Prayer
Scripture:  I John 2:18-29
Hymn:  438 "Lord, Speak to Me"

The most hated, feared, and persecuted religious group during the colonial period in America was the Quakers. Within ten years of the beginning of George Fox's reformation in England (1647) Quaker missionaries appeared in America. Before the first Quaker missionaries arrived, reports of Quaker activities and doctrines had crossed the Atlantic and filled the established governments and churches with alarm. Fox had preached all over Great Britain his doctrine of the Inner Light of the Holy Spirit, calling for a return to the purity of primitive Christianity. His followers gathered to worship in silence until one of their number was led by the Spirit to speak. They were called Quakers because of their trembling before the presence of the Lord, and the shaking power of the Inner Light. The movement spread rapidly among those dissatisfied with all the turmoil and confusion produced by the Reformation. As the dissatisfied "Seekers" listened to the "happy finders" among the Quakers exalting the "Christ within" and calling for the purging of the dross and corruption from existing religion, they, too, experienced the Lord's word as a fire and hammer within their hearts. Although they were mostly people who were plain in dress, in speech, and in behavior, they became fiery and dauntless missionaries who considered themselves God's authentic spokesmen who should take His message of redemption to all the world. They quaked before God but they would not quake before any man or any earthly power. They invaded churches and interrupted sermons with their denunciations of false worship, a hireling clergy, and the folly of seeking God through cold, hollow forms. They might use such strange behavior as going naked through the streets as a "sign" to awaken and arouse the complacent.

Both political and religious authorities considered them more demon-possessed than Spirit-fed, and denounced them as instruments of Satan rather than agents of God. Persecution only increased their zeal and their numbers. They spread through England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland. They found Holland with its tolerance a fruitful mission field. By 1660 Amsterdam had become a missionary base for Quaker invasion of Germany and other parts of Europe. In 1657 a party of six Quakers (three men and three women) went to Turkey to preach to the Sultan and to Jerusalem to preach to the Jews. One of these, Mary Fisher, after delivering her message to the Sultan, returned to be an early Quaker missionary to Massachusetts. John Perrot and John Love boldly denounced the papacy in Rome before Pope Alexander VII and were hanged. Daniel Baker interrupted worship in a Catholic church in Gibraltar by rending his outer garment and stamping upon his hat as a symbol of disapproval of the mockery of true religion. In 1661 four Quakers set out for China with letters from George Fox to the King of Spain, the King of France, the Magistrates of Malta, to the Turks, to the Emperor of China, to Prester John (a legendary medieval Christian King of Asia), and to "all the nations under the whole heavens." The heroism of the early Quaker missionaries knew no bounds.

Some of the Quakers' most self-sacrificing and most fruitful mission work was in the Barbados. It was only natural that the next beckoning mission field was the English colonies in North America. The most active period of English colonization in America was also the time of the most ardent Quaker missionary work. In spite of the grim determination of the governing authorities to keep Quakers out of their territory, ten years before the founding of William Penn's
Quaker colony of Pennsylvania, there were Quaker settlements scattered from New Hampshire through South Carolina.

THE HEROIC PERIOD: THE PERIOD OF MARTYRDOM (1656-1670)

The first Quaker missionaries in North America arrived in Boston in 1656 on a ship from the Barbados. One was Mary Fisher, a young, unmarried lady of twenty-two, who had already preached before the Sultan in Turkey. The other was an elderly woman, Ann Austin, the mother of five children. They had already conducted a successful mission in the Barbados which had become a veritable hive of Quakerism. Before they arrived New England had been well warned against Quakers by a host of anti-Quaker pamphlets written by ministers of both England and New England. The New England Puritans believed that their church and government were divinely appointed and that they were God's chosen instruments to carry out his will. They considered Quakers a dangerous threat to the safety of both church and Commonwealth. They considered the doctrines of the Quakers to be the doctrines of the devil. Quakers considered themselves agents of the Lord to redeem a lost and erring world of fallen churches. Quakers advocated complete separation of Church and State with liberty of conscience and toleration of differences in doctrine. Puritans considered such tolerance a deadly sin.

When the lieutenant governor received word that there were Quakers on the ship, before they could land he sent orders for them to be kept on shipboard and that all their belongings should be searched. Later, in July, 1656, they were taken off the ship and imprisoned for five weeks. The windows of the jail were boarded up so they could not see or be seen. They were stripped and their bodies were examined for tokens of witchcraft. Their books were burned by the hangman in the market place. Finally the captain of the ship was compelled to return them to the Barbados.

On August 7, 1656, a ship from London arrived with eight more Quakers determined to publish their truth in New England. They were immediately imprisoned. After eleven weeks they were sent back to England on the same ship; the ship's captain had been put under bond to return them to England.

