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## Review Of "Quakers And Baptists In Colonial Massachusetts" By C. G. Pestana

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Review

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AN AMERICAN FAMILY MOVES WEST, *which includes the story of several families that came to New England in the Great Migration of the 1630s.*

*Quakers and Baptists in Colonial Massachusetts.* By Carla Gardina Pestana. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1991. Pp. xii, 197. \$44.50.)

Having approached this book with some dread, believing that excellent studies of both Quakers and Baptists in Puritan New England are already available, I concluded that Pestana has uncovered a substantial amount of significant new information. Still, her findings have less relevance for denominational historians than for those whose universe centers on Boston and its vicinity. Pestana has concentrated upon two congregations: the Baptist Church in Boston and Salem Monthly Meeting of Friends (with meetings for worship in Salem, Lynn, and Boston) from their origins until the American Revolution. She has ignored any Baptists or Quakers in Plymouth Colony (before and after its absorption into the Bay Colony), in Maine, or in western Massachusetts. There are also no meaningful comparisons with other Quakers and Baptists in Rhode Island, the Middle Colonies, and England.

Pestana's accomplishment in creating a history of two alternatives to Puritanism is noteworthy because source materials are quite limited. For example, the women's meeting minutes from Salem have not survived, there are gaps in both Baptist and Quaker records, and there is less information provided in the surviving Salem minutes than in other Quaker archives. She compensated for these lacunae by doing extensive research on individuals using town and colony records, tax lists, wills, and genealogies. The result is a provocative local history.

Pestana insists that the usual focus on the Bay Colony's progress to religious liberty distorts the internal dynamics of the two religious communities as well as their relationship to the Puritans. Those who became Quakers rejected the entire pattern of New England society, unlike the Baptists, who disagreed mainly upon a single, difficult issue of theology and church practice, the baptism of infants. The different stances of the two churches resulted in the Puritans opposing the Baptists and despising Quakers. Unlike earlier historians, Pestana argues that there was no reaction

against the execution of Quakers, and persecution of Friends remained popular. Friends began with a frontal assault on the Puritan religious and political system and remained an alien community. Quakers continued to denounce; the Baptists humbly petitioned for toleration.

With a few families constituting one third of the membership, Salem Monthly Meeting early became almost tribal. Quakers fused religion and clan, so by the eighteenth century virtually everybody in the meeting was related. In contrast, Baptist converts left Puritanism as individuals. While prominent families eventually emerged in the Boston Church, the Baptists never became tribal. Patterns of accommodation between Baptists and Puritans soon evolved out of the actions of both parties. A few Baptists sent their children to Harvard, the church came to rely upon an educated ministry, and the basic theological orientation of the Baptists changed in a fashion similar to the Congregationalists'. The Boston Baptist Church even opposed the Great Awakening. Throughout the colonial period Salem Friends maintained a distinctive culture: denouncing an educated ministry, ignoring the Great Awakening, opposing Calvinism, allowing women to preach, and creating an egalitarian pattern of operating the meeting. After 1720 an equilibrium developed in which the Puritans learned to accept religious diversity, but they continued to treat the two groups differently. Baptists could be educated to the truth, but Quakers were best ignored. The primary value of the book is in demonstrating how the religious differences between two sects influenced their life in New England.

Unfortunately, Pestana's presentation of theology is inadequate. She oversimplifies early Quakers' views on eschatology, the Bible, primitive Christianity, and the Inward Light of Christ. She wrongly argues that Quakers allowed the "inner light"—a term never used before 1800—to "supersede" Scripture, a charge often made by Puritans and always denied by Friends. A most significant change in Salem Meeting came when many of the original radical Friends of the 1650s were disowned after 1680. Pestana asserts that the first converts sought to preserve the freedom of early Quakerism against George Fox's 1672 imposition of monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings. It is equally likely that the Salem converts had also changed, becoming partisans of either John Perrot or Wilkinson-Story. Pestana should have demonstrated why Rhode Island Friends, who converted to Quakerism as early as

the Salem members, accepted the pattern advocated by Fox with virtually no dissent. I was disappointed that the book neglected Thomas Maule. Maule was the only original thinker Salem Meeting produced during the entire colonial period. He certainly was cantankerous and out of unity with Friends, yet his thought and role might illustrate that because of their early history and continuing subjection to harassment, Salem Friends, like the Boston Baptists, remained a deviant branch of their denomination. Even though it has many praiseworthy qualities, Pestana's book will appeal only to those whose primary interest is a microscopic examination of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

J. William Frost, *Jenkins Professor of Quaker History and Research at Swarthmore College*, is author of *A PERFECT FREEDOM: RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN PENNSYLVANIA* and co-author of *THE QUAKERS*, both soon to be issued in paperback editions.

*Eugene O'Neill's Creative Struggle: The Decisive Decade, 1924-1933*. By Doris Alexander. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press. 1992. Pp. ix, 339. \$29.95.)

Doris Alexander is well known to students of O'Neill as the author of *The Tempering of Eugene O'Neill* (1962), still a standard work for the study of the playwright. In her new book, Alexander attempts to formulate an original approach to the study of an author and his work, a combination of biographical criticism and "source study" that synthesizes the meticulous research of the biographer with the imaginative erudition of a study like *The Road to Xanadu*. Her goal is no less than to map the process of O'Neill's artistic creation. Beginning with the "source," which Alexander identifies variously as a person or event familiar to O'Neill, his recollection of a work of literature, or "his use of a directive idea from his intellectual ambient," she asks, "Why did exactly this configuration of sources come together at the borderline of consciousness to shape characters, plot, conflict, events? How did they work toward and reach the dramatic resolution of the life experience in each play?" (p. 1).

Alexander gives a separate chapter to each of the nine plays O'Neill wrote during the difficult period between 1924 and 1933: