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# When History Substitutes for Theology: The Impact of Quaker Scholars' Religious Affiliations on the Study of Nineteenth Century American Quakerism

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**Abstract:** This article argues that histories of 19th century Quakerism are often veiled interdenominational theological arguments among Quakers. It looks at the historiography of the Hicksite Separation and the emergence of the pastoral system to suggest that the branch of Quakerism from which the author originates often plays a critical role in how they narrate history. The article suggests that objectivity is not an achievable or desirable aim for Quaker Studies or Quaker history, but that engagement with the broader currents of scholarship and clarifying theological presumptions for non-Quaker audiences are important to maintaining an academically legitimate discipline.

**Keywords:** historiography; Quaker history; Hicksite; holiness; transformation; Quaker Studies

## 1. Introduction

Most American denominations are led by clergy and theologians. However, for the last century, Quakers have also been directed by scholars and academics. Thanks to a large network of prestigious Quaker secondary schools and colleges, in the first few decades of the 20th century, Quakers were able to educate their young people to assume positions of influence within the academy and in their faith. Modernist Quaker leaders especially came out of this milieu, and many of these leaders taught in Quaker colleges. The influence of trained clergy in the denomination was minimal, and the power of Yearly Meeting clerks was in decline by the late 19th century, so the surest route to influence in the Religious Society of Friends was to become a professor in the humanities or social sciences. Many of the most visible leaders were at Quaker colleges: Haverford College philosophy professor Rufus M. Jones, Swarthmore College religion professor Jesse H. Holmes, Earlham College philosophy professor Elton Trueblood, among others. Pendle Hill, a Quaker religious retreat and training center outside Philadelphia, provided a base for academics such as physicist and philosopher Howard Brinton. Others prominent figures gained influence outside of traditional Quaker institutions; Cadbury left Haverford to become the Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard, while Elbert Russell was Dean of Duke Divinity School.

However, because these leaders were in academia, conflicts about the essence and direction of Quakerism—disputes that in other religious groups would have happened within an ecclesiastical hierarchy—ended up being conducted as scholarly disputes. The discipline of history in particular became a primary avenue for religious debates about the denomination. As Quaker historian H. Larry Ingle explained, “having no theologians, the Society of Friends depends upon historians to keep the only human key to its repository of past traditions and experiences” (Ingle 1987, p. 94). Many religious groups have had histories written about them by insiders, who often intervene in contemporary religious debates, but such scholarship is even more influential than is typical in the case of Quakerism, where academics have often doubled as religious leaders. Other groups without

ordained clergy have sometimes had academics play similar roles; for example, there is a unique role of historians among Mormons, who do not have systematic theologians or many Biblical critics (Gaustad 1984, pp. 99–111).

The vast majority of the academic disputes over Quakerism have been about the early decades of the Religious Society of Friends. Various factions within Quakerism have tried to claim that George Fox and the early Quakers were their intellectual and spiritual forbears, rather than belonging to their opponents. Since the 19th century, Fox has been claimed by evangelicals, religious liberals, and moderates, each of whom tried to portray Quaker beginnings in their own image. That these scholarly disputes were simply veiled religious conflicts has been widely noted (Endy 1981, pp. 3–21; Dandelion 2004, pp. 1–8). These historiographical debates have largely broken down into clear factions based on the denominational politics and theological outlooks of the historians involved. Nineteenth-century English Quaker evangelicals had portrayed George Fox as their theological ancestor. In the early 20th century, Rufus M. Jones and William C. Braithwaite saw the first Quakers as a continuation of European Christian mysticism who could provide guidance for contemporary religious liberals. The next generation of scholars tried to rebut Jones's work by suggesting that Quakers had been similar to the Puritans.

This essay examines a subject that has received far less attention, the role of Quaker religious perspectives in coloring the scholarship about the Religious Society of Friends in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Religious partisanship has been particularly visible in cases in which Quaker scholars have examined the many schisms that divided the Quaker movement during this period. Theological divisions between the liberal religious Friends General Conference (FGC), the theologically moderate Friends United Meeting (FUM), which has an evangelical constituency as well as some members who theologically and liturgically resemble mainline churches such as the United Methodists and the Evangelical Friends Church International (EFCI) have separated Quaker scholars in the present. These divisions have been read back into the history of the Hicksite schism, as well as to the revivals of the late 19th century.<sup>1</sup> For the most part, liberal Quaker authors trying to vindicate their own branch of the denomination dominate scholarship published in university presses, though FUM-affiliated scholars, have tried to push back.<sup>2</sup> This article argues that such historical scholarship has increasingly constituted the main venue for theological debate within Quakerism. The lack of clear acknowledgement of this situation by Quaker historians presents a difficulty for non-Quaker scholars, who are unaware of how internal religious debates have shaped academic history. Prioritizing engagement with non-Quaker scholarship and making clear theological biases when they exist should be a priority for the field.