In 1656 the Massachusetts General Court hurriedly passed its first law against the Quakers. A fine of one hundred pounds was to be levied on any ship's captain who should bring a Quaker into the colony and any Quaker entering the borders of Massachusetts was to be arrested, whipped with twenty stripes and imprisoned until he was banished. Any ship owner bringing a Quaker into the colony was to be fined one hundred pounds. Anyone who opened his house to conceal a Quaker was to be fined forty shillings "for each hour of entertainment." While the law was being proclaimed in Boston, Nicholas Upshaw, a respected citizen, became the first convert to Quakerism in Massachusetts. He made a vigorous protest against the law; he was fined and banished. Quakers kept coming.

In 1657 the General Court increased the penalties. A banished Quaker who returned to Massachusetts was to have one ear cropped. If he returned a second time the other ear was to be cropped. If he returned a third time a hole was to be burned through his tongue with a red hot iron. For Quaker women the penalty was whipping for the first two offenses; upon a third offense her tongue was to be bored.

In spite of the penalties the Quakers continued to come. In 1858 the
General Court passed a third law decreeing the death penalty for Quakers who returned. At the time some fifteen Quakers were working in New England. William Brend and William Leddra were arrested while holding a meeting in the woods near Salem. They were carried to Boston for trial and condemned to be beaten. Brend, an elderly man, received one hundred-seventeen blows on his bare back with a tarred rope. In August 1658 John Rous, Christopher Holder, and John Copeland were arrested in Dedham. At their trial before Governor Endicott they were sentenced to have an ear cropped. In September 1658 three Quakers, William Robinson, Marmaduke Stevenson, and Mary Dyer, made themselves liable to the death penalty by returning to Boston after having been banished. They declared that they came "to bear testimony against the persecuting spirit." The General Court sentenced them to be hanged on October 27. While in prison awaiting their execution Robinson and Stevenson wrote

Oh ye Hypcrits! how can you sing and keep such noise concerning Religion, when your hands are full of blood, and your hearts full of Iniquity? Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings, cease to do Evil, learn to do Good, cleanse your hands you sinners, and your hearts you Hypcrits, for your Prayers are abomination to me, Saith the Lord; my Spirit is weary with hearing, and my Soul is vexed day after day with your abominations. Wo Wo to thee thou Bloody Town of Boston and the rest that are Confederate with thee....

They ascended the gallows walking hand in hand with Mary Dyer in the middle. The men were hanged but Mary Dyer was reprieved and sent out of the colony on a horse.

Charles Chauncy, in a sermon preached in Boston in 1658, attempted to justify the persecution of Quakers, "Suppose you should catch six wolves in a trap, and ye cannot prove that they kiled either sheep or lambs: and now you have them they will neither bark nor bite; yet they have the plain marks of wolves, and therefore ye knock them down."

John Norton, one of the chief defenders of Massachusetts orthodoxy, was asked by the Court to prepare a defense of the actions against the Quakers. He published The Heart of New England rent at the Blasphemies of the Present Generation (Cambridge, 1659). He accused the Quakers of borrowing the practices of the Anabaptists of Munster and warned that the same atrocities would be repeated in New England should the Quakers continue to multiply. His final warning was

It concerneth New England always to remember that originally they are a Plantation Religious not a Plantation of Trade. The profession of the purity of doctrine, worship and discipline, is written upon her forehead....All these (her temporal prosperity) notwithstanding, if she fall away from her profession, call her Ichabod, the Glory is departed....God forbid, that after New England hath now shined twenty years and more, like a light on a hill, it should at last go out in the snuff of Marcellianism (an extreme democratic theory of church government).

The General Court defended its action by stating that any man would protect his family by keeping out persons infested with the plague and other contagious diseases, if they should try to force their way into his private dwelling. It was the duty of the fathers of the Commonwealth to protect it from the moral contagion of Quaker teaching.
Mary Dyer returned to Boston in May 1660 to compel the repeal of "that wicked law against God's people." Standing on the ladder of the gallows with the rope around her neck she was given a chance to save her life by renouncing her faith but she replied, "Nay, I cannot." As her body swayed in the wind a spectator cried, "She hangs there as a flag." To Quakers she was "a sign and symbol of deathless loyalty" to the voice of God in her soul.

A fourth Quaker Martyr, William Leddra, a citizen of the Barbados, was hanged March 1661, after spending the winter in an unheated prison chained to a log. He was charged with sympathy for those who had been executed, with refusal to remove his hat, and with persistence in using "thee" and "thou". In prison he had written, "all the imprisonments, and banishments on pain of death, and the loud threatenings of a halter did no more affright me, through the strength and power of God, than if they had threatened to bind a spider's web to my finger."

