More than anything, the establishment of Pennsylvania as a proprietary Quaker colony determined the character of provincial politics. Because of the special powers and privileges that successive representatives of the Penn family gained from their colonial possession, the proprietors were repeatedly in the foreground of public affairs; their respective policies imparted a distinctive rhythm to Pennsylvania politics. Initially, William Penn’s immense presence encouraged the development of a powerful antiproprietary brand of popular politics. This abated somewhat during his wife Hannah’s custodial decades, only to revive under son Thomas’s hardnosed proprietorship. In the face of what they perceived as proprietorial exploitation, provincial Quakers tried to exercise as much control over popular politics as they possibly could. Convinced that they, not the proprietors, were the true stewards of the colony, Pennsylvania Friends believed that the provincial government was and should be theirs to direct in ways consistent with the “holy experiment.” And despite proprietary power, a heavy inflow of immigrants, which soon made Quakers a minority in their province, and various divisions among themselves, Friends remained largely in control of Pennsylvania’s popular politics and continuing overseers of many governmental policies.

Because of their central role in Pennsylvania politics, Friends and fellow
travelers were the chief authors of social and political thought in their province. Beginning with their opposition to William Penn, Quakers evolved a highly distinctive strand of constitutional thought, which celebrated Pennsylvania’s plethora of popular rights and unique governmental structure. These ideas dominated popular thought at the expense of the other important English Whig principles of mixed government and constitutional balance. Building on this firm foundation, the Quakers developed the provincial political ideology of civil Quakerism, which centered on the particularly valuable character of the Pennsylvania constitution, liberty of conscience, provincial prosperity, loosely defined pacifism, rejection of a militia, and resistance to the arbitrary powers of proprietors. Civil Quakerism dominated public thought in the province, becoming the single most important underpinning of Friends’ political hegemony. In refining their ideas and in reaching out to bring others under the aegis of the Quaker Party, Friends developed civil Quakerism into a unique language of politics—a provincial political dialect as it were. So compelling and powerful a persuasion was it that the idiom of civil Quakerism completely dominated political debate in the colony, forcing others to come to terms with its grammar and the assumptions its syntax expressed.

Just as the persuasive and ubiquitous nature of civil Quakerism makes Friends’ political dominance during the mid-eighteenth century comprehensible, so does it explain much of their continuing strength in the late colonial years. Although Friends weakened themselves by a series of well-known unaggressive stands in the course of colonial confrontations with Great Britain, their Pennsylvania opponents were unable to take much advantage of these. And when they did, it was largely because these opponents themselves became defenders of proven civil Quaker tenets. While some of Friends’ sizable residual political strength resulted from the weakness of their political opponents and a marked underrepresentation of the provincial backcountry, continuing political loyalty to the old regime rested to an overwhelming extent on many Pennsylvanians’ deep internalization of the ideology of civil Quakerism.

Proprietors and Politics

Throughout the colonial years, the most coherent periods of provincial politics coincided with specific phases of proprietary family control. During the first thirty years of colonization, William Penn was at the center of all Pennsylvania affairs; a second period extended through the years of the proprietary interregnum, a span of time that arched from Penn’s incapacitating stroke to the settlement of his estate; the third and last ran roughly from
the beginning of Thomas Penn’s proprietorship until the Revolutionary upheaval. Corresponding changes took place in popular politics, as the public moved from preoccupation with William Penn’s policies, through a less focused period, on to intense concern with Thomas Penn’s priorities. Movement through these three distinct stages of proprietary ownership gave a rhythm to Pennsylvania’s public affairs.

During the first three decades of Pennsylvania’s organization, the dominant theme in political affairs was the antiproprietary reaction of provincials to William Penn. Certainly there were numerous divisions among Quakers, and between prominent Friends and leading non-Quakers. Occasionally these erupted in political factiousness, but the prevailing winds were antiproprietary, and it was their consistency that contoured popular political consciousness in Pennsylvania.

Initially, William Penn had been most solicitous of potential settlers. They had been “principally Encouraged . . . [to undertake ‘the Difficulties and hardships Incident to the Settlement of New Collines in these wilderness partes of the world’] by the great Liberties, Franchises and immunities promised . . . [them] in Diverse papers published to the world by Wm penn proprietor.”

Thereafter, Penn seemed to prove himself a most perfidious man. As governor, he had dumped the 1682 Frame of Government at the first opportunity and reneged on promises of popular control over judicial officers. After conveying important powers to the assembly in the 1701 Charter of Privileges, he immediately tried to limit them by claiming a proprietary veto over legislation and contesting the assembly’s power to adjourn as it wished. As a landlord, the colony’s founder seemed just as untrustworthy. Penn had arbitrarily changed the terms of land purchase, demanded quitrents where he had promised none, preferred the cash of new purchasers to the interests of existing landholders, attempted to establish arbitrary powers in his property managers, and allowed his appointees to run the land office like a fiefdom. Finally, as an English lobbyist and protector of the colony, Penn had done little to redeem himself. In the eyes of many provincial Quakers, the proprietor failed to protect the province from royal officials, seemed to make no headway in persuading the English to accept a universal substitution of the affirmation for the oath, appeared ineffective in settling the boundary dispute with Maryland, and risked the property rights of all Pennsylvanians with his personal financial irresponsibility. All told, it was an impressive indictment.

Of course there were those who held more favorable opinions of their proprietor. Penn’s return to the province in 1699 evoked some positive response, and more moderate politicians gained legislative clout in 1705 and again in 1710. But at no point did they relinquish any of the significant popular powers that antiproprietary leaders had gained in their various...
vendettas with Penn and his governors. That was unthinkable. Most politically conscious settlers simultaneously gave considerable credence to Penn's critics and accepted the flattery that was the other side of the popular politicians' antiproprietary pitch. The first settlers and their progeny were the real custodians of the "holy experiment." The province was theirs because of their willingness to risk their lands and meager fortunes, and because Penn, speaking as a fellow settler, not as the absentee landlord he had subsequently become, had originally promised it would belong to the Quaker community. Anything that took from an absentee proprietor and increased the power and autonomy of representatives of the people was a laudable step in fulfilling the promise of Pennsylvania.4

With Penn's illness and death, those who had exploited the proprietary threat this gigantic man seemed to pose lost much of their ability to whip up public ire. Between 1712 and the early 1730s, there was only one instance in which proprietary claims sparked popular anger reminiscent of earlier times.5 Stung by Governor Sir William Keith's cavalier disregard for the advice and authority of councillors and proprietary officials such as himself, James Logan took his complaints to William Penn's widow, Hannah, who was managing proprietary affairs while English courts untangled the legal mess William had left behind. When he returned to Philadelphia in 1724, Logan brought a letter of instruction from Hannah Penn to Keith requiring the governor to heed the majority of a provincial council stacked with her supporters. Keith refused, asserting that here in new uniform were the familiar old bashaws fronting for proprietary tyranny. David Lloyd joined in to argue that the 1701 Charter of Privileges and the Royal Charter of 1681 located legislative power solely in the hands of the proprietor and the free-men or their delegates. Moreover, the popular fear of the hard-money convictions that Logan and his friends allegedly harbored increased the political tension surrounding the argument, which lasted from mid 1724 until early 1726. The councillors might well use their veto power to stop further emissions of paper currency intended to alleviate the severe economic depression that the bursting of London's South Sea Bubble had precipitated in the early 1720s.

Aside from this year and a half of dispute over the nature of the Pennsylvania constitution, the issue of proprietary power was overshadowed by the specter of royal government. When William Penn commissioned Charles Gookin as governor in 1709, Penn expected the seasoned military officer to bring the kind of order and respect to the governor's office that his predecessor, the young, impetuous John Evans, had been incapable of providing. Instead, Gookin brought rapacity and ineffective opportunism. Once convinced that William Penn would sell his rights of government to the Crown (negotiations were all but complete when Penn suffered his stroke in 1712),
Gookin turned a blind eye to proprietary interests and tried to cultivate connections that might secure him a royal governorship in Pennsylvania or the three Lower Counties. One of the last documents Penn signed, with the guidance of his wife’s hand, was the commission ending Gookin’s faithless trusteeship and replacing him with Sir William Keith (1717–1726). Keith’s ambitions were not unlike Gookin’s but his tactics were far different, befitting the charming, intelligent man that he was. Through 1726, he ingratiated himself with popular politicians in both Pennsylvania and the Lower Counties, hoping to convince locals that as a royal governor he would be solicitous of their interests, and to demonstrate to Whitehall that he would be effective in converting proprietary allegiances into royal ones. Immediately after his dismissal in 1726, Keith proved himself a master of improvisation. He headed a slate of Philadelphia County candidates for the assembly with the idea of becoming speaker of the house. Denied that goal by a former ally, David Lloyd, Keith incited his followers to create as much political turmoil as possible. While they churned provincial waters, Keith headed back to London, hoping to convince Whitehall that Pennsylvania’s political discord required his presence as royal governor. Failing that, he hoped to gain such an appointment to the Lower Counties. Despite Keith’s energy and ingenuity, the Penn family kept control of Pennsylvania, and his little faction of Keithians had faded away by 1729.

Because of the cloud over the proprietary title, and Gookin’s and Keith’s somewhat aberrant reactions to the possibility of royal government, the 1710s and 1720s produced some strange alliances and bizarre political battles. Nor did other related conflicts in public life do much to clarify the period. While fear of gubernatorial power remained strong during these years, the assembly acquiesced in Governor Keith’s decision to set up an equity court over which he could preside as chancellor. Quakers were willing to promote some anglicization of their province by modifying their liberal laws to bring them into closer harmony with England’s harsh criminal code, but, at the same time, they continued to plead distinctiveness, pushing hard for the right to substitute an affirmation for all oaths. Many Friends seemed happy to encourage the political radicalism of the Anglican Keith, even though Quakers were heavily outnumbered in Keith’s Philadelphia bailiwick and his success might weaken Quaker political power in the long run. Others, Friends from the surrounding counties and a few from the city, had begun to recognize the need for Quakers to pull together if they were to stay masters in their own house. David Lloyd’s country-based coalition, which had battled the Keithians into submission by 1729, was the first Quaker political group to react to the implications of large-scale non-Quaker immigration and the slow growth of Quaker meetings. Other larger circumstances, such as the growing maturation of Pennsylvania’s
social structure and the changing nature of British politics, may have contributed to less contentious provincial politics, but the connection is very difficult to establish. The fact that this was the one period under the Charter of Privileges when councillors found it possible to achieve election to the assembly simply demonstrates the point. Popular hostility to the proprietaryship was less focused at this time than at any other. Without the polarity a strong proprietary presence imparted to provincial affairs, and as long as governors were acquiescing to popular demands, Pennsylvania politics could be anything from quietly cooperative to eccentrically contentious.

By the early 1730s, members of the proprietary family had sorted out their differences. William and Hannah Penn’s three sons, John, Thomas, and Richard, owned both government and property rights to Pennsylvania. As the eldest, John was the senior partner, but upon John’s death in 1746, Thomas became the majority owner, adding John’s one-half interest to his own quarter. In fact, Thomas was the principal architect of proprietary policy from 1732, for from that date until 1741, he resided in Pennsylvania, attempting to reorganize proprietary affairs. Although Richard’s two sons served in the Pennsylvania government during the 1760s and 1770s, Thomas Penn remained the central proprietary figure through the Revolution.

The reappearance of proprietors in Pennsylvania did not immediately set off an antiproprietary reaction. The turmoil that Hannah Penn’s instructions occasioned had subsided, and the passage of a quarter century since the episodes of conflict under William had killed off old combatants and dulled aged memories. Many Quakers shared a vague fondness for John Penn, “the American,” by virtue of his Pennsylvania birth during William and Hannah’s brief residency, and they also anticipated some financial demands from the Penns, given the train of outstanding proprietary debts that trailed back into earlier times. A number of provincials were also acutely aware of their need for proprietary support. Subsequent to William Penn’s death, the neighboring Calverts had begun to encourage settlement under Maryland patent in what Pennsylvanians regarded as their southern and southwestern borderlands. By the 1730s, violence had broken out in the contested areas; the only hope for clarification of land titles lay with negotiations between the Penns and Calverts. This was no time for Pennsylvanians to turn on their proprietors. Finally, there were the inclinations of Andrew Hamilton, Pennsylvania’s dominant popular leader during the 1730s. Although Hamilton was, in important ways, an intellectual radical and a critic of social pretense, he also had conservative tendencies. He believed in the sanctity of property, argued that the proprietary family should be compensated for accepting the devalued Pennsylvania currency in lieu of sterling quitrent payments, and remembered that he had been the recipient of proprietary largesse in earlier times.
While all of these circumstances conspired to keep overt antiproprietary appeals out of popular political discourse, the controversy over Pennsylvania’s court of chancery proved more indicative of the direction that Pennsylvania politics would soon follow. Gubernatorial power exercised through chancery had become the focal point of political controversy in neighboring New York, and with a new proprietor roaming the province, Pennsylvanians paid heed to the issue.\textsuperscript{12} Their concern grew as Thomas Penn acted to encourage, rather than deny, “whisper[s] that we intend to make use of the Court to recover our arrears” in quitrents and land-purchase money. Penn believed that such rumors might encourage debtors to “think it more proper to comply.”\textsuperscript{13} The assembly’s response was to shut down the old chancery court, which had existed on sufferance, and refuse to legislate a replacement. His support for proprietary interests notwithstanding, Andrew Hamilton led the popular disavowal of the prerogative courts.\textsuperscript{14}

Thomas Penn’s attitude toward a provincial chancery court indicated his priorities. His primary purpose in coming to Pennsylvania had been to begin recouping the fortune his father had lost, and he began vigorously to sort out affairs at the land office. He quickly found that his problems were cumulative ones. First, there were irregular titles and outstanding debts from William’s day. Second, because of the litigation over the proprietary title subsequent to William’s death, the land office, with very few exceptions, had been unwilling to grant proper deeds for the preceding fourteen years. As a result, hundreds of settlers had property claims based on squatters’ rights, warrants, or surveys on which little or no purchase money or quitrents had been paid. Although Thomas Penn hoped he could quickly convert all of these rights into regular titles and collect the outstanding debts, he found that impossible because of a third problem. Those with claims in the southeast had no intention of paying up, because the continuation of the Pennsylvania/Maryland boundary dispute prevented Penn from granting clear title. In fact, as the border conflict escalated during the 1730s, Penn found himself increasing the number of irregular claims by offering unofficial property rights to settlers willing to occupy parts of the disputed area.\textsuperscript{15}

Despite these circumstances, Thomas Penn established his terms of settlement where he could. As of 1732, land prices were to increase by approximately 50 percent in order to compensate for the depreciation of Pennsylvania currency against sterling. Quitrents, an important component of Penn’s projected long-term income, would double and would be paid in sterling. Staring these new terms in the face, many landowners argued that their pre-1732 property claims should be settled under the old rates. For those who had shown some willingness to pay the proprietors by taking out a warrant or completing a survey, Penn had sympathy. But he did demand that
either they pay their back quitrents at rates equivalent to sterling or the assembly compensate him for accepting Pennsylvania currency at face value. For those who had no proof of honest intention, Penn had no charity. They would pay the new rates.\textsuperscript{16}

