Christ had returned to teach his people', in fact all apocalyptic speculation, was

absurd. Amyraut argued that that the passages in the books of Daniel and Revelation that radicals used to calculate when the eschaton would occur had not been written in a hidden code for later generations to interpret, but referred to events in the writers' lifetimes.¹⁰ Unlike most Quakers, Amyraut used historical interpretation to undercut what he defined as a naïve understanding of the Bible.

The Quakers and Penn agreed with Amyraut's emphases upon the universality of God's grace and individual responsibility, but they disagreed on predestination. The Saumur academy teachers denied that they were Arminians and emphasized a covenant of grace, but they did so within a framework of Calvinism that rejected the conclusions of the Synod of Dort. When he became a Quaker, Penn needed to reject Huguenot teaching on the nature of the sacraments, the ministry, hymns, tithes, and the nature of the visible Church.

Equally striking is the difference in tone between Amyraut and the young Penn in debating opponents. Amyraut defended his theological perspectives with calm reason and sought for unity. He wanted to unite all Protestants and even supported Richelieu's abortive attempt to create a Galician Church free from Rome and merging Catholics and Protestants. Amyraut reacted to the recently ended wars of religion in France by stressing the need for peace and the preservation of the rights of Calvinists in a kingdom where Catholics were the majority and the king was a Catholic.¹¹

For the fervid Quaker convert William Penn, theological disputation was a blood sport including fervent denunciation of his opponents, often described in vituperative terms, an example terming the chancellor of Oxford 'little mushroom'. The apocalypse was at hand with judgment being pronounced by God through Penn on all other Protestant and Catholic churches. For Penn predestination was a cruel trick that dishonoured God by making him cruel and irrational and he charged Presbyterians in England with being persecutors.¹²

The differences between Penn's and Amyraut's religious outlooks are so enormous that it has been easy for some scholars to ignore or play down their relationship. Penn rarely praised any Calvinist, although in some treatises defending Quaker ethics and practices he piled up citations including Calvin and Beza to convince the reader that what he was advocating had been approved by the wisest people throughout recorded history.

My thesis is that Amyraut and the Saumur Academy did affect Penn, first, a little as the young belligerent Quaker, and more later, as an older and some might say wiser man attempting to end religious persecution and bring harmony to England. I am not asserting and cannot prove that Amyraut was the only source for Penn's later perspectives but that the similarities between Amyraut's ideas and Penn's make an influence likely, even if Penn did not acknowledge it. My interpretation rests on the fact that Penn was a complicated man who can be seen as re-inventing himself several times or, in more seventeenth-century Restoration terms, wearing several masks. And underlying all these masks, there remained a Christian humanism that occasionally surfaced. Alternatively, one could see Penn as a man of layers and, while he emphasized different qualities depending upon

circumstances, he throughout his adult life could be at times a man of reason, a humanist, courtier, Quaker, seeker of toleration, religious controversialist, political theorist, and a wealthy landowner and proprietor.

II. THE HUMANIST TRADITION AT SAUMUR

In a tract entitled *The Guide Mistaken or Temporizing rebuked* (1668), Penn contrasted the ability and piety of his Saumur teachers with those of his opponent, the minister Jonathan Clapham, who had been in turn a Presbyterian, Independent, and Anglican—in all without ‘Fear, Wit or Wisdom’.¹³ Here Penn is recalling what in all probability was his study at the Academy, because most of the writers he mentioned would not have been in the beginning curriculum at Oxford.

When I retrospect upon that Time I once imploy’d in a Conversation with Books, and call to mind the excellent Defence of Origen, and Apology of Tertullian on the Behalf of those Primitive Christians, and also the Learning, Gravity, and Reason of DuPlessy [Mornay], Grotius, Amiralduis [Amyraut] &c who in their Time were truly Honourable and Modern Writers on the same subjects.¹⁴

Note that the endorsement was qualified: ‘who in their Time’ but, of course, none of them were Friends whose wisdom had superseded them. Still, I wish to concentrate on the qualities that linked all these men in a fashion that appealed to Penn who at this time was a radical Quaker.

The early Christians mentioned appealed to Penn because they had the prestige of being among the most influential creators of normative Christian thought (Origen in Greek and Tertullian in Latin) and knowing them established his intellectual credentials. Both men had written defences of Christianity against paganism and were noted for their strict morality, even asceticism, but had also dissented against what became Roman Catholic orthodoxy. Citing alleged heretics also protected Penn against the charge that he was a Roman Catholic.