New England officials scoffed when Quakers tried to claim the right to appeal to the English government for justice. In 1661, King Charles II was moved by a petition signed by a number of Quakers who had been banished from New England, giving details of the persecution. When the king read Bishop's New England Judged he remarked to his courtiers, "Lo, these are my good subjects of New England, but I will put a stop to them." Edward Burroughs, a leading London Quaker, in a personal interview with the king pled, "There is a vein of innocent blood opened in thy dominions which will run over all if it is not stopped." The king replied, "But I will stop that vein." Burroughs urged, "Then stop it speedily." The king called his secretary and dictated the order that all Quakers condemned and imprisoned in Massachusetts were to be sent to England for trial. He gave Burroughs the privilege of selecting the messenger to carry the order to Governor Endicott. Burroughs chose Samuel Shattuck, a Salem Quaker who had been banished on pain of death. The royal interference in the affairs of the colony and receiving the King's order at the hands of a banished Quaker were a bitter pill for the governor. The order did not immediately end all the persecution, but a reaction set in. In 1661, the General Court, under pressure from Charles II and English public sentiment, repealed the law demanding capital punishment for Quakers. The law for whipping Quakers was back on the statutes in 1662. In 1665, the year Governor Endicott died, a law was passed permitting Quakers to go about their secular business without molestation. In 1675 there was still a law that provided fines for any persons apprehended at a Quaker meeting. The Quakers' opponents were losing their zeal for enforcing laws of persecution. Quakers were becoming more irenic in disposition and tended to obey the laws except for refusing to join the militia and paying taxes for ministerial support. By 1677 the persecution of Quakers in New England had almost completely ended.

Ironically, in spite of all the persecution, the first Monthly Meetings of the Quakers in America were those in Sandwich and Scituate in Massachusetts, both established before 1660. Also the first New England Yearly Meeting in America was established in 1661.

The colonies of Connecticut and New Haven boasted that they were happily free of "sectaries." To make sure that they kept their lands pure they enacted laws almost as severe as those of Massachusetts but they were never as vigorously enforced. In 1656 they passed harsh measures against "any Quakers, Ranters, Adamites, or such notorious heretics" who might, misguidedly, seek a heaven in those colonies. Faced with such a hostile atmosphere in the Connecticut colonies the Quakers turned their attention to Rhode Island and to
Long Island, New Jersey and the colonies to the South.

Quakers found complete religious freedom in Rhode Island. As news of the freedom and tolerance in Rhode Island spread, Quakers flocked to Rhode Island and soon several successful meetings had been formed and capable and aggressive leaders developed. The followers of Anne Hutchinson proved receptive to Quaker teaching. William Coddington, Joshua Coggeshall, Nicholas and John Easton accepted the Quaker faith when they heard it proclaimed. In 1657 the Commissioners of the United Colonies (Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Haven) sent a protest to Rhode Island warning against the spread of the contagion of the Quaker pest. Benedict Arnold, President of the Rhode Island colony replied:

And as to the damage that may in likelihood accrue to the neighbor colonys by theere being here entertained, we conceive it will not prove so dangerous as the course taken by you to send them away out of the country as they come among you.

The General Assembly of Rhode Island in March 1657 sent a letter to Governor Endicott to be forwarded to the Commissioners of the United Colonies, calling attention to the fact that Rhode Island was founded on the principle of "freedom of different consciences" and adding "which freedom we still prize as the greatest hapines that men can posses in this world."

Rhode Island served as a base for the continuing Quaker assault on Massachusetts and as a haven for those expelled. Quakers soon became the majority and ruling party in Rhode Island.

The Quakers came to New Amsterdam and Long Island about the same time they entered Massachusetts. The first Quaker missionaries arrived in New Amsterdam in 1657. They found exiles from New England who had settled on Long Island receptive. Among the ex-New Englanders was Lady Deborah Moody who had been inclined to Baptist and Seeker opinions. She and her sympathizers were among the early Quaker converts. Anne Hutchinson and some of her followers moved to Long Island. Even Roger Williams spent some time on Long Island.

Hearing of the spread of the Quakers in New Netherland the Massachusetts authorities urged Governor Stuyvesant to check the movement. Governor Stuyvesant revived the old law against conventicles and attempted to expell all Quakers. Two Quaker women were arrested and imprisoned for preaching on the streets. A number of Quakers were arrested and deported to Rhode Island. He issued a proclamation imposing a fine of fifty pounds on any one entertaining a Quaker and the confiscation of any ship bringing Quakers into the colony. Thirty-one English residents of Flushing, including the town clerk and sheriff, signed a petition protesting the governor's actions against the Quakers. The English quoted Bible that one should do good to all men and should not offend any of God's children. They declared that they would shelter Quakers as God should persuade their consciences. The governor responded by taking away the right of the town to hold town meetings. The Quakers continued to multiply and formed a Quaker meeting in the town.

