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# Review Of "The Transformation Of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friendsy 1800-1907" By T. D. Hamm

J. William Frost  
*Swarthmore College*

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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907* by Thomas D. Hamm

Review by: J. William Frost

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McPherson describes ably), Stowe's book provides a feminist critique of a society corrupted by an industrializing nation controlled by male values.

All these questions derive from a professional perspective which emphasizes the power of social, cultural, and institutional contexts to shape human choices. But McPherson knowingly chose the other path, emphasizing humans shaping their world. The result is a superb traditional retelling of the nation's most important public experience. Historians interested in alternative stories can set their contributions alongside McPherson's and be assured that they are in the best of company.

*University of Kansas*

PHILLIP S. PALUDAN

*The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907.* By THOMAS D. HAMM. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988. xvii, 261p. Appendixes, bibliography, index. \$25.00.)

Easterners often assume that all nineteenth-century American Quakers followed the pattern of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. In actuality, two thirds of American Friends—almost all of those west of the Alleghenies—between 1860 and 1900 repudiated most of what Philadelphia Quakers had long defined as correct faith and practice. A midwestern Friend by 1900 attended revivals, cared little about the Inner Light, went to church (not a meeting) to hear a sermon and sing hymns, paid money for a minister, and ignored Quaker traditions of pacifism, plain style of dress, and speech. The two most prominent twentieth-century Friends—Herbert Hoover and Richard Nixon—came out of a Quakerism that owed more to evangelicalism and holiness than to George Fox and William Penn. The complex and confusing story of the transformation of mid- and far western Quakerism has for the first time been clearly delineated in Thomas Hamm's prize-winning book.

The Hicksite-Orthodox split in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1827 ended with all American Quakers divided into two camps. The Hicksites had overwhelming numerical domination in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Maryland. Elsewhere the Orthodox prevailed, and Hamm's book concentrates upon their innovations. After 1827, the Orthodox composed two factions; both agreed upon the primacy of scripture, the atonement, virgin birth, and the necessity of religious experience. Quietists (later termed Wilburites or Conservatives) opposed the evangelical emphasis on higher education, Sunday schools, and cooperation with other denominations in benevolent activities. Their religion centered in a disciplined quest for

holiness obtained gradually through silent waiting on the Lord. The evangelicals (later termed Gurneyites) wanted to revitalize what they saw as the dead traditionalism of many Friends. The result was a series of separations in New England, Ohio, and Indiana before 1850 and in Iowa and Kansas in the 1870s. Gurneyites and Conservatives remained together in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Orthodox, but the price of unity was isolation and loss of influence on western Friends—though individual Friends and Haverford College still had an impact.

Friends' desire to end slavery prompted many to fight in the Civil War, thereby weakening pacifism and undermining the traditional disciplinary system. A small elite among Gurneyite Friends attempted to revitalize the Orthodox by founding schools and Sunday schools, promoting Bible study, ending disownment for marriage to a non-Quaker, and stressing a conversion experience. But silent meetings proved less efficient in converting people than revivals. Traveling Quaker ministers began soliciting testimonies and holding protracted meetings. The number of converts (including birthright Friends and outsiders) showed the value of revivals, and new techniques swept midwestern Quaker meetings in the 1870s and 1880s.

The holiness movement provided a theology for post-1860 revivalism. Holiness emphases came to Friends from the Methodists and the Oberlin theology of Charles Finney. Holiness advocates insisted that in addition to conversion there was a second act of grace which brought sanctification. The fruits of sanctification appeared in a holy life—no dancing, card playing, novel reading, attending theater. Holiness preachers distrusted denominational differences and opposed modernism. After 1890 many holiness advocates became fundamentalists.

The revival and holiness seemed to many midwestern Quakers—their leader was David Updegraff—to be commanded in the Bible. Revivals needed revivalists, and these preachers brought a new conception of the role of means of grace: set prayers, sermons, hymns, salaried ministers. Within twenty years the Gurneyite Friends repudiated silent meetings, the traditional Quaker attitudes toward paid ministers, the gradual process of religious growth, and virtually all Quaker traditions. Only when midwestern holiness Friends began practicing baptism did evangelical Friends in England and elsewhere draw back. The holiness Friends came to dominate yearly meetings in Ohio, Iowa, Kansas, Oregon, and California. Evangelical Friends who accepted the pastoral system but not holiness or sacraments prevailed in New England, Indiana, and North Carolina. Orthodox Friends in Great Britain, Philadelphia, Maryland, and New York continued unprogrammed or silent meetings and never espoused either the revival or holiness emphases. Instead, after 1900 they accepted liberalism or modernism and modified evangelicalism.

Quakers today are so numerically insignificant that the arcane details of each faction are of little general interest. Hamm's book is important because he shows the strengths and weaknesses of a variety of conceptual schemas in understanding religious history. Friends' responses to four major developments among Protestants—evangelicalism, revivals, holiness, and liberalism—were conditioned by intellectual presuppositions, class differences, economic transformation, Quaker traditions, and the general cultural milieu. The Quakers adjusted differently than Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists, yet these denominations also fragmented between 1820 and 1880. The history of nineteenth-century Friends is one of division; the twentieth century saw all Quaker bodies joining in attempts to reaffirm a common tradition. Hamm's theological sophistication, knowledge of general historical trends, exhaustive research, and clear writing have resulted in a superb book.

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J. WILLIAM FROST

*The Limits of Sisterhood: The Beecher Sisters on Women's Rights and Woman's Sphere.* Edited by JEANNE BOYDSTON, MARY KELLEY, and ANNE MARGOLIS. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988. xxiv, 369p. Chronology, illustrations, index. Cloth, \$32.00; paper, \$12.95.)

In the mid- and late nineteenth century, Anglo-American Victorians read—and wrote—a prodigious number of “life and letter” biographies. Combining commentary with lengthy extracts, such biographies aimed to give the life in the subject's own words.

In *The Limits of Sisterhood*, Jeanne Boydston, Mary Kelley, and Anne Margolis offer a volume reminiscent of the nineteenth century's beloved form, but now containing critical commentary often missing from their predecessors. Rigorously limiting their selection, the editors have chosen documents that illustrate two central and intertwining themes—women's rights and woman's sphere—in the lives of Catharine Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Isabella Beecher Hooker. Their choice of correspondence, journal entries, and extracts from published work, unified by commentary and headnotes, constitutes a major contribution to American women's studies, culture studies, and social history.

Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe have received considerable attention from scholars and the reading public, whereas Isabella Beecher Hooker, say the editors, has been unjustly ignored, overshadowed by her