The ‘Defence’ of Origen was probably *Contra Celsus*, an apology for Christianity and its heritage in the Old Testament against Celsus, whose attack survived only in the excerpts quoted in order to be refuted. Penn’s early controversial works would follow Origen’s method of citing an opponent’s words in order to oppose them. The *Contra* showed a thorough knowledge of the Bible as well as Greek, Egyptian, and Roman religions. Origen appealed to men of ‘reason’ and invoked history to prove that God was the author of Old as well as the New Testament and that the weaknesses that Celsus found in the Bible were minor compared with those in pagan religions.¹⁵ Origen sought to prove that Jesus had confirmed the best insights of Plato and the Stoics. Moses, the prophets, a loving God, the miracles and teachings of Jesus, and the promise of eternal life proved the superiority of Christianity. An ultimate test of the truthfulness of Christianity was its ability to transform the moral lives of its adherents. The erudition, emphasis on reason, biblicism, refutation of paganism (particularly Epicureanism), and stress on morality that was in Origen also appeared in the writings of the other three men cited above and also in the writings of Penn.

Tertullian is thought to have sympathized with or even become a Montanist in reaction to laxity in Catholic piety. Penn's *No Cross, No Crown* (1668), written while he was in prison, identified Christian ethics with mortification of fleshly desires, a theme in both Origen and Tertullian. Most important, Tertullian's *Apology*, the work Penn cited, was a plea for religious toleration against Roman persecution and Friends identified their sufferings in Restoration England with those of the early Christians:

...for you to take away one's freedom of religion and put a ban on one's free choice of a god, with the result that it is not lawful for me to worship whom I will, but I am compelled to worship contrary to my will. No one, not even a man, will be willing to receive the worship of an unwilling client.¹⁶

In 'To Scapula' Tertullian wrote in words that even sound like the later Penn:

It is the law of mankind and the natural right of each individual to worship what he thinks proper, nor does the religion of one man either harm or help another. But, it is not proper for religion to compel men to religion, which should be accepted of one's own accord, not by force.¹⁷

For Tertullian, Christians could support an emperor of a different religion by praying for him, and he argued that their prayers were more efficacious than those of the pagans because they had sought the aid of the only true God. Loyalty to the Roman Catholic Louis XIII characterized the thought of Amyraut, and Penn showed his loyalty to Charles II and James II.

There are clear connections between Grotius, Mornay, and Amyraut, and Penn. Brian Armstrong and Francois Laplanche have argued that a school of Christian humanism originating with Erasmus was continued by Grotius, Mornay, and Amyraut. Penn cited Erasmus elsewhere, but it would have been inappropriate for him to link a modern Roman Catholic with learned Calvinists when complaining about Clapham's ignorance.¹⁸ Penn, like other school children, could have learned Latin by reading Erasmus's *Colloquies* or *Adages*. Like Penn, Erasmus sought to base Christian beliefs on the Bible, emphasized the purity of following Christ as a basis for ethical living, and contrasted the simplicity of the early Church with later developments in Catholicism. He also stressed the reasonableness of Christianity and stayed clear of the polemics between Roman Catholics and Lutherans, instead writing a treatise stressing freedom of the will and humans' responsibility for their actions in contrast to the doctrine predestination implicit in Luther and explicit in Calvin. Erasmus was not a pacifist, but was a persistent critic of just war theory and its misuse to legitimate the incessant wars among Europeans. Like Penn, Erasmus thought that wars were a product of folly; Christian leaders could find a better way to solve their disputes. Penn's *Fruits of Solitude or Reflexions and Maxims* (1689) can be seen as half way between Erasmus and Benjamin Franklin's advices. His *Essay on the Present and Future Peace of Europe* (1693) was similar to Erasmus's search for ending the incessant wars in Europe through satire in *In Praise of Folly* and *The Education of a Christian Prince*.¹⁹

The second man praised was Hugo Grotius, a scholar cited by Penn throughout his career. Hugo Grotius is often remembered today as one of the fathers of international law. Penn's 'Essay on...Peace of Europe' that envisaged a parliament or diet of European states as a method of preventing wars drew directly on Grotius. When in 1693 Penn drew up a list of books for the young Sir John Rodes, he recommended the *Of the Law of War and Peace*. In *No Cross, No Crown*, Penn described Grotius as a man of 'Universal Knowledge' and also cited his biblical commentaries and defence of the Christian religion.²⁰ Grotius resembles Mornay and Amyraut because all three wrote defences of the Christian religion against sceptics, Epicureans, and Muslims in which they based their arguments not on revelation but on the reasonableness of Christianity.²¹ They also all wrote biblical commentaries, and Penn later cited Grotius's *Annotations*. Penn also resembled Grotius in the way he mixed citations from the Greeks, Romans, and early and medieval Christians without much understanding of historical context in order to prove that intelligent men of all ages agreed and that such wisdom underlay natural law.