Throughout the mid 1730s, Pennsylvania settlers did not feel the full effect of Thomas Penn's policies, but circumstances changed swiftly. By the end of the decade, Whitehall had established a temporary boundary line between Pennsylvania and Maryland, and Pennsylvania legislators had passed a law compensating Penn for accepting an artificially low exchange rate on his pre-1732 quitrents.\textsuperscript{17} In anticipation of these events, Thomas Penn came as close to glee as he ever would. He would "lose no time to seize on the tenants and use all methods the laws allow to make a speedy collection of the whole."\textsuperscript{18} He was as good as his word, for by December 1739, he could report that Receiver-General James Steel had "for eighteen months past gone through more business than ever he did for two or three years past."\textsuperscript{19} But there was a price to pay for this. When the Donegal Presbytery examined Reverend Samuel Thomson of Pennsborough in September of that year for writing a letter "containing some things which are very offensive to the honourable proprietors," he replied that they were "not his thoughts but the thoughts of the people."\textsuperscript{20}

Popular distaste for Thomas Penn's land policies did not accumulate for long before it gained political expression. When Governor George Thomas broke with the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1740 over what he construed to be the unwillingness of Quaker legislators to provide for colonial defense, public opinion held a different view. Thomas had encouraged the enlisting of indentured servants to serve in a British military campaign against the Spanish; to many provincials such action was tantamount to attacking the property rights of the servants' masters. As the dispute escalated, evidence appeared that Thomas's intentions were far more malevolent even than his opponents first suspected. Governor Thomas wrote to Whitehall that Quakers should be disqualified from government, a proper militia law passed, a chancery court established, and the chief executive given powers to prorogue and dissolve the assembly, as well as joint control with the assembly over all appropriations. This was a prescription for destroying the whole concept of a Quaker colony and for emasculating the provincial constitution. At no time during the conflict between governor and assembly did Thomas Penn dissociate himself from the sentiments of his governor; given Penn's later advocacy of all of Governor Thomas's suggestions (with the notable exception of disqualifying Quakers from all public offices), there is every reason to believe that the governor and the future chief proprietor were in fundamental agreement. Pennsylvanians certainly believed so, for it was Penn, not Thomas, whom Philadelphians hanged in effigy at election time in October 1741.\textsuperscript{21}
The coalescence of antiproprietary anger in mid eighteenth-century Pennsylvania took place for much the same reasons it had in William Penn’s time—because of the unpopularity of both proprietary land policies and political priorities. But in the last thirty-five years of the colony’s existence the shape of proprietary/antiproprietary rivalry was to be much different from what it had been in the first thirty-five. Whereas Pennsylvania’s early years were frequently characterized by factional fluidity and significant divisions within the predominantly Quaker political community, the latter period was distinguished by conflict between the Quaker and Proprietary parties.

The long-lasting polarization between proprietary stalwarts and Quaker critics, although conceived in the 1730s, was born in the early 1740s. Tired out from his efforts to reconcile proprietary and popular interests, Andrew Hamilton turned his back on provincial politics in 1739, and a number of his old friends did likewise. Subsequently, but before the annual October election, word arrived that Britain was at war with Spain. Expecting that non-Quakers would use this occasion as an opportunity to push for a militia and defense preparations, a large number of Friends and their sympathizers were “for choosing none but people of that Persuasion.” Advocates of defense backed off from an electoral contest, perhaps fearing defeat, but also thinking that a Quaker assembly, “do[ing] nothing but trust[ing] in the Lord,” would make an easy target in the future. In this they were wrong. Governor Thomas’s ill-advised recruitment of indentured servants and his attacks on the Pennsylvania constitution quickly became the central issues of the day. But supporters of the proprietorship and executive felt that was a sham. They believed that Quaker leaders were exploiting whatever opportunity they could to mask their pacifist leanings. Consequently, they redoubled their efforts to characterize the assemblymen as an enclave of Quaker intransigents.

The proprietary men’s decision to focus their attack on the Quakerness of their opponents was one of two crucial errors they made during the 1740-1741 defense crisis. Since the 1720s, Friends had become increasingly conscious of their minority status and recognized that if they were to maintain their political dominance, they could no longer afford the kind of internecine warfare that they had been a party to in the past. When Governor Thomas and his Philadelphia allies attacked Quakers, the Quaker presence in government, and the Pennsylvania constitution, they made it easy for Friends to come together in a Quaker political alliance. It also promoted the association of popular rights and privileges with the Quaker Party, which in turn strengthened the appeal of Quaker leaders to growing numbers of non-Quaker freemen.

The second error Proprietary Party leaders made was to tolerate, if not encourage, a plan of electoral intimidation in the Philadelphia county elec-
tion of 1742. Angered by their opponents’ popularity and frustrated by their own failure to win assembly seats the previous year, proprietary sympathizers recruited a large gang of mariners to try to control access to the ballot box. A riot broke out, in which the sailors set on the “Quaker Sons of Bitches,” trying “to knock down the broad Brims.” Speaker of the Assembly John Kinsey, a man the New Yorker James Alexander assayed to be hungry for “popularity applause & to be Esteemed a Patriot,” was not about to let this opportunity pass. He launched an inquiry, which pinned blame for the riot on proprietary stalwarts. Not only did the proprietary men lose the election, they lost their reputations as well. The “knock-down” election became a symbol of the Proprietary Party’s willingness to undermine the Pennsylvania constitution, and the stigma stuck to them for the next thirty years.

During the 1750s and early 1760s, feelings against Thomas Penn ran as high as they ever had done against his father. Once he became chief proprietor in 1746, he advocated all of the changes in the Pennsylvania government for which Governor Thomas had pleaded a decade earlier. Penn wanted a regular militia, a chancery court, a greater say in the appointment of public officials, and “the first cause of all,” as he put it, joint appropriation with the assembly of all revenues. His tenacious adherence to the latter demand in his unyielding instructions to his governors earned the proprietor the intense hatred of various popular provincial leaders. “The Proprietor has no Bowels,” lamented Benjamin Franklin, “he never relents.”

There was nothing but vinegar in Penn’s land policies as well. On becoming chief proprietor, Thomas Penn reorganized the land office, ordering distraints for rent, the ejectment of squatters, and the burning out of homesteaders on unpurchased Indian land. By mid 1757, Penn was taking in more money than at any time since his Pennsylvania residency. But while the proprietor was uncompromising in his pursuit of wealth, and Pennsylvania residents were paying unprecedented taxes to support the French and Indian war effort, Penn was doggedly resisting assembly proposals to tax proprietary land. Even his generosity had a false bottom: a proprietary gift of £5,000 to support the war effort was to be paid out of quitrents collected during the hardship-filled war years. Such policies brought the proprietary family both scorn and hatred. When Richard Penn’s eldest son, John, arrived in Philadelphia in 1753 for a short visit, prominent country Quakers refused to make even a token courtesy visit.

Under these circumstances, the division between the Quaker and Proprietary parties became more pronounced. Quaker Party leaders found that they continued to have a broad constituency of political supporters. Those who were antagonized by the policies and distrusted the intentions of the proprietor gravitated toward the remade Quaker/Assembly Party, which
dominated the House of Representatives after 1756. That restructuring of the party notwithstanding, the proprietary men continued to emphasize the “Quakerness” of their opponents. At the beginning of the French and Indian War, as in the early 1740s, the Proprietary Party tried to convince Pennsylvanians that Quakers, including those who sat in the assembly, were “principled against military service.” When they learned through the continued participation of numerous Quakers in political affairs that such was not the case, but that there was disagreement among Friends over the definition of and priority that should go to peace testimony, proprietary spokespersons made little effort to adjust their views. To them, the anti-proprietary party remained the home of “Quaker plot[s].” These divisions between the Proprietary and Quaker parties, which went back to Thomas Penn’s early days, persisted through the later stages of the French and Indian War and found renewal in the electoral rivalries of the mid 1760s. Although they weakened somewhat thereafter, it took the Revolution to alter the patterns of political partisanship significantly.

Throughout nearly a century of colonial history, proprietary activity was an important determinant of political affairs in Pennsylvania. Despite their different situations, both William and Thomas Penn structured Pennsylvania politics by adopting unpopular policies and thereby becoming lightning rods for colonial discontent. When the proprietorship lay in limbo between the first and second generations, provincial politics were less focused. But as important as this proprietary-induced cycle was in establishing an understandable order in Pennsylvania political affairs, proprietary policies, or their absence, provide only a limited perspective on the character of popular politics. For a more revealing view, it is necessary to turn from the proprietors to the Pennsylvania populace.

Quakers in Politics

The most important influence on political behavior in early Pennsylvania was the Quaker character of the colonial experiment. Friends had planned the enterprise as a Quaker haven, and they predominated in public affairs during the first decades of settlement. Their expectation of prominence was clear, for example, in their reflections on governance. “Government,” ruminated William Penn, “seems to me a part of Religion it self, a thing Sacred in its Institution and End.” His further assertion that government was “capable of Kindness, Goodness and Charity,” and “that the Care and Regulation of many... Affairs, more soft and daily necessary, make up much the greatest
part of *Government,* suggest the kind of benevolent superintendency that Quakers imagined exercising in their enlightened new world. At the same time, William Penn was sincere in his expansive promises “to lay the Foundation of a free Colony for all Mankind, that should go thither.” He simply assumed that outsiders would become Friends or adjust their own values to Quaker standards of law and decorum. In either case, they would accept the public tutelage that leading Friends were eager to offer.

While simple in theory and uplifting in concept, the Quaker vision proved difficult to implement. How could a people principled against violence protect colonists? Would Quaker legislators appropriate money for war against France? Should Quaker officers of government administer capital punishment? If Quakers were unable to fulfill all the requirements of civil office, such as administering oaths, what right had they to hold such positions? On reflection, some Friends thought “government so ill-fitted to their principles” that they were willing to turn their backs upon it. The problems appeared to be so intractable, and acceptable compromises so improbable, that the light Friends might shine in administrative affairs seemed not worth the candle.

By far the majority of Friends, however, held a different opinion. Firmly believing that the “colony and constitutions of government [had been] made by and for Quakers,” they felt that Pennsylvania was rightfully theirs and that they had a consequent obligation to defend their inheritance. The first Quaker settlers had come to the Delaware valley voluntarily, under a contract that promised to make them “more free and Easy than they were in their Native Countrieys.” In their first years as colonists, they enjoyed civil rights that they had been denied in the Old World, and recognized the possibility of developing a warm, caring, domestic life of “holy conversation” within the confines of a Quaker province. But such felicity seemed threatened at many turns. Pennsylvania Anglicans used Friends’ rejection of oaths to discredit Quaker government and deny Friends access to courts. Next door, Delaware Anglicans demonstrated what more their Pennsylvania counterparts would do given the chance. During Queen Anne’s War, the Lower Counties passed a militia law that refused conscientious objector status to Quakers. Frightened by such turns, most Quakers reacted with determination. “It is not to be thought we intended no easier nor better terms for ourselves, in going to America, than we left behind us.” The way for Quakers to protect their heritage was not through quiescence, but through effective and purposeful political involvement.

Resolved though they were to stay in control of Pennsylvania’s government, Friends realized that the relationship between government and Quakerism could not be a static one. The old vision of a colonial utopia, which the proprietor and his co-planners had founded on an all-encompassing Quaker
paternalism, was outdated by the mid 1690s. The Keithian schism discredited the theocratic tendencies of Quaker government by publicly exposing its worst features. As the first generation of minister-magistrates died off, younger public Friends began to steer clear of administrative and judicial appointments. Fights between the Keithians and their opponents, and the subsequent public brawls between David Lloyd’s supporters and more conservative Friends who backed the proprietorship did even more to separate politics and religion into two related but separate spheres. Whereas Quakers were prepared to accept political leaders who were uncompromising, outspoken, and contentious in pursuit of popular power, they chose quieter, far less secular-minded men and women as their spiritual leaders.

Coincident with this change were others that worked to strengthen the Quaker commitment to continued influence in politics. Perhaps the most important of these was the growing worldliness of Quakers. Pennsylvania’s rich land and resources brought material well-being to scores of thrifty Quaker farmers, artisans, and merchants, many of whom became more preoccupied with keeping their worldly possessions than with movements of the spirit. To such individuals, Quakers in government were their best guarantee of continued prosperity and protection for their property.

Other contributions to a growing secular-mindedness came from within Quakerism itself. However tribalistic Quakerism would become by the second quarter of the eighteenth century, early Pennsylvania Quakerism had an inclusive nature. Once settled in the New World, English, Welsh, and Irish immigrants who had been nominal Friends, or simply friends of Friends, in the British Isles flocked into Pennsylvania’s new meetinghouses, imparting a substantial “local content” or “made in Pennsylvania” component to Delaware Valley Quakerism. The result of this infusion of new blood, once families had established themselves and gained whatever weight long-standing meeting attendance conferred, was to dilute the collective memory of old-world “sufferings” that symbolized Friends’ historic unwillingness to compromise with the world. To many Pennsylvania converts and second-generation Quakers, the exercise of political power seemed the most important historically sanctioned way to protect their sectarian integrity.

Friends’ determination to control as much of Pennsylvania’s political destiny as possible found expression in both the exclusive and inclusive tendencies within Quakerism. In the early days of the “holy experiment,” the former predominated; a small group of Quaker ministers, magistrates, and councillors jealously guarded their growing power against outsiders from the Lower Counties and proprietary influence. But by the early eighteenth century, necessity, opportunity, and inclination turned the heads of some Quaker leaders in a different direction. The Keithian schism and
spontaneous immigration in the late 1690s so increased Pennsylvania’s non-Quaker population that James Logan estimated in 1702 that only one-third of Philadelphia residents were Friends. In 1697, the dissident Quaker Robert Turner put together a coalition of “dutch sweeds[s] Fene[s] . . . Baptist[s] Endependant[s] Presbitterian[s] . . . [and] church of England” men to test the political strength of the dominant Quaker leaders. A few years later, David Lloyd was so successful at combining a strong following of Friends with a sizable group of non-Quakers that he and his confidants became the dominant force in Pennsylvania politics. Outsiders were subsumed, politically, by an inclusive popular Quakerism.

Throughout the first three decades of the eighteenth century, leaders of different political factions put more or less emphasis on the exclusive or inclusive character of Quakerism, depending on the nature of their constituency. It was a measure of David Lloyd’s opportunism, for example, that the popular faction he organized in the mid 1720s against Sir William Keith was far more exclusively Quaker than his earlier coalitions; Lloyd was forced to build his new faction on rural footings, and the townships in Chester, Philadelphia, and Bucks were predominantly Quaker. This later Lloydian organization, however, was singular in its narrowness. Other respectable sized factions formed during the first quarter of the eighteenth century were a more eclectic combination of Quaker and non-Quaker elements.