That Quaker theological arguments are being conducted in historical articles and monographs flouts some existing ideas in the field. In his November 2015 address to the Friends Historical Association, philosopher Jeffrey Dudiak argued that early Quakers had a providential vision of

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<sup>1</sup> Modern Quaker divisions are quite complicated. Generally, most unprogrammed Friends, which are Quakers who hold meeting for worship in silence until they feel moved to speak by divine leadings, are also theological liberals, embracing historical criticism of the Bible, evolution, and LGBTQ rights. There are some notable exceptions to the expectation that unprogrammed Friends are liberals. There are a small number of conservative Friends who also have silent meetings; these Friends are successors of the Wilburites and have deliberately tried to follow 19th century Quaker practice, which sometimes includes wearing plain dress. Programmed Friends (sometimes called pastoral Friends), meaning those with paid ministers, would generally be theologically characterized as evangelicals, although a few exceptions occur here as well in more theologically moderate programmed meetings. The FGC is usually understood as being connected with liberal unprogrammed Quakerism, while the FUM and EFCI are pastoral and skew evangelical, but this situation is complicated by many Yearly Meetings being dually affiliated with the FGC and FUM. This means that the FGC in reality contains a number of evangelical programmed meetings, and the FUM includes liberal unprogrammed meetings. In the 1990s, there were failed efforts by FUM leadership to engage in a process dubbed "realignment", which aimed to remove unprogrammed liberal meetings from the organization and bring EFCI and FUM pastoral Friends into a closer connection.

<sup>2</sup> The dominance of liberal Quakers within Quaker historical writing may be explained by Quakers having more of a presence in academia because they have tended to place a higher value on education. For instance, Martha Deed's 1969 survey of the differences in Quaker branches found that liberal Friends listed the most desired occupation for their children as "college professor", while all other Friends listed "farmer" (see Deed 1969).

“Quaker history”. They saw their history and themselves as existing as a continuation of Biblical events, while modern scholars in contrast strove for objectivity as “historians of Quakerism”. He writes that a Quaker religious insider is expected to put aside their commitments when doing history (Dudiak 2017, pp. 6–7). For Dudiak, this divide between commitment and objectivity is harmful to Quakerism, and he explores the possibility of bringing together both approaches. Historians Larry Ingle and J. William Frost, responding to Dudiak’s talk, agreed that such a divide between providential and academic history existed, but they were critical of his idea of trying to bridge it (Ingle 2017; Frost 2017). As Frost disapprovingly and rhetorically asked, when writing history, “Should the Quaker historian decide what party described God accurately?” (Frost 2017, p. 25). Yet, it is clear when it comes to analyzing the 19th century that many of those scholars practicing supposedly academic or secular history often do something very similar to this. While Dudiak’s points are thought-provoking for considering what direction the study of Quaker history *should* take, the reality is that among what both he and his detractors consider objective or academic history, theological positions have become enshrined as historical truth.

To say that these contemporary perspectives infuse scholarship on the past is not to say that this scholarship is inherently flawed. As early as 1935, historian Charles Beard, in his essay “That Noble Dream”, made clear that historians could not hope for complete objectivity, but rather should simply admit their bias. He declared, “We [historians] do not acquire the colorless, neutral mind by declaring our intention to do so. Rather do we clarify the mind by admitting its cultural interests . . . that will control, or intrude upon, the selection and organization of historical materials” (Beard 1935, pp. 74–87).<sup>3</sup>

Beard and Carl Becker, the two Progressive-era pioneers of historical relativism, admitted that while there were discernible facts (Becker discussed Caesar crossing the Rubicon as an example), human interpretation was affected by social and cultural factors and hence could never escape subjectivity. While neither man believed this was an excuse for scholars to be less rigorous in their methods, they did suggest that historians should not aim at the impossible goal of achieving objective truth, which was not only a fool’s errand but one that led to a kind of dangerous self-deception about what scholarship was really doing. Instead, as contemporary historian Peter Novick explains, they felt that “the historian’s social responsibility was to provide an account of the past appropriate to society’s current needs” (Novick 1988, pp. 254–55).