Grotius was a supporter of the Arminian party in Holland and a defender of religious toleration. We now know that the Arminians in Holland endorsed what modern historians call a Confessing Church rather than separation of Church and state. That is, when in power the Arminians utilized the power of the state against the Calvinists.²² After the Synod of Dort and the ascension to power of the strict Calvinists who imprisoned Grotius and executed his patron, the Arminians became more consistent in their insistence upon religious toleration. Grotius escaped from prison, settled in France, and dedicated *Of The Laws of War and Peace* to Louis XIII. Like Erasmus, Grotius was appalled by the militarization of Christianity and religious wars. Grotius opposed religious persecution and sought to establish unity among all forms of Protestants, hoping that James I and then Charles I and Archbishop Laud would lead this effort. Grotius even hoped for reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics, perhaps one reason he was tolerated by Cardinal Richelieu.²³

Philippe Du-Plessis-Mornay (1549–1623) was a military leader, supporter of Henry IV, ambassador to England, governor of Saumur, founder of the Protestant Academy, theologian, and the leader of the Huguenots in France. He was even a gourmand, remembered for sauce Mornay. (Mornay is noted as the probable author of *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, published in 1579 under the pseudonym of Junius Brutus, which advocated armed resistance by lesser magistrates against a king who persecuted the true religion, that is, the Reformed.²⁴ It is doubtful that Penn knew that Mornay wrote the *Vindiciae*.

When the English fought Charles II, Amyraut wrote a treatise on the sovereignty of kings in which he denied any right of revolution against God's anointed king. The emphasis at Saumur was on the divine right of kings while playing down any history of military resistance by the Huguenots. Du Plessis had before the St Bartholomew massacre written tracts pleading for peace among Catholics and Protestants and, after Henry of Navarre became King Henry IV, had remained a major adviser to the king until he converted to Catholicism, was one,

perhaps the principal, author of the Edict of Nantes, and a strong defender of religious freedom.²⁵ So the Mornay Penn learned about and praised, perhaps even modelled himself on later in life, was a statesman, defender of Christianity, and advocate of religious liberty. Penn never cited any work of Mornay; so whether he actually read his works remains unknown.²⁶

Unfortunately for my purposes, we also have no definite evidence of whether Penn read Amyraut, although he does list him in *No Cross, No Crown* as opposed to oaths.²⁷ So I propose to list those positions of Amyraut that at some time in his life Penn also advocated, of which the most important would be those on toleration. Amyraut was writing in a very different context from Mornay because of the numerical weakness of the Reformed Churches and the skill through which Louis XIII's chief minister, Cardinal Richelieu, had reduced Huguenot political power. If toleration were to survive in France, it depended upon the power of the king, his desire for peace in the realm, and his ability to resist Roman Catholic demands that the state had a God-given responsibility to foster the only true religion.

Amyraut provided a Christian defence of toleration based upon the nature of the state and the Church. God was the ultimate author of the state and the Church. God's power legitimated the state through natural law, and its responsibility was to enforce the universal moral law, a law discoverable by reason alone but also confirmed by revelation. In order to maintain a just society in the face of sinful humanity, the state was authorized to use force internally through law and externally through war.

The state had no authority over or responsibility for religion. There was a divine origin of states and kingship, but Muslim and pagan states were legitimate in the eyes of God, and they had the same responsibilities as so-called Christian states: to enforce the natural law discoverable by reason.²⁸ A Roman Catholic, an Anglican, a Muslim, or a Buddhist king had the same obligations: providing security for the realm and enforcing moral law. There could be no union of Church and state because God had separated them. The political theory of Amyraut resembled that of the French *politiques* but it was justified by his biblical exegesis. Compared with Reformed theologians in Geneva, Holland, and Scotland, Amyraut's biblical exegesis and political conclusions were strikingly original and much more tolerant.²⁹

The Church owed its legitimacy to God alone, and it operated in a different fashion from the state. Jesus Christ founded the Church, and his kingdom as described in the New Testament was built on love, never outward force. God out of love gave his Son to bring grace mediated through the Church to save humans from the realm of sin. God's kingdom was purely spiritual. Just as Amyraut denied that the prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures could be applied to contemporary society, so he insisted that the precedents of actions by Hebrew kings to enforce true worship had no relevance after the resurrection of Christ. One difference between the Old and New Testaments was that the former was often difficult to interpret but Christ's teachings in the New were very clear. The Church must be free from the state to govern itself in response to the teachings of Christ.³⁰