In the 1730s and 1740s, Pennsylvania’s popular political leaders moved to a new level of sophistication by drawing the exclusive and inclusive characteristics of Quakerism into a symbiotic relationship that was to last until the final colonial years. This development was largely a response to Friends’ recognition that they were becoming a shrinking minority amid a burgeoning non-Quaker population. If they were to maintain their monopoly of popular political power, they had to find a renewed commonality of purpose and combine it with a broad appeal to those beyond the walls of Friends’ meetinghouses. That they were successful in doing so is a matter of record. Friends strengthened their own sense of political identity by forming what became known as the Quaker Party in 1739 and simultaneously establishing long-lasting political ties between themselves and a variety of out groups in the province’s different counties.

The close linking of Quaker exclusivism to a broader political inclusiveness may appear paradoxical, but the process of social maturation in Pennsylvania facilitated such a political development. Provincial prosperity brought wealth and social status to Quakers, reinforcing their perception of themselves as a particularly fortunate people. At the same time, social stratification had not developed to the point of unduly isolating successful Friends from their neighbors. The same kind of duality flowed from Friends’ emphasis on loving family relationships. On the one hand, the great
emphasis Quakers placed on the quality of their domestic life worked to create tight community nuclei composed of families deeply committed to “loving conversation.” On the other hand, love worked against isolation. Hundreds of families had children marry outside the meeting to partners of different denominations or of no particular religious affiliation, while others had relations who left the Quaker meeting for social, economic, religious, or idiosyncratic personal reasons. The continuation of affective relationships, despite religious apostasy or indifference, took the care and concern of Quakers out of their religiously defined community and built a multiplicity of small bridges into the wider colonial world.53

Friends’ deep commitment to Quaker control of the Pennsylvania government remained strong during midcentury controversies. When, after close to thirty years of peace, King George’s War broke out in 1739, Friends had a sharp retort for those who condemned the Quaker aversion to preparations for military conflict. Quakers felt they had a moral right to continue “the free Enjoyment of Liberty of Conscience, for the Sake of which . . . [their] Fore fathers left their native Country.”54 Non-Quakers who had immigrated to Pennsylvania had known when they did so of Friends’ disinclination to participate in warfare. If those of other religious persuasions disliked that condition of settlement, they might “go elsewhere.”55 Implicit in Quaker politicians’ defense of their political preeminence was a sentiment William Penn had articulated long before: “if the coming of others should overrule us that are the originals, and made it a country we are unhappy.”56 Most of Penn’s successors were not at all willing to contribute to their own disenfranchisement.

The most severe challenge to Friends’ political dominance came, not from outside their society, but from within. During the wartime crisis that French and Indian attacks on the Pennsylvania frontier precipitated in 1755–1756, strict pacifist Friends began a reformation of their society by renouncing the by then long-hallowed tradition of Quaker involvement in government. Emphasizing the exclusivist side of Quakerism, the reformers argued that the Society of Friends had been corrupted by the worldliness that Quaker inclusiveness had encouraged. The essence of Friends’ religion was their responsibility to bear testimony in all facets of their daily life to Christian precepts; that was impossible for Quaker politicians and officials to do. During the preceding years, conscientious Friends had uneasily accepted the kind of assurances that politicians such as the prospective sheriff Mordecai Lloyd gave, that “not withstanding his profession he would fully execute his office in all respects.”57 Now war would lure politically involved Friends into deeper water. They would soon be beyond wading depth, lost in a torrent of activities supportive of violence. Their performance of such tasks would contravene the spirit and intent of their religion to an intolera-
able degree. Even ordinary Quaker citizens should take a stand, many argued, by refusing to pay taxes intended to finance warlike activities.\textsuperscript{58}

While the mid eighteenth-century Quaker reformation was ultimately of great significance in the future of the Society of Friends, it was of far less consequence for the immediate future of Quaker political power.\textsuperscript{59} The most eye-catching incident of the crisis, of course, was the retirement from electoral politics of a number of high-profile Quakers. But the pacifist reformation was sharply limited by its character as a revolution from the top. The strict Quakers may have dominated such high-profile gatherings as the Meeting for Sufferings and the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, but they did not have the minds of the people. By the end of 1756, a public Friend, John Churchman, reported that even in the self-consciously Quaker county of Chester, only about thirty individuals had refused to pay provincial taxes earmarked for the Crown’s use.\textsuperscript{60} Why, country Friends asked, should they balk at such a tax when English Friends paid impositions specifically levied for the support of war?\textsuperscript{61} A year and a half later, Israel Pemberton, Jr., a strict Friend, lamented new developments. The fact that those individuals appointed “to levy, assess & collect the [wartime] tax in the 3 old counties . . . [were] generally such [i.e., Friends]” meant, in Pemberton’s view, that Quakers were willing to persecute other Quakers.\textsuperscript{62} If that were so, it was likely because the tax men expected to meet few neighbors willing to undergo sufferings for a dubious redefinition of Quaker morality. Israel Pemberton’s brother James summed up the situation succinctly when he admitted that “there . . . [was] indeed a majority amongst us who show[ed] little regard to the principles of their profession.”\textsuperscript{63}

Had they been more appreciative of their own tradition of political involvement, reforming Friends would have been better prepared for its strength. Most Pennsylvania Quakers thought well of the relationship between their religion and their government, and felt it was absurd to relinquish such a connection. In the intense dispute over the narrow ethical question of Quaker legislators’ voting money for the Crown’s use in wartime, Speaker of the House Isaac Norris, Jr., offered a compelling justification for Quaker traditionalists. In concluding that “money . . . [could] and ought to be given to the Crown,” Norris pleaded the past. “I have been particularly careful to follow Precedents where men of the closest understanding & reputation among us have been the immediate actors from the first settlement of the Province.”\textsuperscript{64} In larger arenas of public debate, apologists for a politically active Quakerism were equally direct. Pennsylvania was Friends’ “birthright and possession.” “Because they had been the first settlers,” Quakers had a right to govern the province. “Because by good government they had shown themselves fit persons to run the colony,” they had an obligation to extend their stewardship.\textsuperscript{65}
In their effort to justify Quaker political hegemony, the most useful ally popular political leaders turned up was William Penn. By the 1720s and 1730s, contemporaries were choosing to forget the antiproprietary sentiments and factionalism of the early days and had begun to mythologize the past. Negative judgments of the colony’s founder, which their predecessors had passed so freely, became infrequent; encomiums began to abound. Penn was a “great Man,” whose “whole Conduct [was] governed by, an inexhaustible Stock of Humanity and Benevolence to Mankind.” He was “OUR late honourable and worth Proprietor, to whom the Province of Pennsylvania must . . . be under the deepest obligation.” Most important, Penn’s life bespoke a commitment to political activity. He was “justly [to be] compared . . . to the great Lycurgus” in “his Wisdom and Policy” in granting “so excellent a Form of Government” and his deep involvement in governmental affairs. As Pennsylvania’s popular leaders saw it, Penn’s life was an endorsement of Friends’ participation in public affairs.

It was against this tradition that the self-styled “sober sort” of Friends rebelled subsequent to the outbreak of the French and Indian War. Convinced that involvement in government led to moral bankruptcy, the Quaker reformers tried to come to terms with Pennsylvania’s past by arguing that the vital part of William Penn’s experiment was his promise to “settle . . . a perpetual Friendship” with local Indians. That was in keeping with the reformers’ belief that personal pacifism, and the goodwill to all humans that such a doctrine entailed, lay at the heart of Quaker benevolence. But as morally intimidating as the reformers could be, they were never very effective in promoting their alternative vision. Far more compelling was the tradition of Quaker political involvement that William Penn had apparently endorsed. Rather than giving ground to the reformers, some Quakers may have found the case for political involvement stronger than ever before. Whereas William Penn had served “as an Agent and an Advocate for his People, [determined] to defend and secure their Rights and Privileges, . . . his Successors [had tried] to abolish and destroy them.” Not only had the second generation of proprietors broken faith with their people, they had also broken faith with the Lord. The true heirs of William Penn’s vision of a Quaker polity were not his apostate sons—Thomas Penn was a lapsed Quaker, and Richard was an Anglican—but the posterity of his old partners in settlement. Pennsylvania Friends were the only ones who could truly carry the torch of the Quaker past into the unlit future. Pennsylvania gave Friends the freedom to practice their faith because the colony was run by colonial Quakers.

The best indicator of just how dominant Friends became in the popular politics of colonial Pennsylvania was the character of the Pennsylvania Assembly. The convening of the House of Representatives in Friends’ Phila-
delphia Meetinghouse during the 1690s showed the close connection between Quakerism and government. The unicameral legislature of the 1700s was in some ways an analogue of the Quaker meeting. It was “a common practice for them [i.e., the legislators] to sit in silence awhile, like solemn worship, before they proceeded to do business.” Later, in the more cosmopolitan atmosphere of the State House (now better known as Independence Hall), the old ways continued. The speaker might well end debate by declaring the sense of the House rather than calling for a vote; divisions, when they occurred, were infrequently recorded; and members of the House might issue a meetinglike pronouncement to testify to the good behavior of one of their fellow representatives. As late as 1774, a young Philadelphian described the “scary appearance” of our Honourable House. . . . it was enough to make one sweat to see a parcel of Countrymen sitting with their hats on, in great course cloth coats, leather breeches, and woolen stockings in the month of July; — there was not a speech made the whole time, whether their silence proceeded from their modesty or from their inability to speak I know not.” The “broad brimmed hats planted firmly upon . . . [Friends] heads, and . . . [the] long silences, . . . inner dialogues . . . central to the Quaker decision making process,” those were the observable signs of a continuing Quaker ascendancy.

Nor were appearances deceiving. Throughout the entire colonial period, Friends were constantly at the center of political power in the assembly. The speakership of the assembly was always occupied by a Quaker, a nominal Friend, or someone willing to concede a great deal to Quaker influence. Prior to 1756, Quaker legislators were in a majority and dominated assembly committees. During and after 1756, when Quakers constituted a sizable minority in the House of Representatives, they formed the core of an evolving coalition that kept its majority through 1774. So thoroughly entrenched was Quaker legislative power that it took a revolution to destroy it.

A Unique Constitution

Because of their dominance in Pennsylvania government, Quakers and their close political allies were the chief authors of provincial constitutional thought. Friends’ interest in constitutional matters began with first settlement, for they arrived in Pennsylvania strongly determined to take whatever political action they felt necessary to protect the sectarian integrity they had developed amid old-world persecution. Consequently, they were receptive to political innovation as no group of North American colonists had been since the Puritan migration. Their primary political concern was fidelity, not to the orthodoxies of British political theory, but to the logic of the “Holy
Experiment,” the result was one of the most distinctive strands of constitutional thought in any British colony.

One of the most important determinants of the course of constitutional thought in Pennsylvania was the popular understanding of the “Compact” that William Penn and his first purchasers concluded prior to immigration. In England, the parties had negotiated an agreement; the 1682 Frame of Government, along with its accompanying liberal laws, set out the terms of the bargain mutually agreed upon. Even though the original frame of government met with immediate modification in the New World, original principles such as substantial popular participation in government, liberty of conscience, and an enlightened penal code remained conditions of the contract. To political leaders like David Lloyd, Penn’s promises to accept popular control over judicial and administrative officials were a part of the unwritten provincial constitution, as binding after the adoption of the Charter of Privileges in 1701 as in the years before. Moreover, Penn’s guarantee of specific rights was quickly metamorphosed into a general promise of “Enlarged” popular privileges. Pennsylvania’s first settlers, “men of Sobriety and substance,” were “Induced [to immigrate] Chiefly by the provincial Constitution, Which by Compact with the Proprietary was . . . so Established as that the purchasers and adventurers were to have greater Privileges than they Enjoyed in their native Countreys.”

Although popular leaders frequently took William Penn to task for what they perceived as his backsliding on their settlement contract, when it suited their purposes, community members would also emphasize occasions on which the proprietor appeared as the most unreserved supporter of popular rights. The adoption of the 1701 Charter of Privileges was the best known of these episodes. Knowledge of Penn’s acceptance of “the Charter . . . primarily . . . to shelter . . . [Pennsylvania] against A violent or Arbitrary [i.e., royal] Governor” prompted many Pennsylvanians to view their new constitution as a proprietary gift, signifying a commitment to deed to the people “all the Power he could.” This view, that Penn had finally passed on to the Pennsylvania Assembly all the legislative power reserved for “the freemen of the . . . Countrey . . . or of their Delegates or Deputies” in the Royal Charter of 1681, was confirmed by the text of the Charter of Privileges. The slight 1701 constitution only briefly considered the legislative powers of the governor and the assembly, but provincial politicians quickly interpreted the absence of any specific legislative mandate for the provincial council as incontrovertible evidence that legislative authority was divided, not into three parts, “but [into] two states or Branches.” Because there was nothing resembling a middle estate vying for power with the assembly and governor, there appeared to be fewer constraints on popularly elected representatives. Granted, the governor was still a force with which to contend.
But a unicameral legislature that could claim to be the voice of all provincial residents soon made itself into a structural embodiment of Pennsylvanians’ dedication to the fullest expansion of popular privileges.

Because they were convinced of the special nature of their enterprise and of the uniqueness of their constitution, Pennsylvania’s early political leaders found the issue of their constitutional relationship with Great Britain a delicate one. All were quite prepared to “claim” and “enjoy all the Common Rights and privileges of freeborn English subjects.” In order to possess more rights than Englishmen, Pennsylvanians had to be blessed with the existing ones. But usually the discussion of rights arose in the context of a debate over assembly powers, and that inevitably raised the slippery question of how analogous the Pennsylvania constitution was to its Westminster counterpart. In the heat of argument, exuberant popular spokespersons would sometimes voice sweeping generalizations that ignored the different circumstances of colony and mother country. They might claim an unqualified “Right to parliamentary Privileges,” or “that the Assemblies in the English-Plantations . . . [were] formed on the Plan of an English Parliament.” Occasionally, legislators would go to great lengths to develop an extended parliamentary analogy that they thought would bolster their case in a heated argument with a governor over a specific power.

Most of the time, however, pundits were far more circumspect. “The Constitution of England & ours much differ,” they argued. While “the method of Executing . . . [legislative] Power, always was as near as could be in a Parliamentary way,” the actual allocation of legislative power in Pennsylvania was between proprietor and people, not among king, lords and commons. No authority could “bind” Pennsylvania’s assembly to parliamentary precedents. “Only as they . . . [were] found by the House convenient and consistent with the Constitution of this Government [were] they . . . admitted; and frequently altered and adopted to the particular Circumstances of the Colony.” While it was true that Pennsylvania’s inclusion within the British realm and general adherence to a British constitutional order provided guidelines for what “Proper Incidents . . . though not expressly granted” should attend the exercise of legislative power, popular leaders were determined that they should decide what these “Proper Incidents” were. And always they would interpret such powers in ways that reinforced the unique character of the Pennsylvania constitution. Local leaders were acutely aware that their provincial government had “the Advantage of the British Constitution” in a number of respects, and they were determined to protect those features.

