

RUSSELL SANDERS

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HISTORICAL PERSECUTION OF BELIEVERS

LESSON 19

QUAKERS – PART 3

As we saw yesterday, significant numbers of Quakers fled to the North American Colonies to escape persecution in England. This emigration began in the 1650's about 30 years after the Pilgrims had done the same. Unfortunately, the persecution followed them to America where they were treated even more harshly.

After three decades of American persecution, their welfare began to change with the arrival of devout Quaker William Penn from England in 1682. To settle an old family debt, King Charles II gave Penn ownership of a large tract of land in America. It became known as Pennsylvania (Penn's Woods) and covers present day Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Upon Penn's arrival, the Dutch and Swedish colonies already there pledged their allegiance to their new landlord, although they soon began to dislike the government he set up. That led to the formation of Delaware where they could set it up their way.

Penn was a strong advocate for a democratic form of government and for religious freedom. This brought about an era of tolerance for Quakers and relief from the severity of persecution. Although they were still viewed with skepticism, at least now they could worship freely.

The Quaker, William Penn, through his writings and books had a profound effect on the formation of the U.S. Constitution about a hundred years after his arrival in the New World. We owe a debt of gratitude to that most famous of Quakers who was also the founder of Philadelphia where the liberty bell resides and for a brief period was the capitol of the newly formed United States of America.

God bless America, and God bless the Quakers for what they endured to bring us to the freedoms we have today.