For humans, the seat of true religion was the conscience, and conscience was inherently free and subject only to God. If anyone attempted to coerce religion, the result would be hypocrisy or false worship. Toleration was necessary for true religion, and could also be justified as useful to the state for utilitarian reasons because ending outward war among Protestants and Catholics allowed security for all and from that prosperity that strengthened the realm would develop. So toleration was necessary for the Church, good for the people, and useful to the state. Amyraut did not extend religious toleration to everyone. All had agreed that it was necessary to include Jews, because Jesus was a Jew and Judaism had been the seedbed of Christianity. Only those religions long established in the realm, namely, the Reformed and Roman Catholics, deserved toleration, but welcoming and tolerating new religions (i.e., the Anabaptists and English sects) would disturb the peace of the realm.³¹ In summary, Amyraut's political theory differed markedly from that of Calvin, Beza, the Puritans, and the Dutch Reformed—all of whom gave the godly magistrate as a member of the church a role in fostering religion. It differs also from those who advocated a Confessing State; that is, toleration was allowed with various disabilities but the state officially supported one religion. So, in essence, Amyraut's position was closer to what Penn established in Pennsylvania than what he advocated for England.

The clearest example of Amyraut's impact on Penn is in religious toleration, but there are many other similarities—though most come from Penn's later writings. Like other Christian humanists, Amyraut sought to unify Protestants by distinguishing between essentials in religion of which all agreed and matters of less importance. He thought that if all adhered closely to Scripture, then harmony could be secured. His desire for simplicity in religion was not because he was anti-intellectual. Instead, he relied upon reason and intelligent discussion to show the superiority of Christianity to sceptics, Epicureans, Jews, and Muslims. Christianity was a reasonable religion and its ethical demands were reasonable.³² When Penn was at Saumur, Amyraut was ill and may not have been teaching, but he continued to write, and it was the moral example of his teacher that Penn praised in the 'The Guide Mistaken'.

III. PENN THE QUAKER HUMANIST

An example of the impact of Amyraut on Penn is in 'The Sandy Foundation Shaken' (1668), the second tract written after his conversion to Quakerism. Quakers had often opposed using the term Trinity because it was not found in the Bible, but Penn also used the kind of arguments that Amyraut employed against Transubstantiation.³³ Amyraut insisted that if an interpretation of Scripture went against reason, such as the substance of the wine being changed into the actual blood of Christ while the accidents remained the same, the doctrine was wrong. Christian beliefs derived from revelation could be above reason but, because God was reasonable, could not contradict intelligence. Here is Penn on the unreasonableness using the standard definitions of the Trinity and the satisfaction theory of the atonement:

Not as Man.

6. The Justice offended being Infinite, his Satisfaction ought to bear a Proportion therewith, which Jesus Christ, as Man could never pay, he being Finite, and from a finite Cause, could not proceed an infinite Effect; for so Man may be said to bring forth God, since nothing below the Divinity itself, can rightly be stilled Infinite.

Not as God and Man.

7. For where two Mediums, or Middle Propositions, are singly inconsistent with the Nature of the End, for what Difficulty of its Accomplishment; and this I am persuaded must be obvious to every unbyas'd Understanding.³⁴

Penn differed from most other early Quakers in his emphasis upon the reasonableness of Christianity. Here he resembled Amyraut more than George Fox.³⁵ It was not that Penn or Amyraut devalued revelation. Far from it, they insisted that revelation gave information about the loving nature of God, Jesus, and forgiveness of sins that was not discoverable from reason. Revelation went beyond reason, but did not contradict it. 'Religion and Reason are so consistent that Religion can neither be understood nor maintained without Reason'.³⁶ God gave to humans reason so that they could distinguish truth from falsehood, right from wrong, good religion from bad religion. A person must be able to examine religion using reason; that was a crucial element in the makeup of humans and why toleration was necessary. Conscience required freedom to decide and true religion depends upon an individual's liberty of conscience. Humans are 'born free' and are most godlike when using their intelligence.