The belief that the Pennsylvania constitution was both peculiar and peculiarly attractive gained great currency during the first half of the eighteenth century. Utilizing William Penn’s supposed promises, select elements of
English political tradition, and the structure of their proprietary government, popular political leaders gradually put together a political theory that proved to be an immensely persuasive interpretation of Pennsylvania’s constitutional order.

The most important stimulus to innovative constitutional thinking in turn-of-the-century Pennsylvania was the adoption of the 1701 Charter of Privileges. The omission, purposeful or not, of any clear legislative mandate for a governor’s council allowed the assembly, under David Lloyd’s unyielding leadership, firmly to deny any formal advisory role to the council. As Lloyd put it, the council’s power went no “further than as a Council of State, & . . . [was] no part of the Legislative power of . . . Governt.” The consequences of this situation, as one critic of Pennsylvania’s government derisively snorted, was to make the council “only a name.” During the first quarter of the eighteenth century, William Penn’s young, tendentious proprietary secretary, James Logan, tried his utmost to bring the council into the legislative process through the back door. As he later explained, the charter’s failure to describe the council as a functioning upper chamber in a bicameral legislature had been an oversight occasioned by William Penn being “under a great pressure of Affairs,” and that as soon as the proprietor had realized the omission, he “established a Council,” with standard conciliar powers, “by Letters Patent under the Great-Seal.” Logan’s efforts, however, were counterproductive. The ensuing controversy between assembly and proprietary officials simply attested to what David Lloyd had always maintained, that councillors with a direct legislative role in government would use their authority to curtail popular power.

Two decades later, the council again became the focal point of political debate. In hopes of easing his way to a royal governorship of Pennsylvania should William Penn’s death precipitate the demise of the proprietorship, the current proprietary-appointed governor, Sir William Keith, made common cause with assembly politicians, completely disregarding the advice of his councillors. In order to bring Keith to heel, William Penn’s executrix, his second wife Hannah Penn, sent instructions commanding Keith make “no Speech, nor send any written Message to the Assembly . . . nor pass any . . . Law[s], without the Consent of a Majority of . . . [the Council] Board.” Not surprisingly, this effort to give the council legislative authority by proprietary instruction occasioned angry resistance. Popular spokespersons responded that the council could not “legally be understood to be any other than a Council of State, to advise, and be present, as solemn Witnesses of the Governor’s Action.” So intense was the protest against alteration by proprietary ukase that James Logan and a handful of his Philadelphia friends were soon feverishly backpedaling, trying to explain away their earlier statements and salvage a few shreds of political influence.
Informally, of course, council members did play a role in Pennsylvania government, giving advice to the governor and on occasion serving as an interim executive board between gubernatorial appointments. Building on what they perceived to be their intended similarity to both the British House of Lords and councils elsewhere in the colonial realm, apologists for the Pennsylvania council occasionally tried to dress themselves up as a special, ill-defined, estate in Pennsylvania. Their order was composed of “men of Substance,” whose wealth distinguished them as new-world aristocrats. In their view, they brought the wisdom to Pennsylvania government that the aristocratic element theoretically supplied to Britain’s mixed constitution. Such pretension, however, few Pennsylvanians would abide.

“Gentlemen who form the Council,” observed the cartographer Lewis Evans, “have no Interest of Privilege above the Freholders nor are they delegated by the People.” Other critics believed that wealthy and influential councillors personified predatoryness, not wisdom, and that any group so thoroughly self-deceived was no worthwhile candidate for a special and permanent role in provincial government. Moreover, there were no local customs that suggested the councillors’ claims were more than rank opportunism. Council members had never disqualified themselves from voting in provincial elections, or, in fact, from sitting simultaneously as assembly representatives. In England, members of the aristocratic estate did not meddle in electoral politics. More important, while the British constitution made provision for lords temporal and spiritual, the Pennsylvania Charter of Privileges appeared to deny the existence of a separate conciliar order. Governor and assembly were acknowledged, but there was no provision for a “third” legislative “State.”

The efforts of a few outspoken council members to find a rationale for their inclusion in the legislative process met with little success. The public at large recognized what Hannah Penn openly admitted, that the council was a clutch of proprietary “friends.” The prevalence of that view during William Penn’s proprietorship prevented the council from gaining stature as a distinct governmental institution with legitimate provincial interests to represent. Once control of Pennsylvania passed to the second generation of Penns, a greater distance opened up between proprietors and councillors. But the council was so burdened with its reputation as a proprietary rubber stamp, and so frequently put into the position of having to defend Thomas Penn’s odious policies, that it became, if anything, a less prestigious body by the mid eighteenth century than it had been some decades earlier.

Pennsylvanians’ rejection of a bicameral legislature meant that legislative power was “lodged solely in the Governor and Assembly,” the “two parts [of] our legislature.” Strictly speaking, the governor was the proprietor, but with the exception of the few months of his Pennsylvania residencies
when William Penn personally exercised gubernatorial power, he and his successors always appointed a deputy (referred to in this book as governor) to reside in Pennsylvania and exercise executive power. Shortly after the adoption of the 1701 Charter of Privileges, William Penn tried to claim that, as proprietor, he retained a separate veto power over any legislation upon which his deputy and the assembly agreed. Even his hand-picked counsellors, however, would have nothing to do with that idea. Proprietary failure to gain a veto made the appointment of a governor particularly important for the proprietary family. The province’s chief executive was the only official with power to protect proprietary interests from assembly encroachments.

Proprietary surrogate though he was, the Pennsylvania governor was also a representative of the Crown. Incumbent governors tried to capitalize on that connection, recognizing that they could benefit from the royal cachet. But that was not easy. Most locals felt that “the Royal Prerogative as exercised in England . . . [could] no more be understood to accompany . . . Sovereignty, than all the other [English] Laws [could].” Pennsylvania had its own constitution, and under that set of arrangements the governor was overwhelmingly the proprietor’s man. The Penn family appointed him, sent him instructions, placed him under a performance bond, and in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries even paid him. Proprietary privileges and gubernatorial powers were inextricably entwined. Executive authority over the Pennsylvania system and over court personnel, for example, was, simultaneously, proprietary patronage power. Proprietary demands that Penn land be exempt from taxation took the form of gubernatorial insistence that, as one part of the legislature, the chief executive had a right to amend tax bills. Although William Penn was willing to give his governor somewhat more leeway to depart from proprietary instructions than his son Thomas was, the public always felt that on issues of executive power and proprietary privilege, the governor’s first inclination was to heed the voice of those who had commissioned him.

The close association of Pennsylvania’s governors with the proprietary had a profound impact on popular attitudes toward the provincial constitution. The most important consequence was the belief that the gubernatorial half of the legislative process was dominated by private interests, most notably those of the proprietary. “The Proprietaries . . . [themselves comprised] a separate Branch of the Legislature” and “the Proprietary Estate and Interest . . . [was] separate” from those of the people. Penn family concerns constituted “an Idol to which, they . . . long sacrifice[d] the Public Weal.” Rather than allow their governors to participate in the give-and-take of legislative compromise, the proprietary family mandated specific policies, to the point where under Thomas Penn’s suzerainty they could be
accused of “oblige[ing] . . . [the assembly] to make Laws [favorable to the proprietor] by Direction.” Under bond as he was, the governor appeared to be little more than “the Proprietors Tool,” an agent whose charge it was simply to implement proprietary instructions.

On their own account, Pennsylvania’s governors were not above self-interested activities. As everyone in Pennsylvania knew, “men . . . don’t commonly, make use of all the Friends and Interest they have, to get themselves appointed Governors, merely for an Opportunity of doing good to the people they are to govern.” And the governors were always surrounded by advisors whose positions belied their disinterest. Councillors were, on the one hand, proprietary and governors’ favorites, “chosen as Men do Horsewhips, for being neat and pliant,” and, on the other, “a sett of private men” with their own agendas. There was little reason to think that considerations of public interest would prevail over the cacophony of private demands that ceaselessly echoed through the frequently rather vacuous minds of Pennsylvania’s governors.

Popular political leaders responded in a variety of ways to the perceived dominance of private interests in the gubernatorial portion of the legislative power. During periods of intense political conflict, they frequently condemned what they believed to be specific instances of selfish behavior. When the rich council members lobbied against a land bank in the early 1720s, they were declared guilty of sacrificing the public good to private gain. When Thomas Penn insisted on exempting his land from taxation during the French and Indian War, he demonstrated how the unrestrained pursuit of private advantage could thoroughly corrupt. Powerful figures such as Penn and James Logan required continuous and close scrutiny, for they artfully maintained a specious pretense of public good while pursuing their interests as “private persons,” “infringe[ing] . . . on the Properties [of provincial landholders.] and oppress[ing] the Freemen of Pennsylvania.”

On balance, however, Pennsylvanians avoided wholesale condemnation of private interest. Jaundiced against proprietary government though he was, Joseph Galloway summed up a half-century of political experience when he described private Interest, not as an enemy, but “like some restless Friend, . . . always alive, . . . ever active.” As Pennsylvania’s popular leaders clearly recognized, the secret of reducing the toll that gubernatorial surveillance could exact was to induce the restless friend inside each chief executive to work on behalf of, rather than against, popular interests. The conservative councilman Isaac Norris, Sr., pointed out the means of doing so when he reduced the essence of government to an exchange. “Government ought to be supported, the Governor maintained, and the necessary public charges defrayed: But then the people must have Privileges granted and laws made.” Simply put, the way to induce a governor to pick up a
pen (with which to sign popular legislation) was to put money in his purse. In the early eighteenth century, the assembly took over from the proprietary the financial responsibility of maintaining their governor and thereafter became quite adept at buying the goodwill of numerous chief executives.\textsuperscript{126} Even the proprietor occasionally proved amenable to such tactics. In the late 1730s, Thomas Penn accepted legislation allowing freeholders to pay their quitrents in depreciated Pennsylvania currency rather than in sterling in return for a compensatory stipend.\textsuperscript{127} By the mid eighteenth century, most popular political leaders could agree that the “Practice of purchasing and paying for Laws . . . [was] interwoven with our \textit{Proprietary Constitution}.”\textsuperscript{128} It was possible to experience sustained good government under a proprietary regime if the assembly tended to the public good and the governor stood, not by his commission, but by the hand that fed him.

The most important result of the close association of private interest with gubernatorial power was a diminution of the authoritative aura of the chief executive, and a related tendency for the assembly to gain widespread recognition as the \textit{only} institution of government capable of speaking for the public interest. If the governor was, “in a sense, not even a public officer at all, but the agent of a private person or group of persons . . . charged . . . with the defence and protection of distinctly private interests,” he could not possibly speak for the public good.\textsuperscript{129} When Governor Evans tried to shore up his position by claiming that he had “the chief command of all the People in the Province, . . . [and was] theirs, & therefore their Representatives Superior,” the assembly would not yield.\textsuperscript{130} They claimed a “Concurrent Authority,” an “Equality” that flowed from the establishment of “two states or Branches in the Legislative authority of . . . [the] Province.”\textsuperscript{131} Ordinary legislators were “in as near Relation to the Crown as any . . . [could] pretend to be in this Govrmt.”\textsuperscript{132} In the hand-to-hand encounters of political debate, popular pundits repeatedly cut into gubernatorial pretension with derisive ripostes.\textsuperscript{133} Governors were “our Fellow-Subjects,” “Proconsuls” who “strut and king it away in the Provinces, and who usurp the Title appropriate to their royal Master, by calling themselves God’s Viceregents, to which they have just as much Right as the Parish Constables, who as well as the others execute their Office in the King’s Name.”\textsuperscript{134}

Occasionally, as a matter of practical politics, popular leaders would retreat from their belittlement of the governor. In times of war, Quaker assemblymen were frequently willing to put the monkey of preparedness on the governor’s back. As captain-general and “Head of the Legislature,” the governor bore responsibility to react to danger.\textsuperscript{135} Military defense was the duty of those in whose hands “the executive powers of government” lay.\textsuperscript{136} In the face of other, less conventional crises in which they needed the governor, elected representatives could be far more creative. When legisla-
tors tried to initiate impeachment procedures against James Logan, and later against Provost William Smith, they argued that the governor could “be deemed to supply a middle state, Resembling (though in Inferiour Degree) that of the [English House of] Lords” and thereby empowered to serve as judge in such an action. That bizarre notion, however, was the closest any popular politicians ever came to suggesting that the governor had a claim to an elevated status under the Pennsylvania constitution. To an overwhelming degree, the effect of popular political rhetoric was to disparage the governor’s ability to transcend a narrow private interest (one that was particularly inimical to those of Pennsylvanians), and thereby discredit him as a spokesperson for the public good.

In place of the governor as the traditional leader of the community, popular politicians proffered themselves, through the agency of the Pennsylvania Assembly. In their view, the assemblymen represented the “whole Province,” or more specifically the “whole Body of the People.” Because there were no separate estates in Pennsylvania, those who paid taxes, owned property, and qualified to vote were part of a provincewide “Body Corporate, and every Person thus situated, a real Member of that Body.” In representing “the Whole people,” legislators assumed responsibility for reconciling or discounting private interests to the point of discovering the public good. As the province’s custodian, the assembly’s obligation was plain: to be an effective initiator and guarantor of good laws. Elected representatives composed a “Body of Delegates, impowered by their Constituents” to legislate “for the general interest and utility of the whole Body Politic.”

Critics responded that their opponents occupied indefensible ground. William Penn, who knew his old friends well, quietly stated that they were courting anarchic consequences by trying to “mak[e] . . . themselves the whole Legislative,” and thereby, putting executive powers under the control of an “uncertain collective body.” Others were less restrained. The assembly failed to acknowledge that it represented only “a part” of “the People of Pennsylvania,” not them all. By taking the lead in government, the House of Representatives strove “to invert the order of Govmt,” and politically conscious Pennsylvanians either encouraged them or quietly acquiesced, “allow[ing] the Legislators [i.e., representatives] to be Head of State.” Pennsylvania’s popular leaders were sensitive to these charges that they were closet republicans with “democratical aspirations.” Thus, they were always willing—and, it is important to note, sincerely willing—to acknowledge some kind of vague symbolic subordinance. The governor appointed by the proprietor was at the “Helm of Government”; Pennsylvanians were in a dependent relationship with Great Britain; in urging governors to ignore proprietary instructions, the chief executive should look to “his
Majesty’s Interest” and “the Good of his Subjects.” In time, popular spokespersons became adept at turning charges of constitutional radicalism back on their opponents. “Such a conduct [Governor Morris’s intransigence over a taxation bill] in a Governor, appears to us the most likely thing in the World to make People incline to a Democracy, who would otherwise never have dreamt of it.” But, in fact, their critics were not so far wrong. Popular political thinkers were inspired by the conviction that Pennsylvania had been founded by “mutual compact” among prospective settlers, including William Penn, who intended to place “the whole legislative power . . . where it . . . [was] always safest lodged, in the hands of the People.” The responsibility for implementing this contract to promote the public interest clearly lay with the people’s representatives.