Governor Stuyvesant arrested John Browne, a leader of the Quakers on Long Island, and fined him twenty-five pounds for permitting his house to be used for a Quaker meeting in violation of the conventicle law. Browne refused to pay the fine and was deported to Amsterdam. He appealed to the Directors
of the Dutch West India Company. The liberty-loving Dutch cleared Browne of the charges against him and sent him back to New Amsterdam where he continued as a Quaker. The Dutch India Company sent a letter to Governor Stuyvesant ordering a policy of religious toleration, citing the long established Dutch policy of allowing freedom of conscience and asylum to the persecuted.

The number of the Quakers continued to increase from the migration of those persecuted in other places and by their ability to convert those in revolt against other forms of religion, especially from the established churches. By the opening of the eighteenth century there were at least seven Quaker meetings in New York, four on Long Island, two on the mainland, and one on Shelter Island.

In 1656, the year the first Quakers landed in Boston, Elizabeth Harris, a Quaker from London, arrived in Virginia. During a one year stay she made many converts in Virginia and Maryland. In 1657 Josiah Cole and Thomas Thurston were so successful in making converts in Virginia that the Virginia legislature in 1658 ordered the banishment of all Quakers from Virginia. The law entitled "An Act for Suppressing Quakers," provided that all Quakers in the colony should be arrested, imprisoned, and sent out of the colony; should they return they would be treated as felons. The law provided for a fine of one hundred pounds for any one entertaining Quakers or for permitting Quaker assemblies in or near his house. Governor Berkeley declared that the "pestilential sect" deserved whatever fines, floggings or incarcerations he could impose. In spite of the vigorous enforcement of the law the Quakers multiplied in Virginia. In Maryland Quakers found good soil for their teaching. Some troubles arose over the refusal of Quakers to take oaths and a few Quaker preachers were whipped out of the Province. Compared to the other colonies the Quakers found Maryland a tolerant and peaceful field for work and they grew.

The Quakers had North Carolina almost to themselves until the end of the seventeenth century. In both North and South Carolina when the Anglicans tried to establish places of worship and to mark off parishes they found the Quakers firmly established. They had developed considerable organization by 1676. For the next quarter of a century they were the only organized religious body in the Carolinas. George Fox advised the Quakers of North and South Carolina to join in a Yearly Meeting. In North Carolina Quarterly Meetings had begun by 1689. In 1700 a zealous Anglican, Henderson Walker, became deputy governor in North Carolina and attempted to make the Church of England the established religion. He found Quakers and other dissenters formed the majority in the Assembly and able to block his moves to lay out parishes. In 1703 he wrote the Lord Bishop of London urging that he send good men to stop the growth of the pernicious Quakers. In 1704 he renewed the attempt to establish the Church of England and in 1705 he tried to apply England's Test Act but he met open revolt. In 1708 the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel complained that the Quakers had the sole management of the country in their hands. Quakers and Presbyterians were making so many proselytes it was impossible to keep their people from being seduced. A generation later the governor of North Carolina noted that Quakers had continued to grow and the worst thing was that the Quakers had become respectable.

GEORGE FOX IN AMERICA: THE SPREAD OF QUAKERISM

As the persecution ended a new period opened for Quakerism. It was marked by the coming to America of some of the ablest Quaker missionaries of Great
Britain. The most influential was the founder of the Quakers, George Fox. Preceding Fox's visit and in a large measure preparing the way for him was the visit of John Burnyeat. Burnyeat made his first visit to America in 1664, spending three very fruitful years promoting the Quaker cause. George Fox with twelve Quaker companions left England for America on June 6, 1671. One of the companions was William Edmundson, one of the most forceful of the Quaker missionaries. He would make two more very fruitful visits, one in 1675-77 and one in 1683. Fox and his company landed in the Barbados on August 3, 1671 where he met a good reception and greatly encouraged the work. He went on to Jamaica where he spent three very busy and successful months. He arrived in Maryland on March 3, 1672. By the thirtieth of March he had reached Rhode Island, busily visiting Quaker meetings on the journey. He spent two busy and exciting months in that Quaker haven. He then turned southward, visiting Long Island and the Quaker communities in New Jersey. He visited the Quakers in Maryland. He spent the autumn of 1672 in Virginia and the Carolinas and then returned to Maryland, sailing for England on March 21, 1673. In his Journal Fox gave an exciting account of his most successful and fruitful journey. He won many converts and greatly encouraged and strengthened the Quakers. Everywhere he gave careful attention to perfecting and strengthening the Quaker organization into Monthly, Quarterly and Annual Meetings.