Since Man is a reasonable Creature, and that the most reasonable he is in Religion, the nearer to his own being he comes, and to the Wisdom and Truth of his Creator, that did so make him: A Religion without Reason, imposed by an unaccountable Authority, against Reason, Sense, and Conviction, cannot be the Religion of the God of Truth and Reason.³⁷

Christian ethics were reasonable ethics and God so constituted the world that morality led to happiness.³⁸ So when in 1693 and 1702 Penn published *Some Fruits of Solitude* and *More Fruits of Solitude, in Reflections and Maxims, relating to the Conduct of Humane Life* with no explicit reference to Quakerism or the Inward Light, he did not betray the advice of *No Cross, No Crown* even though there was enormous difference between the self-denial and mortification recommended in 1669 and the moderation and balance of the later advice.

Penn did not develop a systematic theory on religious toleration in any one pamphlet, and emphasized different rationales depending on whether he was on trial or in prison, addressing the king, Parliament, a judge, or foreign magistrates, seeking redress for suffering Quakers, or establishing the framework for a new society in Pennsylvania. When appealing for ending the persecution of Quakers in Emden, he relied on general principles. When seeking general support in England, he cited the Magna Charter, Great Charter of Henry III, guarantees for property, and the rights of Englishmen.³⁹ After the Popish Plot and during the Exclusion Crisis, he sought to unite Protestants against an alleged Roman Catholic menace.

Even then, at his most anti-Catholic extreme, he allowed Roman Catholics freedom of worship so long as they renounced allegiance not to the spiritual but to the political powers of the papacy.⁴⁰ Even this restriction was dropped in the 1681 laws of Pennsylvania. In England, unlike Pennsylvania, Penn seems to have assumed the continued existence of a state Church, perhaps with the example of Holland in mind. He defined liberty of conscience as ‘not only a meer Liberty of the Mind, in believing this or that Principle or Doctrine, but the Exercise of our selves in a visible Way of Worship’.⁴¹ So he advocated toleration without, however, addressing specifically how the Quaker refusal to pay tithes was compatible with state support of religion. He did not protest when, after the Glorious Revolution, Parliament allowed distraint of an equal amount for the tithe rather than imprisonment for non-payment.

My purpose in what follows is not to enunciate all of Penn’s ideas on toleration, particularly those that applied specifically to his understanding of English history and law, but to show the congruence of many of his arguments with those of Amyraut. These ideas appear in some of Penn’s earliest and late writings.

Both men argued that God’s power created Church and state, but that the nature of these two realms differed. God instituted the state to provide laws to restrain sinful humans and to ensure civil peace so that society could exist. They followed Aristotle and Augustine in seeing the existence of a peaceful civil society as a good. Penn distinguished the origins of society as distinct from those of religion, since before Christianity was introduced in England by the monk Augustine, people had lived there under a government. So while both institutions were from God, Church and state should not be confused. The functions of government differed from those of religion, because a government could not bring grace. What it could do was restrain sins; that is, it could use laws to forbid those public actions against the general welfare required by the moral law. The moral law, a law also summarized in the Ten Commandments, equalled the natural law that was observed in all societies and that could be discovered by reason. The sultan of the Turks, the emperor of China, the monarchs of Europe—all kingdoms had the same God-given responsibilities to enforce the moral law necessary for the existence of a society. The state was a good and to guarantee its survival God gave to the king or his equivalent a monopoly on force. Still, the state was limited; it had no purely religious function, that is, it controlled actions but not beliefs.⁴²

As Penn phrased it: ‘the Civil Affairs of all Governments in the World, may be peacefully transacted under the different Liveries, or Trims of Religion, where Civil Rights are inviolably observ’d’.⁴³

For Penn, all men were ‘born free, and have equal Plea to Natural and Civil common Priviledges’. The civil society that existed before religion was founded upon a right of property.⁴⁴ Property rights were not subject to opinion, particularly religious opinion; so any government that persecuted religion attacked a fundamental right of property. Prosecution weakened a state by creating factions, punishing hard-working moral citizens who contributed to the wealth of a society.

Amyraut argued that the Old Testament precedents on the responsibility of the kings of Israel and Judah to enforce correct religious unity by force had been abrogated by Jesus. Penn never explicitly made this argument about the Hebrew Scriptures, but he consistently cited only New Testament verses when talking about the limited responsibility of magistrates.⁴⁵

Penn, like Amyraut, insisted that God sent Jesus to establish the Church. Jesus had renounced force in his life and death and had, thereby, created the pattern for Church governance. Jesus disdained all political power, insisting that his kingdom was not of this world, and had relied upon purely spiritual authority. He had attracted followers through love and had coerced no one. So the Church should not claim greater power than what Jesus ever claimed and, if it attempted to compel one form of worship, it betrayed Christ. Not only had Jesus not exercised political power, neither had the apostles or Paul, and Christianity had spread by preaching and example in spite of and not because of the Roman government. For a government to claim infallibility in religion was 'to invade the Divine Prerogative, and divest the Almighty of a right, due to none beside Himself.'⁴⁶

True Christianity rested upon the free consent of the individual to respond in obedience to the grace of God or what Penn called the Inward Light. The seat of religion was conscience and conscience could not be coerced without destroying a person. No God would wish to be worshipped by a person made to conform by a fear of persecution. Forced worship led to hypocrisy and that undermined the well-being of the general society, but its effects were even worse for an individual who could not receive eternal life.