Because of the uniqueness of the Pennsylvania constitution, public discourse over its character differed considerably from constitutional debate in other colonies. There were a handful of intellectual traditionalists and social conservatives who, with little sense of the irony of their situation, argued for radical change. James Logan believed that Pennsylvania’s constitution “blemish[ed]” the countenance of Britain’s colonial empire. Only the adoption of a mixed government would guarantee the kind of conformity that Logan craved. Provost William Smith was another well-known figure whose distaste for his adopted province’s “Independency” gained expression in his cries for “mix’t Forms” of government. But Logan, Smith, and a few fellow travelers drew on assumptions that were outside the mainstream of political thought in Pennsylvania; they further marginalized their intellectual impact with ill-advised pronouncements that the Charter of Privileges was “not worth so many pence,” or that the provincial constitution was an “absurdity.”

To the vast majority of politically conscious Pennsylvanians, such sentiments were ludicrous. Mixed government had been traded off for a frame of government that provided more rights than Englishmen enjoyed. To argue that “the government of . . . [the] province . . . [was] defective, as far as it want[ed] . . . an exact Resemblance to that of our Mother-Country” was unreflective mimicry of a “laudable partiality in Britons, to prefer their own Constitution, as the most perfect of all others.” “It . . . [was] altogether as absurd to prescribe the same form of government to people differently circumstanced, as to pretend to fortify all forts . . . on the same model.”

Not surprisingly, Pennsylvania’s popular leaders also dismissed traditional notions of balanced government. To be sure, the issue of balance did arise in mid eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. But the balance in question was not the legislative equilibrium that king, lords, and commons maintained in the idealized English constitution. One tendency was to see the Quakers as a balance wheel in the political relationships of the various religious denomi-
nations and linguistic groups in Pennsylvania. But rarely, was to imply the need for some balance between the proprietor as a “separate estate” and the interests of the people. But the most common use of the term balance (and even this was infrequent) was in the context of the “Great” John Locke’s division of governmental power into “Legislative, executive and federative.” Although acknowledging this tripartite scheme, Pennsylvanians primarily concerned themselves with the balance of power between the legislative and executive branches of government. Used in this context, balance offered a rationale for both proprietor and assembly. Thomas Penn and his supporters availed themselves of this logic more than anyone else. Penn felt entitled “to get the power of Government more equally divided,” for in his view the Pennsylvania constitution promised him “one Half the legislative power.” Popular politicians perceived this as a second-generation proprietary plot “to recover the Privileges their father gave in order to settle his Province without any charge to himself or the Crown.” Assembly spokespersons occasionally used the argument of balance in support of their resistance to proprietary efforts to reposition the fulcrum that lay between executive and legislature. But in the larger sense of pleading for a legislative equilibrium between the traditional three estates, the idea of balance had no relevance for Pennsylvania politics. “BALANCE OF POWER,” snorted Andrew Hamilton, “that was much talked of... Nonsense, when applied to a Democratical Government” like that of Pennsylvania.

Convinced that Pennsylvania had “a quite different Frame and Constitution... than Great Britain,” and that such distinctiveness was the single most important reason why they enjoyed more rights than the English, the majority of popular politicians were predisposed to dismiss out of hand structural criticism based on standard categories of English constitutional thought. While it was true that a half-century after its founding, Pennsylvania’s “Constitution [was] not old enough to plead Perinscription,” its foundations were much stronger than the “simple conjectures” that contemporaries relied on to elucidate the English past. William Penn, for example, had left a clear record of what he had intended. The 1701 Charter of Privileges reinforced the 1681 Royal Charter by placing a great deal of power in the unicameral legislature, and the 1682 Frame of Government promised the representatives of the people sweeping powers of appointment and review over executive and judicial officers. These documents, along with Penn’s selectively remembered ancillary promises, provided a thorough set of guidelines for the provincial constitution. Contemporaries could examine their provincial traditions to determine if their constitution had decayed or deviated from its standards. Alternatively, they could look to the past to help them identify powers that needed to come under assembly control in
order to fulfill Penn’s alleged vision of a model commonwealth. And if the past was not as clear as it might have been, Pennsylvania’s political thinkers could look elsewhere for help. Not to Great Britain, not to the inappropriate standards of mixed government and a balanced constitution, but to “their reason.”167 “Reason” and the logic of “natural Right” were the obvious means of illuminating relationships between the assembly and the proprietor.168 Quiet, reasoned appreciation of Pennsylvania’s unique constitutional development would do much more than anything else to clarify and promote the political goal that William Penn had long ago singled out, “to support Power in Reverence with the People, and to secure the People from the Abuses of Power.”169

The Ideology of Civil Quakerism

From the first years of settlement to the end of the colonial period, Quakers and a handful of individuals in close association with Friends dominated the Pennsylvania Assembly and defined the character of the provincial constitution. Yet from the early eighteenth century on, Friends were in a minority, and by 1757 Provincial Secretary Richard Peters estimated that only one-eighth of the province was Quaker.170 That circumstance raises the very important question of how the Quakers maintained their political dominance.

The best point at which to begin considering this problem is with the admission of Isaac Norris, Jr., that Friends safeguarded their political influence through what he called “the Quaker System.”171 In the narrowest sense, Norris meant by this the Quaker ability to exploit both the divisions within other denominations and the rivalry among them. The Anglican, Presbyterian, and German Lutheran and Reformed churches all experienced some localized or regional divisions during the mid eighteenth century, and the animosities among factions of different denominations worked against the appearance of any large, popular non-Quaker political alliance. As the Friends archenemy, Provost William Smith, saw it, the Quakers had “made it their invariable rule (agreeable to the Maxim, Divide et impera) to divide and distract all other Societies, and to take off some men among them.”172 Both Norris and Smith recognized, although Smith made too much of it, the deliberate, manipulative side of Quaker politics. Continuation of the “Quaker System” of politics required intentional exploitation of the advantages that religious pluralism provided.

Another important part of the Quaker strategy of maintaining political power was to gerrymander county boundaries and to underrepresent new counties in the assembly. When Berks and Northampton counties were
established in the early 1750s, the Quaker Party carefully separated the new German-settled backcountry areas of Philadelphia and Bucks counties from the long-established Quaker communities of the southeast.\textsuperscript{173} The practice of decreasing assembly representation to new counties had begun sometime earlier. When Lancaster County was created in 1729, it received four assembly seats. Twenty years later, York was given two seats. When Berks and Northampton were established in 1750 and 1752 respectively, each was assigned only one seat. The progressive decline in the representation of backcountry counties was a deliberate assembly policy designed to ensure the continued dominance of the three old Quaker counties and Philadelphia, with their combined total of twenty-six legislative seats. The “Quaker System” entailed keeping political power where it began in Pennsylvania, in the long-settled Quaker communities close to the Delaware River.\textsuperscript{174}

A third way in which popular Quaker leaders consciously enhanced their political influence was to exploit the patronage possibilities that assembly powers offered. As the House of Representatives asserted itself against governor and proprietors, more and more powers came their way. Trustees of the loan office, currency signers for Pennsylvania’s paper money, collectors of the excise, inspectors of flour, staves, and lumber, collectors of tonnage duties and import duties on criminals, servants, and slaves, and provincial commissioners to direct the expenditure of various funds—all were creatures of the assembly. These were just some of the perquisites that popular leaders divided among the more voracious of their followers.\textsuperscript{175}

Finally, there was the opportunity that the proprietary presence itself created. The “Quaker System” of government rested, to some degree, on the cultivation of antiproprietary sentiments. Popular leaders were prepared to distill the discontent proprietary policies engendered and to use the potent mixture for their own political purposes. In so doing, they acted consciously, deliberately, and pragmatically. They took note of corrupt surveyors, land office favoritism, and increasingly heavy quitrent exactions, and tried to exploit the resentfulness such awareness produced when the Quaker Party faced immediate threats.\textsuperscript{176} Non-Quakers or Friends, backcountry residents or easterners, countryfolk or urbanites, it made little difference. Most Pennsylvanians responded positively to the popular tactics of blackening the proprietary. So intoxicating could the sentiments behind popular politics become that on occasion even Thomas Penn’s own attorney-general could not be counted on to defend charter-based, proprietary privileges.\textsuperscript{177}

But the relationship of Pennsylvania residents to the proprietor was never simply a matter of political opportunism. Day-to-day conflicts between proprietor and people were also a catalyst to a broader range of thinking about the nature of the Pennsylvania polity. Differences between William Penn and his fellow first settlers, as well as those between his son Thomas
and second-generation Pennsylvanians, raised the question of what the Quaker experiment was to be. How was it to be carried out? How governed? What values would it reflect? What might it hope to achieve? By posing such questions, proprietary/popular conflicts created a context in which Quakers were forced to define themselves and their mission in Pennsylvania. Because the Society of Friends was a religious organization, we tend to think of Pennsylvania Quakers in religious terms—the universal potential of the Inner Light, personal pacifism, the avoidance of oaths, a plain style of life and address, and various other testimonies. We forget that Friends had already largely succeeded in establishing a powerful religious identity prior to their immigration. What preoccupied them far more on their arrival in Pennsylvania was their need for supplementary, and very extensive, self-definition as participants in, and governors of, a new worldly experiment.

The introspection that the assumption of governmental responsibility occasioned, sharpened by continuing conflict between proprietors and their Pennsylvania opponents, produced a reasonably coherent cluster of popular beliefs that may best be referred to as an ideology of civil Quakerism.178 More than anything else, this ideology defined the character of Pennsylvania’s popular political community, providing the glue, as it were, that held together the “Quaker System” of government. After a few short decades in Pennsylvania, Friends found themselves identifying so closely with the ideology of civil Quakerism, and giving it such precedence in their conception of community purpose, that they strongly resisted even the instruction of Quaker reformers whose interests were far more focused on the Society’s religious integrity.179 Nor was the appeal of this ideology limited to Quakers. One of its strengths was that it brought others into the “Quaker System” through a process of “Quakerization.”180 Contemporaries meant by this that non-Quakers accepted Friends’ standards of judgment on many public issues and embraced many of the political goals identified by popular Quakers. Quakerization was shorthand for the political consensus that the ideology of civil Quakerism tended to produce.

The cluster of interrelated political beliefs that identified the ideology of civil Quakerism appeared piecemeal in the reflections of both Friends and their non-Quaker allies on the nature of the Pennsylvania experiment during their experiences in public affairs. One observation that frequently prompted speculation about the principles of Quaker government was the type of comment the New Yorker John Watts made in 1774 on considering the Pennsylvania he had come to know. “Tis an amazing Colony that, for increase and wealth.”181 How was it possible to explain the colony’s growth, its demonstrable riches, and the fact that those “among us who are in other Places called the common People” could search the “Whole Globe” and find no place “to compare for Ease, Freedom, Sufficiency of Necessaries, and a
general Equality? Andrew Hamilton had an answer that other Pennsylvanians echoed innumerable times:

It is not to the Fertility of our Soil, and the Commodiousness of our Rivers, that we ought chiefly to attribute the great Progress this Province has made, within so small a Compass of Years, in Improvements, Wealth, Trade and Navigation, and the extraordinary Increases of People, who have been drawn hither from almost every Country in Europe; a Progress which much more antient Settlements on the Main of America cannot at present boast of; No, it is principally and almost wholly owing to the Excellency of our Constitution, under which we enjoy a greater Share both of civil and religious Liberty than any of our Neighbours.

There it was. At the heart of the ideology of civil Quakerism, was Pennsylvania’s unique constitution, with its “Charter of Privileges . . . a Monument of . . . [William Penn’s] Benevolence to Mankind.” The essential character of the Pennsylvania constitution had nothing to do with the mixed government and balanced constitution that was the centerpiece of political thought in Great Britain. Rather, the Pennsylvania document presented an array of particular powers that the representatives of the people had come to enjoy under the Charter: the council had no ability to veto legislation, provincial elections were annual, and sheriffs were elected, while the assembly sat on its own adjournments, raised and disposed of public money, named its own treasurer, appointed many of the officers of government, and controlled the salaries of others. Although there were a few isolated Philadelphians who claimed that their fellow-citizens enjoyed a surfeit of privileges, the vast majority of politically aware Pennsylvanians thought that, if anything, assembly powers should be increased, not checked. In a Quakerized polity, guided by the view that government should be “limited,” and accustomed to perceiving authority as arising from a deeply internalized ethic of self-restraint, the concentration of political power in the hands of the people’s representatives was nothing to fear.

The other major feature of the Pennsylvania constitution that Andrew Hamilton emphasized in his paean was its guarantee of liberty of conscience. William Penn considered freedom of religion to be, as he put it, “the first fundamental of the Government of my Country. . . . every Person that does or shall reside therein shall have and enjoy the Free Possession of his or her faith and exercise of worship towards God, in such way and manner As every Person shall in Conscience believe is most acceptable to God and so long as every such Person useth not their Christian liberty to Licentiousness.” All of Penn’s early constitutions granted religious liberty, and in 1701 the first article of the Charter of Privileges reaffirmed that promise. No one who “acknowledge[d] one almighty God” should be “molested or prejudiced in his or their person or Estate because of his or their Conscientious persuasian or Practice.” Stated as it was, in emphatic tones, and
contrasting markedly with prevailing practices on both sides of the Atlantic, Penn’s promise of religious liberty echoed loudly through the dissenting religious communities of the British Isles and western Europe. The Presbyterian Francis Alison immigrated “because of the charter that protected every religion and . . . [granted] equal privileges of citizenship.” German sectarians were drawn to Pennsylvania by assurances that “children of God” would find a haven “secure from outward persecution.” Once resident in Pennsylvania, individuals were, if anything, more appreciative of their religious freedom. Locals reminded pretentious Anglicans that “by Pens Charter” “all Religions are free in this Province,” and when the corporation of Philadelphia welcomed Thomas Penn to Pennsylvania in 1732, it thanked him, “above all . . . [for his] religious care . . . in securing that Natural Right Liberty of Conscience and Freedom from Spiritual Tyranny.” Many Pennsylvanians could easily agree with the German immigrant who pointed to Pennsylvania’s religious freedom as the most important reason why he “did not repent . . . [his] immigration.”

There were, of course, differences over what religious liberty entailed. During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Anglicans challenged Quakers over the latter’s demand that affirmations should replace oaths, and claimed that religious freedom entitled them to the same establishment benefits they enjoyed in England. As for Friends, their spokespersons frequently felt that responsibility for the maintenance of civil order and for the good reputation of their society placed an onus upon them to distinguish the practice of religious liberty from that of licentious behavior. The most serious disagreements, however, occurred over pacifism. Many Friends believed that liberty of conscience entailed some limitation on wartime commitments, while many non-Quakers felt that God’s injunctions to defend themselves required provincial laws facilitating active belligerence. But such disagreements rarely produced any qualifications to the widely shared judgment that Pennsylvania’s “chief virtue” was “the wholesome Laws of . . . [the] Province, by which all Men, without distinction, are protected from Injury and Persecution, on Account of any religious Opinions.”