On his arrival in Maryland Fox attended a Great General Meeting called by John Burnyeat. It was attended by "many people of considerable quality," including five or six Justices of the Peace, the Speaker of the Assembly, and others of note. Fox and Burnyeat took part in many "large and heavenly" meetings all along the Eastern coast. Everywhere Fox's audiences included important people that set the mark of respectability on the Quakers. In Rhode Island, the climax of his American visit, multitudes from all over New England came to hear him. He was entertained by Nicholas Easton, the Quaker Governor, who travelled extensively with him. Where ever he went Fox established new meetings.

Fox's great success and popularity greatly aroused the wrath of Roger Williams—of all types of religious expression Williams disliked the Quakers the most. Williams was seventy years of age. He could not stand the Quaker enthusiasm and conceit and confidence in their rightness. He tried several times to speak in Fox's meetings but each time he was headed off—once by the sudden praying of the governor's wife. Finally he drew up fourteen propositions on the errors of Quakerism and sent them to Fox, challenging him to a debate. Fox failed to receive the propositions and the challenge. When he did not receive a reply from Fox he concluded that the Quaker feared to meet him and he declared "The old Fox thought it best to run for it, and leave the work to his Journeymen and chaplains....George Fox hath pluckt in his Horns."

Fox had already left the colony before news of the challenge reached him. A debate was finally arranged with seven propositions to be discussed at Newport and the remaining seven at Providence. William Edmundson, backed by John Stubbs and John Burnyeat, upheld the Quaker position against Williams. Immense crowds attended the debate that was conducted on both sides with scant courtesy and much mutual vilification. Both sides claimed victory. After the debate Williams described Edmundson,

A stout portly man of great voice, who would often vapour and preach long, and when I patiently waited till the gust was over, and began to speak, he would stop my mouth with a very unhansome
shout of a previous interruption...a pragmatical and insulting soul....
A flash of wit, a face of brass, and a tongue set on fire from hell of Lyes and Fury.

Edmundson said of Williams,
the bitter old man could make nothing out, but on the contrary they were turned back upon himself: he was baffled and the People saw his weakness, folloy and envy....There were many prejudic'd Baptists would fain have helped the old priest against the Friends; but they durst not undertake the Charge against us for they saw it was weak and false.

The debate was proof that Rhode Island was living up to its founding principles of religious freedom. Both sides practiced freedom of conscience and freedom of speech.

Following the debate Williams published his George Fox Digg'd out of His Burrowes or an offer of a Disputation on fourteen proposals made this Summer 1672 (so called) unto G. Fox then present in Rhode Island in New England by R. W., Boston: 1676.

Two years later George Fox and John Burnyeat answered with their A New England Fire-Brand quenched, Being Something in Answer unto a Lying, Slanderous Book, Entitled George Fox Digged out of his Burrowes, etc. Printed at Boston in the year 1676 of one Roger Williams. . .Where his proposals are turn'd upon his own Head, and there and here he was and is sufficiently confuted, etc. London: 1678.

Fox visited many Quaker homes and took part in many meetings on Long Island and in New Jersey. In both he established a number of new meetings. Preaching in Virginia he was able to double the number of Quakers there. His most constructive work was in the Southern colonies. Edmundson had preceded him and prepared the way for a warm reception. In North Carolina he was lovingly received by the Governor and his wife. Fox met his largest response in Maryland. A Great General Meeting for all Maryland held on the Eastern Shore in October, 1672, lasted for five days. It was attended by the largest group of people that had ever gathered in Maryland. Fox described it as a "very heavenly meeting" and declared that "Friends were sweetly refreshed... and Justices and other persons of quality" were convinced.

After Fox's visit many other noted and able Quakers travelled through the colonies as missionaries. Thomas Chalkley, one of the most effective, came from London to Philadelphia in 1701 and stayed for forty years ranging from Maine to South Carolina. Another who had a large share in the growth of Quakerism was Thomas Story. He had worked in England and Scotland before coming to America in 1698. From 1700 to 1705 he served with William Penn in Pennsylvania as a member of the Provincial Council. He left voluminous Journal records. Between 1684 and 1763 some one hundred eleven Quaker Ministers from England and Ireland visited the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Best known of these travelling Friends was John Woolman whose Journal has become a famous classic of Christian Devotions.