The young Penn relished theological controversy, but the older Penn was reluctant to enter into theological debates, being willing to express his own views of Quaker truths while leaving pamphlet warfare to others. Like Amyraut, Penn sought religious peace and both agreed that the way to obtain this was by reducing Christianity to its essential teachings on which all agreed: morality, Jesus as the son of God, salvation, eternal life. Creeds substituted humanity's wisdom for God's word and so all creeds should be nothing but biblical citations. With agreement on essentials, an end of persecution, and laws to enforce the moral law, the state would in the absence of religious strife enjoy 'peace', 'plenty', and 'unity'.⁴⁷

IV. SUMMARY

Here are a few of the similarities between Penn and the Christian humanists of Saumur:

1. Religious persecution is bad for religion.
2. Religious persecution is bad for the state.
3. Religious persecution is bad for the individual.
4. Ethics are the key to Christian living.
5. The state is not to enforce religious unity but to maintain the moral law.
6. Christianity is a reasonable religion to be defended by intellect.
7. Christian ethics are reasonable.

8. Reliance upon natural law and the law of peoples.
9. Love of peace.
10. Loyalty to the king.
11. Reducing religion to essentials to bring Christian unity.

Isolating the influences upon a man as complicated and as subject to various ideas and responding to different circumstances as Penn between 1660 and 1700 is no easy task. I am very aware that all the ideas that Amyraut or Penn expressed are found elsewhere in England. Still, we know that Penn studied in the Protestant Academy, that he spent more time there than at Oxford or Lincoln's Inn, and that it is likely that much of the knowledge of Christian theology he showed soon after his conversion came from there. There was a consistent inconsistency in Penn from 1667 until 1700 as he juggled emphases learned from Amyraut, other Quakers, the Bible, natural law, and reason. So can I prove beyond a reasonable doubt that his Christian humanism came from Amyraut? No. But somewhere Penn learned to be a Quaker humanist and the most likely place is the Protestant Academy in Saumur.

NOTES

1. Rotch, W., *Memorandum Written by William Rotch in the Eighteenth Year of his Age*, New York, 1916, p. 65.

2. Philips, E., *The Good Quaker in French Legend*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932, p. 12 cites the French revolutionary who cried out, 'O Tyrants of the earth. What have you gained by your bloodthirstiness? Think on William Penn, tremble and weep.' Barber, W.H., 'Voltaire and Quakerism: Enlightenment and Inner Light', *Studies on Voltaire* 29 (1963), pp. 81-109.

3. Christian humanism, a movement of the Northern Renaissance exemplified by Thomas More, John Colet, and Desiderius Erasmus, emphasised the dignity of humans, freedom of the will, study of the early Christian writings, an ethics based on the imitation of Christ, reason, toleration, and peace.

4. Penn could have learned from Amyraut, or from other teachers at Saumur, or from conversations with the other 200 pupils at the Academy, of whom only half were studying to be clergy.

5. Clarkson, T., *Memoirs of William Penn* (1813), I, pp. 10-11; Samuel Pepys knew about Penn leaving on 1 November 1661. Pepys, S., *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970-83, 1995, II, p. 206; Peare, C.O., *William Penn*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956, 1966, p. 37.

6. Greaves, R., 'John Owen (1616-1683), Theologian and Independent Minister', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (September 2009), online; Ferguson, S., and Oliver, R.W., '“The one and only, absolute and perfect, rule”': Haykin, M.A.G., 'The One and Only, Absolute and Perfect Rule: John Owen and the Challenge of the Quakers', in R.W. Oliver (ed.), *John Owen: The Man and his Theology*, Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing; Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2002, pp. 131-55.

7. Pepys, S., *Diary*, V, pp. 225, 255, 257; VI, pp. 213, 222.

8. Penn, W., 'An Address to Protestants', in *Works*, London: J. Sowle, 1726, I, p. 738.

9. Amyraut, M., *A Discourse concerning the Divine Dreams Mention'd in Scripture, together with the marks and characters by which they might be distinguish'd from Vain Delusions*, London: A.C. for Kettiby, 1660; *Discours de la souveraineté des roys* (Google Books, 1650), pp. 40, 165.