Without question, most Pennsylvanians believed they lived in a favored world. “We are distinguished,” their representatives wrote, “above any others of the King’s Subjects abroad.” And most were equally convinced that they owed their enjoyment of Pennsylvania’s political and religious privileges to the Quakers. William Penn had provided the frame of government and the ideal of a benevolent society open to immigrants of varied background; other Friends had dedicated much effort to securing the popular privileges that the assembly had gained and the Quaker Party was determined to defend. While many non-Quaker Pennsylvanians lauded freedom
of conscience, no religious group earned the kind of association with that principle that Friends enjoyed. Liberty of conscience, the most essential of all Privileges, remained first and foremost a Quaker issue.\textsuperscript{200}

Like the constitution and liberty of conscience, prosperity, too, was coupled tightly to Quakerism. Of course, it was happenstance that placed William Penn's colony in a "healthful Climate" and "productive Country," but many colonists were prepared to see even that as the bestowal of divine favor on a secular Quaker enterprise.\textsuperscript{201} And the more apologists emphasized the connection between prosperity and the Quaker constitution, the more the promotion of economic opportunities seemed, in itself, to be a principle of Quaker government. Most important, the assembly's sponsorship and management of the provincial loan office seemed to be incontrovertible evidence of the Friends' commitment to the province's economic well-being.

The Pennsylvania loan office came into existence in 1723, when the assembly tried to ameliorate the effects of economic depression by printing a provincial currency. The currency provided a number of benefits. It primed the economic pump by allowing public works expenditures to be financed on the expectation of future government income. It raised a public revenue through the interest payments borrowers made, and thus contributed to Pennsylvania's ability to avoid provincial property taxes through the beginning of the French and Indian War. It provided a local circulating medium of exchange in an economy frequently short of specie, and hence relieved some of the pressure on debtors, whose lack of liquidity, rather than lack of assets, threatened them with serious losses. Most important, the loan office was a land bank that extended moderate-sized loans to residents who could offer as collateral realty or personalty valued at twice the amount of the loan. The fact that the interest rate was a flat 5 percent, with no consideration given to risk, drew thousands of Pennsylvanians to the loan office door. While it is obvious from the collateral requirements that the provincial loans were no subsidy to the working poor, they did allow a wide range of farmers and small businessmen to purchase land and invest in improvements that ultimately raised productivity. By offering below-market interest rates, and thus subsidizing capital formation, the Pennsylvania government facilitated the economic expansion and prosperity that so clearly distinguished the colony.\textsuperscript{202}

In the thirty-odd years during which the loan office was effective, Pennsylvanians closely associated it with popular Quaker leaders and the Quaker Party.\textsuperscript{203} When the assembly first broached the idea of a loan office, the proprietary family and its Pennsylvania voice, James Logan, strongly resisted it, correctly viewing the plan as inflationary. Eventually, Thomas Penn came around to the view that the loan office was a necessary evil, facilitating
the liquidity he needed in order to sell land and collect quitrents. In the public mind, however, he remained the enemy of paper currency.\textsuperscript{204} From the beginning, assemblymen were the chief sponsors of the loan office, and it was the popular politician David Lloyd who, in 1729, persuaded Governor Patrick Gordon to break his proprietary instructions against further emissions.\textsuperscript{205} Thereafter, the Quaker-dominated assembly spearheaded both the successful campaigns to increase and re-emit loan office funds in the 1730s and 1740s, and the ill-fated, prolonged effort to persuade Thomas Penn to agree to augment the currency in the late 1740s and early 1750s.\textsuperscript{206}

In the organization of the loan office, political sponsorship was just as clear. Under Andrew Hamilton's speakership of the assembly, Hamilton himself was also acting trustee of the loan office. John Kinsey followed in Hamilton's footsteps in both offices, and when Isaac Norris, Jr., became speaker, his brother Charles took over the loan office. The four additional trustees appointed to represent the three old counties and the southwestern backcountry were without exception close allies, who thus acquired the power to oversee property evaluations, to order the waiting list for mortgages, and to decide against which delinquent debtor legal proceedings might commence.\textsuperscript{207} There was no appeal from their recommendations, and clearly they made some enemies. One anonymous petitioner charged that the “station of a Trustee of the General Loan Office . . . [was] attended with such influence and power upon the persons and estates of the Inhabitants . . . and upon the votes in elections, that it . . . [was] highly unreasonable they should sit or act as Representatives in the General Assembly.”\textsuperscript{208} But complaints were few. By all accounts, the loan office was lenient and the wait for those in line worthwhile.\textsuperscript{209} Obviously, the trustees granted loans and administered their office with one eye on the politics of their decisions. But blatant patronage merely underlined what everyone knew, that Pennsylvania’s popular politics were Quaker politics.\textsuperscript{210} And the loan office symbolized one of the most admired characteristics of public-spirited Quakerism—an innovative, facilitative turn of mind, willing, within what we now recognize as conservative economic parameters, to enhance Pennsylvania's reputation as “the best poor man's country.”\textsuperscript{211}

While the bulk of contemporary comment attesting to Pennsylvania's attractiveness centered on the provincial constitution, liberty of conscience, and economic opportunity, other features of the Quaker colony were by no means overlooked. “Neither Soldier nor mercenary Bonds of any other Denomination burden or injure us,” wrote one individual. “The Natives . . . we have always livd peaceably with and they love us. We have none of those opulent powerful Men, which are in some Parts of the World, to oppress or enslave us.”\textsuperscript{212} Some chose to stress the ethereal side of the provincial heritage, “the hand of Brotherly Love, Forbearance and meek-
ness” that attended Quakerism. Others turned to the practical. Pennsylvania was free of “racking Rents for Lands, oppressive Taxes, Tythes, and Military Appointments.” Whatever their specific concern, and no matter how fragmentary, such statements enhance our understanding of the peculiar popular political ideology that distinguished the Quaker Party.

One of the values that contemporaries most frequently associated with colonial Pennsylvania was peacefulness. Quakers were committed to harmonious relationships among all human kind, and their North American experiment was intended to foster “mutual forbearance” and respect, tolerance, and charity. Whereas to be “Presbyterianized” was to demonstrate an “uncharitable temper” in public affairs, to be Quakerized was to be predominantly concerned with establishing amicable relations. It was the Quaker influence in Pennsylvania that was responsible for producing what William Livingston of New York identified as a quiet “medley of all kinds of People and of all denominations” in comparison with the dissonance of his own multicultural colony. While Friends’ desire for social harmony was implicit in their advocacy of religious tolerance, it found clearest expression in the principle of pacifism. Quakers were widely known to eschew warfare, and Pennsylvania was intended to be a peaceable country. Many non-Quaker immigrants welcomed such a policy; they, or their parents, had seen too much of warfare in the Old World. One indicator of how persuasive pacifist sympathies had become in Pennsylvania by the outbreak of the French and Indian War was the bellicose Governor Robert Hunter Morris’s recognition that he needed to play to that gallery. “I and the People of Pennsylvania,” Morris disingenuously proclaimed, “have been used to Peaceable principles.” By using this language, Morris was trying to identify himself with the many Pennsylvanians who yearned for a continuation of peace, and who felt aggrieved by their loss of blood in the province’s first real war. He hoped to bring round “soft” pacifists to support aggressive military policies.

But Quakers, too, recognized that the advent of war created a new situation. And new situations required a clarification of old standards. While the well-known Quaker reformers, with their formulation of a new strict pacifism and withdrawal from politics (although not from all political activity), frequently commanded the attention of outsiders, the majority of Friends believed they could retain their personal pacifism and still participate as citizens, local officials, and legislators in the war effort. At the local level, within the context of the community in which non-Quakers usually came to know their Quaker neighbors, there was plenty of evidence that pacifism did not always mean what its Philadelphia critics charged. Out on the frontier areas of southwestern Pennsylvania, there were Quakers who had been closely enough involved in the Pennsylvania-Maryland boundary
fracas to lay to rest any rumors that they would sacrifice their community to strict pacifism.\textsuperscript{220} And incidents during the French and Indian War and Pontiac’s Rebellion pointed out that the tradition of tough-minded frontier Quakerism continued on. The well-known Quaker Wright brothers, James and John, busied themselves procuring military transport;\textsuperscript{221} Thomas Minshall supported defensive measures; and the Warrington Monthly Meeting rebuked John Pope and John Blackburn for their aggressive response to Indian attacks.\textsuperscript{222} “Four leading Quakers,” among others, supported the recruitment of a local force of rangers after York County faced repeated attacks;\textsuperscript{223} in Northampton County, Friends were prepared “to be security for all [the arms] that should be loss or broke or stolen” in order to encourage their delivery.\textsuperscript{224} As practiced, Quaker pacifism was by no means a simple, one-dimensional faith. Rather, it was a predisposition that in wartime could accommodate a variety of actions contributing to community safety, provided, of course, they stopped considerably short of personal violence. Non-Quakers perceived those gestures of community commitment as meaningful in themselves, but also as symbols of goodwill that validated Friends’ claim to conscientious objector status.

Given their views on warfare, it is not surprising that most Pennsylvania Quakers were opposed to the establishment of a provincial militia prior to the French and Indian War. They believed that the governor, in his charter-sanctioned capacity of captain-general, could issue commissions and call out a voluntary militia if he wished.\textsuperscript{225} Governors Evans and Thomas both availed themselves of that option when warfare seemed to threaten the province.\textsuperscript{226} Another alternative was for citizens to take the initiative (as they did in Benjamin Franklin’s famous Association of 1747) and having organized themselves into military companies, place themselves under the command of the governor.\textsuperscript{227} Both of these options allowed the bellicose to organize and defend themselves without creating laws that might result in punitive action against pacifists.

Once the French and Indian War broke out, the reorganized Quaker Party was prepared to break with tradition, but only slightly. It would pass a militia law, provided there be no compulsory turnout, the men choose their own officers, and the elected officers write the articles of discipline.\textsuperscript{228} Outsiders viewed such a law as a “Joke on all military Affairs.”\textsuperscript{229} But to Pennsylvanians, the principles involved were a matter of conviction. The assembly would not relent even when the Crown repealed the province’s voluntary militia law in 1756. Thereafter, those Pennsylvanians who did fight in the French and Indian War did so largely as paid provincial enlistees, serving for short periods under officers whom the governor commissioned and subject to the discipline of the British Mutiny Act.\textsuperscript{230}

For Pennsylvania’s popular politicians, the issue of the militia certainly
touched on the problem of protecting pacifists. The passage of a militia law in the three Lower Counties that required all able-bodied men to enlist, provide arms and ammunition, and attend exercises under threat of fine, again demonstrated that persecution was never far off. But the Quaker Party leaders also understood that conflict over the organization of a militia was a quarrel over political power. In the highly polarized atmosphere of the day, the governor would appoint only his supporters as officers, and Quaker Party leaders feared that the militia would thus become an instrument of political change. Back in Governor Evans’s day, the voluntary militia had taken upon itself the right to intimidate electors, and that specter remained. In his polemic *A Brief State*, Provost William Smith set out a blueprint for a political revolution by proposing that militia patronage, indoctrination, and intimidation be used to build up a strong governor’s party, dedicated to increasing executive and proprietary power and establishing a mixed constitution. The only sure way to frustrate such a nefarious scheme was to keep the choice of militia officers in the hands of the troops. As Richard Peters observed, the principle of election was one that the Quaker Party would “never” give up.

Prejudice against any militia law that had a whiff of punitiveness or coercion about it ran far beyond Quaker circles. During the early 1740s, for example, German settlers were likely to see a militia in the context of both proprietary land policy and their European past. A governor controlled by a proprietary family might well use the militia to “eject . . . poor people out of their possessions,” or to force the many Pennsylvanian land claimants who were tardy in paying fees or purchase money to take out regular patents immediately. The militia itself might be exploited as a source of labor to build forts. Quaker Party supporters warned their fellow Germans that following the Proprietary Party would only “bring the same Slavery upon us, for which we fled from our Native Country.” When the French and Indian War crisis broke, Quaker Party leaders continued to play on these same fears. Benjamin Franklin was a master at this. He evoked images of old-world tyranny by accusing Thomas Penn of “reducing a free People to the abject State of Vassalage.” On reconsideration, Pennsylvanians would be worse off than that, for “Vassals must follow their Lords to the Wars . . . : our Lord Proprietary would send us out to fight for him.” Penn’s willingness “to stile himself absolute Proprietary” was indicative of his intentions. He wanted provincials “not only to defend . . . [proprietary] Lands, but to plough them: For this . . . [his] Lieutenant . . . [might] allege the Usage and Custom in Germany . . . [for by the mid 1750s the province was] chiefly [composed of] Germans.”

How much such skillful innuendo and rhetorical flourish affected public opinion is difficult to say. Isaac Norris, Jr., was already sure of German
sympathies in the spring of 1755, certain that they would “joyn . . . [with the Quaker Party] in dread of arbitrary Government.”241 That Norris knew his neighbors well, Governor Denny confirmed over two years later. “When I hastened . . . into the County of Berks,” he recounted, “to encourage the raising . . . [of a local defense force] I met with an unexpected Obstacle. The Country People . . . woud not serve under Provincial Officers . . . but insisted on chusing their own; . . . cry[ing] this up as a most valuable Privilege, and it is generally deemed so, and obstinately persisted in.”242 Like other Quakerized Pennsylvanians, church Germans as well as “soft” pacifists (such as Christopher Saur, Sr., had become in 1755) might accept a militia under the dread of Indian attack, but they would do so only under the terms of a noncoercive, elective militia law.243 Suspicion of standard defense organizations and those associated with the military continued throughout the war.244 Ultimately, Pennsylvania’s governors had to give up on a militia law and settle for defending the province with hired guns who sold their services for short periods of enlistment. Because these men would only serve under neighbors whom they knew and trusted, and who frequently shared many of the same popular political assumptions as their troops, the proprietary supporters’ hopes of establishing militia-based cadres for their party came to nothing.245 Even Conrad Weiser, a well-regarded military leader who supported the governor’s party, found it impossible to translate his military influence into electoral support.246

Although civil Quakerism gained its distinctive character largely from its few fundamental conceptions—the sanctity of the provincial constitution, liberty of conscience, provincial prosperity, a loosely defined pacifism, and no regular militia law—Quaker Party supporters frequently stressed other appealing ideas consistent with their main tenets. One of the most attractive of these was low taxes. Building on their view that a tithe-free society promised cheap government, popular Quakers quickly broadened their position to oppose public levies that were for the support of superfluous placemen. William Penn had originally promised to take care of the expenses of government, and some onus to do so remained on the proprietary family even after his death. As for the general populace’s contribution to public revenue, that should be as little and as painless as possible. In fact, until 1755, Pennsylvania had no provincial tax on wealth or property, a circumstance that lent credence to popular belief in the beneficence of Quaker leaders and in good prospects for prosperity under their care.247 After the French and Indian War broke out and taxes skyrocketed, the Quaker Party could no longer make such sweeping claims, but it compensated somewhat by stressing its commitment to equitable taxation. If Pennsylvania freeholders were going to pay unprecedented taxes, popular leaders would do their best to see that the proprietors did likewise.248
A related area in which Quaker and Quaker Party leaders took some interest was property rights. As we might expect of those who shared a strong belief in the sanctity of property, they were careful never to question the proprietor's right to purchase Indian land and to set land prices, quitrent rates, or settlement covenants. But they did take the view that community interest and individual property titles needed some protection from proprietary capriciousness. That conviction lay behind the assembly's willingness to pay compensation to the proprietary for accepting pre-1732 quitrents in Pennsylvania currency at a pegged rate. If the proprietors demanded sterling, the exchange rate would fall further, injuring all Pennsylvania consumers. It was that conviction, too, that prompted the Quaker Party to push for public access to the proprietary land office. Because the real property rights of all Pennsylvanians were dependent on the records of that office, it was intolerable that these documents were not open to scrutiny, and that the office could be opened or closed at the whim of its secretary.