That Quaker scholars arrive at particularly theologically infused interpretations of history does not mean they are doing bad scholarship; many of them are well-trained at major universities and attempt to be fair-minded. There is, as Beard and Becker acknowledged, simply no such thing as a neutral interpretation of the past. For these scholars, their religious convictions and historical view of denominational splits always coincide, because in their understanding, both are objectively true.<sup>4</sup>

Regrettably, the implicit theological agenda of the scholars writing the history of Quakerism has not always been clearly conveyed or readily apparent to those outside of the denomination. The consequence of this is that non-Quaker scholars seeking to write about the Religious Society of Friends in relation to other aspects of American history, such as in connections with abolition, women’s rights, or in other social reforms, end up unintentionally wading into denominational debates that they know little about and accordingly make problematic mistakes. For example, historian Daniel

<sup>3</sup> For further debates about objectivity in history, see: (Novick 1988; Iggers 1997; Gaddis 2002; Evans 1997).

<sup>4</sup> I obviously also have a detectable theological bias in my perspective. I am a graduate of Earlham College (where I was a student of Thomas D. Hamm), a theological liberal, a convinced Quaker, and a member of a meeting that is affiliated with FGC and FUM. Since my religious liberalism causes me to see religious change as having the possibility of being a positive and progressive development, the idea that modern Quaker practice and belief may have discontinuities with historical Quakerism does not cause me any religious concern. Many of the liberal Quaker beliefs that I particularly value, such as an emphasis on mysticism, personal religious experience, and social service, are late 19th and 20th century adaptations to modernity. Such an understanding might be problematic for the faith of more theologically conservative Friends who seek to prove their continuity with earlier generations of Friends, and ultimately with the early Christian church.

Walker Howe's magisterial history of the early 19th century, *What Hath God Wrought*, drew his account of the Hicksite schism almost exclusively from one book, *Quakers in Conflict* by Quaker historian H. Larry Ingle, and as a result declared that the Hicksites' faith resembled the Quakerism of George Fox, while presumably Orthodox Quakerism did not (Howe 2007, pp. 196–97). Such a claim is offensive to the descendants of the Orthodox, and perhaps comparable to questioning their Christianity, although it is possible that Howe simply did not understand the implication of his statement.

## 2. Hicksite Separation

During the 19th century, several controversial schisms occurred within the Religious Society of Friends. The first of these was the Hicksite Separation of 1827, which created two bodies of Quakers, the Hicksites, named after one of the movement's leaders, Rhode Island Quaker minister Elias Hicks, and the Orthodox. The Orthodox argued that Hicks and his followers held heretical views, while the Hicksites argued that the Orthodox had abandoned traditional Quaker practices. Both groups disowned the other, and considered themselves the only authentic Quakers. Although these groups reunified at least nominally by the 1960s, the emotional wounds of the schism were deep, and continued to shape Quaker attitudes. The FUM and EFCI trace their ancestry to the Orthodox side of the split, while the FGC was created by Hicksites. In the 19th century, both Orthodox and Hicksite Quakers wrote about the schism, trying to justify their own perspectives. While 20th-century Quaker historians would profess greater detachment, they also were taking sides in theological battles.

In 1910, Henry W. Wilbur, a Quaker minister from the New York Yearly Meeting (Hicksite), completed *The Life and Labor of Elias Hicks*. Published by the FGC the biography was written to serve as a historical vindication for Hicks and his followers. The book attempted to prove that the liberal Quakerism of the FGC, as opposed to the more evangelical approach undertaken by the Five Years Meeting (the predecessor of the FUM), was the only legitimate lineage of Quakerism.