10. Amyraut, *Discours de la souveraineté des roys*, pp. 94, 161, 165; Francois LaPlanche, *L'Écriture, Le Sacré, et L'Histoire: Étudiés et Politiques Protestants devant la Bible en France au XVII^e siècle*, Amsterdam, 1986, pp. 394, 425, 435-36, 453, 466-69.

11. Amyraut, like Penn, adjusted his emphases according to circumstances. When he appealed to Louis XIII to maintain Huguenot rights, his arguments rested upon the Edict of Nantes, an alleged defiance by lesser magistrates of the king's wishes, and the benevolence of the king to free those who had earlier resisted and were now confined to the galleys. *Lettre du synode national des églises réformées de France, présentée au roi* (1631). I am indebted to Jeanne-Henriette Louis for emailing me a copy of this work.

12. Penn, W., 'Truth Exalted', in *Works*, I, pp. 241-47.

13. William Penn, 'The Guide mistaken & Temporizing rebuked', in *Works*, II, p. 3.

14. 'Penn, 'The Guide mistaken', 3. Different early Church Fathers plus Grotius, DuPlessis de Mornay, and Admiralus [Amyraut] are listed in 'A Discourse of the General Rule of Faith and Practice', I, p. 592. Neither Origen nor Tertullian were in the curriculum of grammar schools or Oxford, but Penn would have studied Latin and Greek authors. Theology, like politics and history, was too dangerous for beginners who might draw wrong judgments. Penn could have read Grotius or Erasmus at Oxford, but more likely only Anglican apologists. Feingold, M., 'The Humanities', in *History of Oxford: The Seventeenth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, pp. 335-36.

15. Origène, *Contre Celse*, ed. M. Borret, Sources Chrétienne, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1967, I, Introduction, p. 8; Section I, 21, pp. 129-35; Section I, pp. 26-27, p. 149; Section I, 33, p. 167; Section VIII, 43, p. 191; II, 99, pp. 433-35.

16. Tertullian, *Apology*, in *Disciplinary, Moral and Ascetical Works: The Fathers of the Church*, New York: Fathers of the Church Inc., 1959, p. 76; Useful secondary sources are Barns, T., *Tertullian: A History and Literary Study*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971 and Dunn, G., *Tertullian: The Early Church Fathers*, New York: Routledge, 2009.

17. Tertullian, 'To Scapula', p. 153. Penn in 1686 quoted this passage and another from the *Apology*, II, p. 747.

18. In *No Cross, No Crown* (1669), pp. 21, 63, Penn described Erasmus as 'a Learned man, and then whom I know not any, we may so properly defer the matter to'. Laplanche, *L'Écriture, Le Sacré and L'Histoire*, p. 16; Armstrong, B., *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969, pp. 121-24; Penn, 'Commentaries on James', in *Works*, I, p. 658.

19. 'The Complaint of Peace', in J. Dolan (ed.), *The Essential Erasmus*, and Born, L. (trans.), *Education of a Christian Prince* (New York: Norton, 1968), pp. 249-57; *In Praise of Folly*, ed. H.H. Hudson, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941.

20. William Penn to Sir John Rodes, October 1693, in *Papers of William Penn*, III, p. 379; 'No Cross, No Crown', in *Works*, I, pp. 603, 624-25; II, p. 426.

21. Herring, J.P., *Hugo Grotius as Apologist for the Christian Religion: A Study of his Work: De veritate religiosa christiane (1640)*, trans. J.C. Grayson, Boston: Brill, 2004, p. 163. Amyraut, M., *A Treatise concerning Religions: In Refutation of the Opinion which Accounts All Indifferent*, London, 1660.

22. Grell, O.P., and Scribner, B. (eds.), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 1-12, also essays by A. Pettigree, pp. 182-98, and D. MacCulloch, pp. 199-216; Hsia, R.P., and van Nierop, H. (eds.), *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 74-79. See also Leeler, J., *Tolerance and the Reformation*, trans. T.L. Westow, Longmans, New York, 1960, Book 7, pp. 256-323.

23. Trevor-Roper, H., *From Counter-Reformation to Glorious Revolution*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 47-82.

24. Mornay, P.d.P., *A Defence of Liberty against Tyrants: A Translation of the Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos by Junius Brutus*, New York: Harcourt Brace, c. 1923. When the book was reprinted in England in 1689, Penn as a supporter of James II would not have agreed with its central thesis.

25. Fragonard, M., 'La liberté de conscience chez Du Plessis-Mornay (1576-1598)', in H. Guggisberg and F. Lestringant (eds.), *Liberté de conscience, xvi-xvii siècles: actes du colloque de Muhouse et Bale*, Genève: Librairie Droz, 1991, pp. 135-52.

26. The work Penn most likely would have read was *Traité de la vérité de la religion chrétienne contre les athées, epicuriens, payens, juifs, mahométans et autres infidels*, Antwerp, 1581. We can be almost certain Penn read this because, on the topic of universal knowledge of God, he compared the writings of 'DuPlessy, Grotius, Admiraldus, L. Herbert, and above all Dr. Cudworth'. Penn also mentioned English translations of works by Du Mornay. The only teacher at Saumur Penn quoted was John Cameron. 'Spirit of Truth Vindicated' (1672), in *Works*, II, pp. 124, 149. Amyraut was in many ways a disciple of Cameron. On the three Huguenot rebellions, 1620, 1625, and 1627, see Sturdy, D., *Fractured Europe 1600-1721*, Blackwell History of Europe, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 122-28; also Clarke, J., *Huguenot Warrior: Life and Times of Henri de Rohan 1579-1638*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986.

27. Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, p. 12.

28. LaPlanche, *L'Écriture, Le Sacre and L'Histoire*, pp. 396-97, 378-88, 478, 484-86; Amyraut, *Discours*, pp. 61-63; *A Treatise Concerning Religion*, p. 271.

29. Nobbs, D., *Theocracy and Toleration: A Study in Disputes in Dutch Calvinism from 1600 to 1650*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938, pp. 251-70.

30. LaPlanche, *L'Écriture, Le Sacre and L'Histoire*, pp. 388, 506. 518-20.

31. La Planche, *L'Écriture, Le Sacre and L'Histoire*, pp. 392-93, 487-89.

32. We need a study of the similarities and contrasts in Penn's ethical thought as contained in *No Cross, No Crown*, and *Fruits of Solitude* with that of Amyraut in the six volumes of *La Morale Chrétienne à Monsieur de Villarnoul*, Saumur, 1652-1660.

33. Clarke, D., 'Faith and Reason in the Thought of Moise Amyraut', in A.P. Coudert et al. (eds.), *Judaeo-Christian Intellectual Culture in the Seventeenth Century*, Boston, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999, pp. 145-59.

34. Penn, W., 'Sandy Foundation Shaken' (1669), in *Works*, I, p. 258.

35. The early Friend Penn most resembles in his use of reason is George Bishop. Unfortunately, the only good secondary source on Bishop stops at 1660.

36. Penn, W., 'An Address to Protestants', (1679), in *Works*, pp. 690, 753, 777-78.

37. Penn, 'An Address to Protestants', I, p. 794; Amyraut, *Treatise Concerning Religion*, pp. 88, 92, 106.

38. Amyraut, *La Morale Chrétienne*, I, pp. 178, 200, 244-45, 449.

39. Penn, W., 'England's Present Interest (1675); 'A Letter to the Council and Senate of Embden', (1674), in *Works*, I, pp. 609-11.

40. Penn, W., 'One Project for the Good of England' (1679), in *Works*, II, pp. 684, 688, 689; 'A Seasonable Caveat against Popery' (1670), in *Works*, I, p. 483. Here after pages of diatribes about the untrustworthiness of Catholics, Penn exclaimed 'nor would I take the Burden off my own Shoulders, to lay it on theirs (being a profest abetter of an Universal Toleration)'. Somehow I doubt that very many readers of either of these two tracts would be persuaded to tolerate Catholics.

41. William Penn, 'Great Case of Liberty of Conscience' (1670), in *Works*, I, p. 447; essentially the same definition is given in 'A Perswasive to Moderation' (1686), in *Works*, II, p. 729 where he insists granting toleration would not take away the privileges of the Church of England.

42. Penn, W., 'Great Case of Liberty of Conscience', I, p. 452-56.

43. Penn, W., 'England's Present Interest', in *Works*, I, p. 688.
44. Penn, 'England's Present Interest', I, pp. 611, 641.
45. In 'A Perswasive to Moderation', II, p. 732 when Penn listed all the kingdoms that had allowed toleration, he mentioned the religion of Noah, skipped all the kings of Israel, and mentioned Mordecai who in the book of Esther persuaded King Ahasueros to spare the Jews.
46. Penn, W., 'Great Case of Liberty of Conscience', Chapters. I, II, IV.
47. Penn, 'Great Case of Liberty of Conscience', I, p. 455.

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