Although these were quite specific Quaker Party policies, they reflect a larger dimension of civil Quakerism. This was the general tendency of Quaker leaders to try to put power that had obvious public implications under the control or oversight of popular representatives or institutions. The land office should be put in the hands of assembly appointees, individuals who would regard themselves as public, not private, trustees. The governor should never be given the power to preside over a chancery court. Governors were proprietary appointees, and many chancery cases would involve proprietary land claims. Such cases should, instead, go to the common law courts, where juries could represent the community's voice. Juries, however, were not enough in themselves. Magistrates could be petty tyrants in summary hearings, and they could overawe juries not of firm resolve. The assembly, then, should have the right to remove magistrates, for those who once broke "over the Verge and Confines of Law...[to] rove in the Field of Oppression...[were likely to] never stop." The important thing about these ideas was neither their individual distinctiveness nor their Whiggish cast, but that they complemented the general tenor of civil Quaker thought so well.

Civil Quakerism as a Political Idiom

The ideology of civil Quakerism, composed as it was of a deep appreciation of Pennsylvania's unique constitution, liberty of conscience, provincial prosperity, loosely defined pacifism, rejection of a militia, and resistance to the arbitrary powers of proprietors, was a compelling persuasion. It began with early Quakerism, gained clear expression in David Lloyd's creative
hands, and matured into an orthodoxy under the Quaker Party. And it won election after election for its most articulate spokespersons. Like all ideologies, it was subject to manipulation. Popular political leaders such as David Lloyd, Andrew Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin exploited the prejudices that belief entailed. But they were able to do so with such effectiveness because they, too, held some faith in the main tenets of civil Quakerism, or, at least, in their efficacy, and combined that faith with their political bent for pragmatic ways.

The powerful hold that civil Quakerism maintained over the majority of the Pennsylvania populace was in part explicable by the talents of popular leaders. It also owed something to the inherent difficulties of the proprietary position and the incompetence of proprietary leaders. But its greatest strength was its coherence. For Friends, the main tenets of civil Quakerism gave expression to two of their most important concerns—their Quaker identity and their autonomy. The former dictated the need for the latter; the latter allowed them to pursue the former. Civil Quakerism was the synergistic offspring.

A related process took place among non-Quakers. Take, for example, the case of Pennsylvania's numerous German population. Whether they were of sectarian or church leanings, Pennsylvania Germans centered their public discourse on liberty of conscience, freedom from taxation, the absence of coercion, and both the experience and expectation of prosperity—ideas that merged easily with the primary tenets of civil Quakerism. This conceptual congruence, along with a shared tolerance for shifting positions on pacifism, and a parallel emphasis among the large numbers of southern German immigrants and among Pennsylvania Quakers on the importance of the indwelling spirit and of domestic life, encouraged the Germans' appreciation of civil Quakerism, and, to the extent that cultural and linguistic barriers permitted it, their inclusion within that discourse. Provincial Germans were reflecting their acculturation to the dominant political norms as much as their own experiences when they praised Pennsylvania as a unique land, unsurpassed in its provision of privileges.253

Among Pennsylvanians generally, no matter their ethnic background, the logic of the "Quaker System" was in itself persuasive enough to bring many outsiders into a Quakerized political relationship with Friends. But that development was immeasurably strengthened by a simultaneous and interrelated process of socioreligious Quakerization. During the early eighteenth century, for example, James Logan reported that "the affirmation is looked upon by the generality of the people who are not of our persuasion to be as binding as an oath";254 by midcentury there were always a significant number of non-Quaker assemblymen who qualified by affirmation rather than by oath;255 and in the 1760s, Joseph Galloway testified that
those who scrupled to swear oaths included “Quakers, the Moravians, Menonists, Dumplers, and a great Number of the Irish and Dutch Presbyterians.” Just how far the outer limits of Quakerization extended can be seen in the case of the Pennsylvania Presbyterians, whose attitudes toward work and leisure were patently Quaker, and by the gentlemen “who call . . . [themselves] Quaker[s] but hath not the least appearance of one of that Stamp either in Garb, Conversation, or Behaviour.” Extensive acculturation to Quaker norms was evident in the complaints of clergy that their parishioners were indifferent to the sacraments of baptism and communion, in the case with which outsiders attended Quaker meetings, in the number of Friends who married non-Quakers, and in a host of instances of neighborly interchange. The persuasive power of the Quaker example was enormous, and the large numbers of Pennsylvanians who were “Friendly,” although not Friends, were the result.

A small episode in Andrew Hamilton’s career illustrates how pervasive and subtle the Quaker influence could be. In 1738, when Hamilton was once again nominated speaker of the House, he refused to disable himself—that is, go through a ritual disparagement of his abilities prior to the governor’s recognition of him in that capacity. “As that Piece of Modesty is [in] general look’d upon to be meerly formal, and far from Sincerity, he was not desirous to be censur’d, as saying that with his Mouth which was not agreeable to the Sentiments of his Heart.” Although he “fell very far short” of perfection, “his large Experience” inclined him to “thankfully accept . . . the Trust.”

In this vignette, the Anglican Hamilton put parliamentary precedent to the Quaker test of honesty and found tradition to be lacking. In so doing, he illustrated how acculturation to Quaker social norms could have important implications for political behavior. Overall, socioreligious Quakerization and political Quakerization were mutually supporting and facilitating. They worked together both to expand the perimeters and to increase the cohesion of the civil Quaker ideology.

The very pervasiveness of the ideology of civil Quakerism gave it enormous resilience during the mid to late colonial years. To its declared enemies, the supporters of the proprietorship and executive, its popularity frequently defied understanding. The complexity of the proprietary place-man Lynford Lardner’s attempt to explain Quaker political power illustrates how baffled some commentators felt. The Quakers kept their influence, Lardner opined, because “their yearly meetings, their economy, their industry, their unanimity—in short their riches, to say nothing of their craft and subtlety . . . [gave] them advantages.” “Their whole plan,” Lardner went on, finally glimpsing the true dimension of the problem, was “to keep clouded the minds of the common people, in other words the majority.”
Others, less prone to seeing the world in manipulative terms, might also on occasion glimpse the Proprietary Party’s difficulty in trying to weaken Quaker influence. The Quaker Party had the “ears” of the electorate and the “affections of the People.” By such an admission, Proprietary Party leaders were not only drawing attention to the way in which popular politicians cultivated the electorate, but also acknowledging how extensively Pennsylvanians had internalized the values that civil Quakerism entailed.

So compelling were the tenets of civil Quakerism that even when some groups had occasional doubts about specific Quaker Party policies, they continued to affirm their belief in Quakerized leadership. When a group of Philadelphia and Chester County petitioners requested the assembly to work out some adequate means of defense in the early stages of the French and Indian War, Speaker of the House Isaac Norris, Jr., put the hard question to them. Should the assembly “give up any Right[s], which, in the Opinion of the House, the People were justly entitled to? . . . No, they answered, [what] they wanted was that some Expedient might be fallen upon.” By the same token, many German settlers in the exposed areas of Lancaster and Berks counties agreed that it was sensible for them to pick up arms and push for more effective government action in the face of Indian warfare. But such actions implied neither a rejection of the “Quaker System” nor a repudiation of the notion that pacifist-tinged politicians served society well in normal times.

As the central ideas of civil Quakerism diffused through Pennsylvania society, they lost some of their sharpness and took on multiple meanings. But that characteristic became, in itself, a strength. Differences in understanding exactly what peaceable principles meant allowed Friends to muddle through the exclusion crisis, and gave their non-Quaker friends the opportunity to accommodate whatever differences they had with their neighbors. Similarly, some non-Quakers could write off the extreme solicitude of the “sober set” of Friends for the Indians as an aberration. Most Quakers were far less concerned about charity to natives than they were about maintaining traditional political rights and privileges. Perhaps the best indicator of the great strength of the civil Quaker ideology is to be found in the elections of 1764 and 1765. When Benjamin Franklin and his fellow Philadelphians appeared to turn their backs on the Pennsylvania constitution, the centerpiece of the “Quaker System,” numerous Quaker Party supporters briefly abandoned their leaders. If the price for defending Pennsylvania’s superior political system was continued proprietary government, the defectors would pay it. On the other hand, adherents of the Quaker Party saw themselves as reaffirming their faith in the special character of the Pennsylvania experiment through the new policy of seeking royal
government. Quaker and Proprietary party leaders were effective in mobilizing competing cadres of voters precisely because both appealed to beliefs shaped by civil Quakerism.\textsuperscript{265}

So powerful and pervasive was the ideology of civil Quakerism that it structured the language of political debate in Pennsylvania and gave the province its own idiom of political discourse. The best means of illustrating this development is explicitly to compare key passages in the language of civil Quakerism with those of the country, or classical republican, paradigm that reputedly molded eighteenth-century British-American colonial political language so powerfully in its own image.\textsuperscript{266} What emerges from such close comparison is a view rather different from the conventional one: while country thinkers focused mainly on promoting a mixed and balanced constitution, arguing over the legitimacy of a religious establishment, advocating a militia rather than a standing army, and asserting the corruption of the post–Glorious Revolution Anglo-American political system, Pennsylvanians had somewhat different priorities.\textsuperscript{267}

At the center of political discourse in Pennsylvania was the provincial constitution, a constitution that the colonists had strenuously built to guarantee themselves far more privileges than the British enjoyed. Far from advocating the mixed form of government, Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly rejected it. They dismissed the council, and treated the proprietary as a powerful private interest, even though the Penns represented one estate through their control of the governorship. In taking the view that only the democratic branch of government truly considered the public interest, Pennsylvanians turned their backs on the traditional categories of British constitutional thought and struck out on their own. They masked their temerity by continuing to talk about the British constitution, assembly rights, and occasionally about balance in government. But if we look closely at what they were saying, we can see that theirs was no traditional English political discourse. Most references to the British constitution were general, suggesting that it was a wonderful creation that provided important, but nonspecific, guidelines for the structuring of colonial government. Most of their attention went to rights, particularly assembly rights, but the important point here is that Pennsylvanians perceived the enjoyment of popular rights (far beyond those sanctioned by the British constitution) as the primary means by which they might attain social and political harmony. And, finally, the ways in which provincials used the term balance was determined by local context. When remarked upon in a positive way, the term meant something very different from what it did in Great Britain.\textsuperscript{268}

The most widely known distinguishing feature of the Pennsylvania constitution was its guarantee of liberty of conscience. Fulfillment of that promise had important implications for political discourse, because so many
old-world countries and their colonies still supported state churches. Complaints against tithes, indictments of state-church pretensions, and criticism of establishment worldliness were staples of eighteenth-century Anglo-American thought. Such writings served as a self-congratulatory reminder to Pennsylvanians of their province’s enlightenment, but they were of little relevance to local politics. What took their place was public discussion over what liberty of conscience meant in a society that was committed to such a goal. Answers to that question included some general reflections on the character of natural rights, but because the Pennsylvania sponsors of religious freedom were Friends, political exchange inevitably centered on the problem of pacifism. The apparent clash of Quaker values with what others frequently considered to be the duties of government was a recurring theme in public affairs. (To what extent should conscientious objectors be required to support the government in wartime? What right did Quakers have to prevent non-pacifists from enjoying governmental leadership in defending themselves?) As the moral equivalent of the church/state debate, it became a major component of the popular political idiom.

No issue demonstrates more clearly the distinctive nature of political thought in Pennsylvania than the disagreement over the colonial militia. In the majority of British North American colonies, residents seemed to accept that the maintenance of a well-ordered militia was a crucial underpinning of liberty, a canon of English country thought. Militias preserved rights, standing armies betrayed them. Yet most Pennsylvanians saw a regular militia as anything but a benefit; it was, in their view, a malevolent force, a threat to the province’s most cherished liberties. For pacifists, the very organization of a militia would transgress their religious rights; for both conscientious objectors and their non-pacifist political allies, an active militia was a specter of proprietary tyranny. What they hit on for defense (in place of the various unworkable voluntary militias) were local hirelings, enlistees whose services the province bought for relatively short periods of time, and who could be expected to disband once the assembly stopped their pay. There were also Pennsylvanians who clearly had no fear of a standing army and gave indications that they would welcome a permanent complement of British soldiers to keep the peace. In opting for these solutions to their military needs, and in vigorously rejecting a customary militia, Pennsylvanians broke free of English country thought and blazed their own trail through new-world thickets.

Finally, there was the issue of corruption. While it is true that colonial Pennsylvanians did on occasion use country language, which suggested that an expanding subculture of corruption was systematically poisoning British society and threatening to precipitate a cycle of decay in British liberty, attitudes and conditions were so different in Pennsylvania that such ideas
The financial revolution in Great Britain that encouraged luxury and venality among public figures had no counterpart in Pennsylvania. Popular politicians controlled the colony’s paper money and kept taxes low. Patronage appointments were few, and because the assembly filled a considerable portion of these, there was no clamor for the kind of place bills that British reformers constantly demanded. Nor was the English country cry for annual parliaments of any relevance in a colony with yearly provincial elections. While English radical-Whig writers viewed commerce with some reservations, Pennsylvanians were far less equivocal; they recognized commerce as their life’s blood and felt that a broadly shared prosperity was likely to enhance both public and private virtue. The pessimism of the radical-Whig ideologues was not at all appealing to those schooled in the optimistic universalism of Quaker theology, convinced that Pennsylvania’s material prospects were overwhelmingly favorable, and ebullient about the rights they enjoyed under the Pennsylvania constitution. When Pennsylvanians did show signs of what we today might call paranoia, it was directed at various denominations, not at some distant source of corruption. Granted, Thomas Penn was perceived as a potential tyrant, but the dangers he posed were much more comprehensible in the context of Pennsylvanians’ ongoing struggle with proprietary privilege than in that of a British culture being overcome by luxury and vice.

The point is, that far from mimicking any particular strand of Anglo-American thought, Pennsylvanians formed their own distinctive political dialect. Unquestionably, they drew on the country tradition. But their discourse reflected several other traditions as well. The most discernable of these was the seventeenth-century constitutionalist tradition, which, because of the institutionalized conflict between governor and assembly, periodically informed public debate. Others, to name the obvious, were the traditions of English common law, Lockean liberalism, work-ethnic Protestantism, and various strands of natural jurisprudential thought. Present, too, in somewhat more amorphous form was the court tradition of mainstream Whiggism. However precisely focused or diffuse these various strains of Anglo-American thought were, they all shared one thing in common in the Pennsylvania context: they were subordinate to, rather than determinative of, civil Quakerism. Pennsylvania’s distinctive political idiom drew on an English heritage, but that is only to say that Pennsylvanians shared a capacious conceptual and linguistic currency with all Anglo-American societies. What created a peculiar political idiom in Pennsylvania was the proprietary presence, the unique provincial constitution, and the continuous political leadership of Quaker and Quakerized politicians.

