

1 2 

THE MIDDLE COLONIES, LIBERALISM, AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT:

THE ORIGINS OF

"AMERICAN" CULTURE

HISTORY 1100.3,
28 SEPT.-3 OCT 2006

3 

I. THE RESTORATION AND THE RESTORATION COLONIES

- ◆ A. Charles II and the Growth of English Imperialism
 - 1. Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660 made English government more absolutist & expensive.
 - 2. Charles's need for revenue led to aggressive expansion of shipping & commerce, new interest in colonies, and wars with the Dutch (1652-54, 64-67, 72-74) over all of the above.
- ◆ B. The Restoration's impact on English America
 - 1. Role of the colonies: help fund commercial expansion by supplying raw materials and buying finished goods, at maximum profit to England.
 - 2. Caribbean island colonies (West Indies), growing sugar, were most lucrative and valued by home government.
 - 3. The Restoration Colonies (NC, SC, NJ, NY, PA): payoffs to king's supporters & creditors, who became "proprietors" of colonies.
 - Debt to Admiral Sir William Penn paid by a colony to his son.
 - King's brother James, Duke of York, got New Netherlands.
 - 4. Rise of proprietary colonies & English trade fostered both rise of African-based slavery in America, and social experiments.

4 

II. PENNSYLVANIA:

THE QUAKER ORIGINS OF MODERN AMERICAN SOCIETY

- ◆ A. The Quakers or Friends: most radical & controversial Protestant sects
 - 1. Spread most successfully in early days by George Fox & Margaret Fell among poor farmers in Wales & NW England, source of most early PA migrants
 - 2. Almost the opposite of the Calvinists: believed that each person had an "inner light" that could reveal God's Truth to them; Bible could only be understood this way
 - 3. Quaker worship involved no clergy, ritual, or prepared sermon. Instead, it was a silent meeting in which all reflected on themselves until someone spontaneously began to communicate what their inner light was telling them. Could be boring or very disorderly – hence name "Quakers."
 - Recruited members through "holy conversation" of all believers instead of evangelism or coercion; disciplined only own members but watched members' behavior closely.
 - 4. Quaker egalitarianism: allowed women to preach; refused to remove hats, use formal pronouns, swear or haggle over prices; opposed war & slavery.
- ◆ B. Protestant Reformation & the family: empowering patriarchs while rehabilitating & reforming marriage
 - Attacked traditional double standards regarding sex and marriage; crusaded against prostitution; defended sex within marriage, condemned Catholic emphasis on celibacy
- ◆ C. The Quaker family: pioneered "domesticity," seeing the family as primarily a site for the protection, nurture, & moral instruction of children
 - 1. Self-chosen, "companionate" marriages heavily tested for compatibility & purity.
 - 2. Children as "tender plants" trained through intense, emotional "holy conversation."
 - 3. Quaker fathers to devote themselves entirely to families in the now-expected way.

5 

II. PENNSYLVANIA:

THE QUAKER ORIGINS OF MODERN AMERICAN SOCIETY

(CONT.)

- ◆ D. The Quaker political legacy: tolerance & pluralism
 - Proprietor William Penn's "Frame of Government" (1681) – religious & ethnic toleration, with no "established" church; plan of Philadelphia; became a very diverse place
 - Penn also hoped to make money selling & collecting fees on land
 - Pennsylvania politics: Competitive, not dominated by any 1 group
 - Factions included Philadelphia commercial interests, rural ethnics (Germans & Scots-Irish), Quakers & the Penn descendants
 - Penn's famously peaceful relations with the Delaware (Lenape) Indians, insisting that all land be purchased
- ◆ E. Model for an enlightened world: philosophers' praise for Quaker domesticity & Pennsylvania society.

6 

III. DEVELOPMENT OF COLONIAL BRITISH AMERICA IN THE 18TH CENTURY

- ◆ A. Incredible population increases during 18th Century
 - 1. Causes: Health and immigration.
 - 2. Natural increase of all races in all regions. Fewer cities = better health, abundant land = better diet.
 - 3. Migration of German, Scottish, and Scots-Irish to Middle Colonies & interior South (plus Africans to plantation South.)
 - a) Because of European wars, religious and ethnic repression.
 - b) Recruitment by proprietors, manor lords, and speculators.
 - c) Attractive Middle Colonies social conditions: "The best poor man's country" in the Americas or Europe, it was said.
- ◆ B. Diversity & Prosperity in the Middle Colonies
 - 1. An ethnic "salad bowl" of relatively prosperous "freehold" farm families and growing cities.
 - 2. Secular, commercially-oriented society & government.
 - 3. Post-Quaker Pennsylvania
 - Failure of later generations to marry within group

- Penn’s descendants find a commercial means of preying on the Indians: The Walking Purchase (radio clip)
- ♦ C. Growth of African-based chattel slavery : Bacon’s Rebellion, slave codes

7 IV. THE RISE OF LOCKEAN LIBERALISM

- ♦ A. One source of new ideas: The Enlightenment, dominant intellectual movement of 18th century.
 - 1. Enlightenment taught truth could only be derived from observation, experience, & experiment, using reason.
 - Approach known as “empiricism” or simply science.
 - Secular in approach: Relied far less on Bible & theology as literal descriptions of how the universe worked.
 - Newton’s work encouraged view of universe as a machine whose workings could be understood & manipulated by human beings.
 - 2. Developed into a highly optimistic outlook that saw human history as progressing toward perfection rather than waiting for damnation/salvation/Apocalypse.
 - 3. Highly influential in America: The “liberalism” of English physician & philosopher John Locke (1632-1704), a founder of the Enlightenment.
 - Locke’s particular emphasis was “sensationalism,” idea that knowledge could be gained only through the experience of our senses, or reflections upon them.
 - One basis was Locke’s controversial theory of the mind, that it was like a blank piece of white paper, with no characters on it, a “tabula rasa” or blank slate that experience wrote on.

8 IV. THE RISE OF LOCKEAN LIBERALISM (CONT.)

- ♦ B. Locke on Government
 - 1. Wrote his key works while working for Anthony Ashley Cooper, earl of Shaftesbury (politician & conspirator against Stuarts), partly to justify the Glorious Revolution.
 - 2. *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), published just after the Glorious Revolution. Responded to Filmer. Ideas:
 - Divine right of kings wrong on all levels. Community _ family.
 - Government was not ordained by God, but that something that people had invented for their own benefit, to protect their rights (especially property rights).
 - Revised view of “nature” as relatively benign: People were naturally free, naturally individuals. Indians as example.
 - Purpose of government was preserving liberty, not exercising authority; source of power/location of sovereignty was “people,” not God or the King.
 - Thus rulers and governments had their power only by consent of the governed, as trustees under a “social contract” with the people. This idea created a “right of revolution.”

9 IV. THE RISE OF LOCKEAN LIBERALISM (CONT.)

- ♦ C. Locke on childrearing and education
 - 1. Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* became a popular source of advice for parents and educators in 18th-century America
 - 2. Advocated some strikingly modern and less coercive ideas about raising and educating children
 - a) Goal should be the creation of a rational, self-controlled, productive person
 - b) While not using the term “self-esteem,” suggested that breaking a child & making him “slavish” did not serve this goal
 - c) Attacked corporal punishment for both education and discipline
 - d) Advocated learning through use of skills rather than memorization
 - e) Criticized traditional classical curriculum – French, writing, and accounting rather than Latin
- ♦ D. The reception of Locke’s ideas
 - 1. British embraced Locke but only in limited fashion: sovereignty remained strong (centered on Parliament), popular consent considered largely “virtual,” terms of “social contract” understood as loose and unwritten.
 - 2. Americans became strong Lockean almost naturally, based on their experience of living distant from royal authority, of having contact with “state of nature,” local practice of actual representation and popular consent.
 - 3. Lockeanism and society: How could blank slates live together?
 - Later Enlightenment thinkers sometimes revised “tabula rasa” view of human nature:
 - Either celebrating self-interest & depicting society as a self-regulating machine (Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees*)
 - Or arguing for a natural sociability and an innate “moral sense” (Hutcheson, Jefferson) that led people to sympathize with each other, love justice, etc.

10 RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN EARLY AMERICA