The fact that the idiom of civil Quakerism played such an important part in structuring political discourse in Pennsylvania had significant implica-
Understandings for the tenor of provincial politics. In comparison with New York, political debate in Pennsylvania was far more focused on the peculiar policies associated with civil Quakerism than on the "Cant-Words" of Anglo-American politics. For example, politicians made only minimal efforts to gain advantage from the court/country distinction; those categories fitted so poorly with the realities of Pennsylvania politics that by the mid to late colonial years, contemporaries were searching for alternatives, such as "friends of the People," "the Party of the People," or the "popular side," to supplement the standard Quaker Party nomenclature. This means neither that political argument was unfailingly principled nor that cant was absent. Provost William Smith, for example, would dress himself in whatever clothes came in handy, and cant phrases abounded in the polemical literature of the 1720s and 1760s. But despite the excesses of partisan writing, political debate had a fundamental shape, a basic integrity that came from the substantive questions at issue. Popular Quaker leaders had no need, and no desire, to represent themselves as heirs to any particular fashionable strand of British political thought. They were comfortable in their own Quaker traditions and thus forced their critics to differentiate themselves in the most disadvantageous way possible, through their opposition to the main tenets of civil Quakerism.

Moreover, the moral dimension of Quakerism reinforced this characteristic. As numerous commentators pointed out, Friends had their own "stile," particularly in the poorly recorded political world of personal meetings and community gatherings. Occasionally, we get a glimpse of this, in petitions, in remonstrances, or in a casual comment. It is clear that in politics, as in business and religion, Friends valued directness and honesty. The diffusion of this concern for public integrity among non-Quaker political allies was part of the larger process of "Quakerization," and it reinforced the tendency of spokespersons for civil Quakerism to focus their attention on issues that mattered the most to themselves and their peers. There was no honesty in looking east across the Atlantic for political euphemisms; the important questions could best be addressed in the context of Quaker belief and Pennsylvania tradition.

Continuing Quaker Dominance

During the last ten years of the colonial period, the Quaker Party leaders seemed to lose their unerring touch for popular politics. They ended up on the wrong side of the Stamp Act controversy; they had little sympathy with the hard-line non-importers who wanted to extend Philadelphia's embargo against the Townsend Duties beyond 1770; in the early 1770s they lost the
support of numerous Philadelphia mechanics, shopkeepers, and merchants who wanted a stronger patriotic response to Great Britain and more input into a political process from which they felt excluded; and they did little to build an effective interest in the fast-growing frontier areas of western Pennsylvania. Yet they remained in control of provincial politics. Those upper-class individuals who gained prominence as anti-British, “patriot” spokespersons could only gain an occasional perch in the assembly. Mechanics and lesser merchants from among Philadelphia’s street politicians met with even more sparing success. And longer-lived legislative critics of assembly speaker Joseph Galloway’s policies were among the most moderate of men.

The fundamental reason for the continuing power of the Old Party in the assembly and the moderate character of most successful opposition initiatives, both within the legislature and in the street politics of Philadelphia, was Pennsylvanians’ deep attachment to their constitution and the “Quaker System” of politics. Pennsylvania residents continued to be deeply appreciative of their province’s enviable reputation as a place blessed by more popular privileges than any other society; that gave the ideology of civil Quakerism a continuing vitality that the Quaker Party’s arteriosclerosis tended to obscure. Take, for example, the views of the two most prominent public figures in Pennsylvania during the late colonial years, John Dickinson and Joseph Galloway. Both were legal-minded traditionalists, whose well-known determination to perpetuate Britain’s connection with her colonies illustrates how severely each was enmeshed in the web of British constitutional thought. Yet their social and intellectual conservatism led them to defend Pennsylvania’s constitutional integrity despite its incongruence with British assumptions. Dickinson turned a blind eye to the standards of mixed government when he defended his province’s constitution as an exceptional repository of popular privileges. Many of the rights that he emphasized were at the heart of civil Quakerism. As for Joseph Galloway, he simply dismissed objections to his efforts both to strengthen assembly power and emasculate the proprietorship with the bland assurance that “considered as a Charter-Government,” Pennsylvania was “as near the mix’d Form, as Wisdom and Prudence could direct.” He might doff his hat to these fundamental assumptions of Anglo-American political thought, but his first allegiance was to Pennsylvania’s peculiar brand of constitutionalism.

Just as Pennsylvania’s distinctive popular political ideology lived on, so did the process of Quakerization. Back in the early 1740s, an anonymous German writer had defended Friends’ political influence by rhetorically demanding, “what hurt have we received of them? don’t they appear to be good and peaceable as Neighbours and made us partakers of such privileges as they enjoy themselves . . . both in Temporal and Religious Affairs.”
Overwhelmingly, non-Quakers answered the question in the affirmative; they continued to do so in the 1750s, when Isaac Norris, Jr., observed that Lancaster County always elected Quakers "tho' there . . . [were] scarcely one hundred of that profession in the whole county." And amid the stress of the mid 1760s, that pattern continued in a number of western areas. In fact, the Quaker Party had always recognized a need to speak to some backcountry concerns, even during times of conflict between east and west, and that tradition continued on some important issues. Which is not to say, however, that Quakerization overwhelmed the province the way it once had, for the social roots that sustained the process were gradually dying. As the Quaker reform movement gained strength, the most outward-looking, secular-minded Friends (poor Friends but good Quakerizers, as it were) were disowned, and the Society's leaders began to shepherd their flock into more enclosed pasture. More and more Pennsylvanians lived in areas remote from Quaker residents, and that prevented the kind of community interchange essential to Quakerization. In the Philadelphia area, attitudinal barriers that separated the Quaker elite from "the Yahoo Race" seemed to grow higher, a concomitant of wealth- and class-induced social isolation. Yet in the old rural areas, including Lancaster and Berks counties, traditional patterns of political behavior continued to have tremendous strength. Even in the hotbed of Philadelphia, the loyalty of many city mechanics to the Quaker Party through the early 1770s attested to the persistence of Quaker influence.

If the Quaker Party was slow to weaken in the 1760s and early 1770s, part of the reason was the character of its opponents. Despite its electoral success in the mid 1760s, the Proprietary Party refused to take further runs at the Assembly Party; subsequent to the 1765 election, the two began to develop a passively cooperative, if bickering, relationship. What facilitated that on the Proprietary Party's side was the moribund state of the campaign for royal government, the assembly's acceptance of a modus vivendi with the proprietors on the fundamental issue of taxation of proprietary land, and joint appropriation of governmental revenues. On the Quaker side, old antagonisms stemming from proprietary land policies in the eastern counties had died away, and supporters of the proprietorship were clearly willing to let Quaker Party loyalists have their way in electoral politics in the three old counties. The prevailing feeling among leaders of both old parties was that, given the uncertainties of the imperial relationship, they wanted to avoid public rivalries that might encourage significant political mobilization. Some Proprietary Party men had felt very uncomfortable in their mobbish opposition to the Stamp Act and were happy to support the efforts of Old Party leaders to restrain boisterous public protests against British policies. Many members of both established parties also looked askance at the grow-
ing numbers and vociferousness of Presbyterians. The old combatants felt more comfortable with each other than they did with what they viewed as the unpredictability of some of the current spokespersons for mid-Atlantic Calvinism. 299

Although historians sometimes assume that the Proprietary Party served as an important vehicle for the expression of the discontent of western Pennsylvania with the Quakers, there is little evidence of such a development. Far from supporting the proprietary interest, western settlers hated the Penns. All of the animosity stemming from proprietary quitrent policies, favoritism in land grants, and land office corruption and ineptitude, which had once emanated from eastern Pennsylvania and turned so many Quakers against William Penn, currently centered in the more recently settled western areas and soured frontier families on those with proprietary connections. The Scotch-Irish again and again demonstrated their abiding hostility to Penn claims and exactions. In the 1730s and 1740s, they fought for their homes in Paxton, Derry, and Donnegal against the land-purchase terms Thomas Penn demanded. In the 1750s it was the Scotch-Irish assessors of Cumberland County who stung the proprietors by overassessing Penn lands, thinking as Provost William Smith reported to Thomas Penn, that it was “justice to do him injustice.” 300 In the 1760s and early 1770s, those same Scotch-Irish left upper Lancaster and Cumberland counties to support Connecticut’s claims to the Wyoming Valley, and joined with Virginians in Redstone Valley on the Monongahela River and at Fort Pitt to resist the hated Penn terms for land. And the antipathy was mutual. Back in the 1750s, proprietary placemen were just as anxious to hive off recent immigrants into minimally represented new counties as their Quaker counterparts were. 301

The low esteem in which the governor’s friends held frontier settlers was reflected in their attitude toward western county assemblymen. As the Presbyterian minister John Elder lamented in soliciting the “best Offices with the Govr” through his old acquaintance Richard Peters, “It’s well-known that Representations from the back Inhabitants, have but little weight with the Gentlemen in power, they looking on us, either as incapable of forming just notions of things, or as bias’d by Selfish Views.” 302 The extent to which that attitude permeated the ranks of both Proprietary and Quaker parties and drew them together became clear in the 1760s, when members of both parties considered denying the fundamental English right of local trials to whites indicted for murdering Indians. Their perception of justice and concern for law and order overrode whatever sympathy either party had for western grievances. Rather than serve as point men for westerners’ attacks on the Old Party, many Proprietary Party men preferred to help the Quakers defend their mutually shared eastern redoubt. 303

As the Proprietary Party gradually drifted toward détente with the Quak-
ers, a few Old Party leaders began to comment on a new opponent, an amorphous entity they called the Presbyterian Party. Rather than a fundamental realignment in electoral politics, the appearance of this appellation reflected the state of mind of a few prominent Quakers and Anglicans. Presbyterians seemed on the ascendancy because of the increase in their numbers in backcountry areas, the steady stream of New Light ministerial graduates from the College of New Jersey (Princeton), the intercolonial cooperation of some Presbyterians and Congregationalists through the Sons of Liberty protests against the British, and talk of one great Calvinist union between mid-Atlantic Presbyterians and New England Congregationalists. Also, they were distrusted as the historic persecutors of Friends, as inveterate critics of Pennsylvania’s Quaker government, and as vicious opponents of recent Quaker Party policies.

Yet such concerns expressed fears of what might be, not of what was. Despite their numbers, Presbyterians were in political disarray. The western Scotch-Irish had only the most tenuous political links with easterners, and those became weaker once Chief Justice William Allen appeared to prefer his old proprietary connections to the interests of his fellow Presbyterians from across the Susquehanna. In all parts of Pennsylvania where sizable numbers of Presbyterians gathered, incessant religious squabbles precluded sustained political cooperation. In the outlying areas of the province, New Lights, Old Lights, seceders, and covenanters fragmented Scotch-Irish communities. In Philadelphia, where cooperation was essential for political success, the range, frequency, and duration of the conflicts between Old and New Light church members portrayed groups far more interested in being right than in being elected. As one interested party observed, “some denominations openly insult us as acting without plan or design, quarreling with one another, and seldom uniting together, even to promote the most salutary purposes.” Even among those who were politically minded, counsel differed. Some wanted to rail on against Friends, others were “so much more apprehensive” of Anglican efforts to acquire a bishop for North America and to promote the establishment of their church in all the colonies, that they were “fully determin’d to meet the Quaker’s half Way, shake Hands and be Friends.” Those who were of different mind contributed to the stigma Presbyterians needed to overcome if they were to broaden their political support—that they were too narrowly sectarian to merit trust in Pennsylvania’s multicultural society.

Divided as they were, and in some instances deeply distrusted, Pennsylvania’s Presbyterians were incapable of establishing their own political party. In Philadelphia, they composed several shards of an increasingly fragmented electorate; in old rural areas in which they resided in numbers, most continued to be either actively or passively Quakerized; out in the under-
represented reaches of Cumberland County, they simply represented, as best they could, their frontier interests. Despite the network of Presbyterian congregations that honeycombed much of Pennsylvania and seemed by its very presence to demonstrate the existence of a Presbyterian Party, nothing galvanized any faction of Presbyterians to make common cause with their counterparts in the electoral politics of the late 1760s and early 1770s.  

Although the continued vitality of civil Quakerism, the appeasement of the Proprietary Party, and the influence of Presbyterians are important in explaining the continuing nature of Quaker Party political power in the late colonial years, it is arguable that one feature of the Pennsylvania political system, the underrepresentation of the backcountry, was the critical variable that allowed the aforementioned factors to come into play. From the early 1750s on, backcountry champions occasionally raised the issue of the inequitable allocation of assembly seats, and of course, during Pontiac’s Rebellion, apologists for the Paxton Boys tried to make a cause célèbre of the issue. The question is a difficult one with which to deal because conclusions so clearly depend on the particular assumptions we make. Had all the counties been given the same eight assembly seats that each of the three old counties had, there is no question but that Pennsylvania’s post-1750 politics would have worn a different face. Ultimately, Quaker Party influence was determined by residency patterns, and aside from the existence of a few small pockets of influential Quakers in Lancaster, York, and Berks counties, western settlement took place beyond the Friends’ effective political perimeter. The sheer weight of western representation under such a scheme would have established new centers of western power.

Given prevailing attitudes, however, it would have been most unlikely (short of revolution) for contemporaries to make such a radical change. A more likely scenario would have been a partial reapportionment to reflect some changes in the geographic distribution of wealth and numbers. Had such reform taken place, strong centers of Quakerized politics like Philadelphia City and Philadelphia, Lancaster, and Berks counties, would have been the chief beneficiaries, along with the neglected Cumberland and Northampton counties. It is possible, of course, that such change would have differed little from those produced by more radical reapportionment. Perhaps the pressure of expanded representation in the city and county of Philadelphia and Lancaster County, in particular, might have exploded the Quaker system and unleashed powerful anti-Quaker, and possibly more egalitarian, political forces. But such a hypothesis substantially discounts the momentum of decades of Quakerization and the continuing influence of civil Quakerism. Such change would surely have created more political conflict, but it is unlikely that it would have brought the continuing power of the old Quaker coalition to a quick end.
Simply put, the Quakers remained so entrenched in power in the late colonial years because they continued to have the minds of the people. The Quaker system of politics and the ideology of civil Quakerism continued to have unrivaled persuasive power even in such uncertain times. For close to a century, Friends and their political allies had been the custodians of a social experiment designed around contemporary ideas of benevolence, liberty, and prosperity. Although self-serving, Friends’ characterization of Pennsylvania as a society uniquely favored among western countries was, for the most part, accepted as accurate. Convinced of their good fortune, and concerned about the changing tenor of private and public life in Pennsylvania, most politically active citizens would not easily or hastily turn their backs on the political leaders who had been the traditional defenders of their province’s rich heritage.