Wilbur was quite blunt about this agenda, suggesting that Hicks was the logical successor of the chief founder of Quakerism, George Fox. As Wilbur explained, "we believe it is not too much to say that [Elias Hicks] carried the fundamental idea of the Society of Friends, as delivered by George Fox, to its logical conclusion, as applied to thought and life, more clearly and forcibly than any of his predecessors or contemporaries." The Orthodox faction that opposed Hicks was portrayed as inauthentic in their profession of Quakerism, because they "discounted the position of Fox and [Robert] Barclay touching the Inner Light, and gave exaggerated importance to the claims of evangelical theology" (Wilbur 1910, p. 7). Barclay, a late 17th-century Scottish Quaker and the author of *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, was seen as the leading theological expositor of the Quaker movement. By suggesting that the Orthodox faction had ignored the idea of the Inner Light, Wilbur asserted that they had betrayed Quakerism's founding principles.

Wilbur ensured that his readers understood that even if Hicks had been heavily criticized by the Orthodox, this did not mean that Hicks was in error. Wilbur reminded his readers that George Fox had been subject to the same kinds of ridicule and assessment (Wilbur 1910, p. 8). The preface to the book, written by Elizabeth Powell Bond, the Dean of Women at Swarthmore College, even more bluntly stated that Hicks was a successor to Fox and a model of Christian life that readers of the biography should emulate.

In 1921, the final books of the Rowntree History Series were published. Volumes one and two of *The Later Periods of Quakerism* by Rufus M. Jones addressed Quakerism in the 19th century. The book series was a joint project of British and American Quakers Jones, William Charles Braithwaite and John Wilhelm Rowntree, and was intended to provide a narrative of Quaker history that would be conducive for liberal Quakerism. The complete series presented a vision of Quakerism as a mystical religion, centered on religious experiences adapted to embrace historical criticism and the findings of modern science (Kennedy 2001, pp. 197–210; Southern 2011; Schmidt 2005, pp. 230–37).

Jones grew up in Gurneyite Quakerism, which was a group who descended from the Orthodox faction that would eventually give rise to FUM; however, by adulthood, he had become a religious

liberal who made it one of his key life goals to bridge the divide between the disparate Quaker groups. In *The Later Periods of Quakerism: Volume One*, Jones presented both sides in the Hicksite separation as deeply flawed, having only partial grasps on Quakerism, and criticized each on explicitly religious lines. The Hicksites were right to champion Inner Light and individual freedom in religion, Jones wrote, but he suggested that they had no constructive theology of their own. As he explained, “No great spiritual movement ever flourished on the mere liberty of believing what one wishes” (Jones 1921a, p. 485). The Orthodox had been right to focus on the idea that God’s grace could redeem humanity from sin and emphasize Christ’s divinity, Jones asserted, but they wrongly emphasized the religious texts of the past and old theology while developing nothing new. Jones’ ultimate argument was that both groups should have embraced a kind of modernistic and mystical Quakerism, which was a conclusion that validated his project to reunify these groups.

Writing over three decades later, Bliss Forbush intended his book *Elias Hicks: Quaker Liberal*, published by Columbia University Press, to be a more scholarly account of Hicks’s life. Forbush, a former chairman of the FGC and the headmaster at Friends School in Baltimore, admitted candidly that when it came to the Hicksite separation, “no Quaker can write impartially” (Forbush 1956, p. XIII). Rather than aspiring toward objectivity, he aimed to write from a liberal theological perspective that placed the Friends General Conference as a logical culmination of Quaker practice.

However, Forbush did not make this overt. Instead, his writing was elliptical and veiled. He remarked:

“Today the most divisive issue involves the very purpose for which the Society of Friends came into being: the free and open group worship without clerical leadership, as opposed to the pastoral or churchly system practices by the majority of Friends in America. In the wider relationship of American churches with the present resurgence of theological orthodoxy, the liberalism of Elias Hicks is still a healthy antidote.” (Forbush 1956, p. XII).

The theologically correct Quakers that Forbush said were engaged in “free and open group worship” were those, he implied, whose descendants would join the FGC, unlike the “pastoral and churchly system” that was in use by the FUM. Recovering Hicks’s life as an “antidote” served to illustrate how the group that Forbush had once helped lead, the FGC, was made up of far better Quakers than their rivals.

Yet Forbush was also anxious to close off the possibility of Hicks’s legacy being used to stifle theological innovation. He made clear that “the implications of [Hicks’] words are carried to fuller conclusions by modern liberals” (Forbush 1956, p. XV). This meant that Hicks could be seen as a theological ancestor to FGC Quakerism, even though many of members of the FGC were considerably more theologically radical than he had been, with some members suggesting that God was not personal or embracing Arianism or Socinianism. Hicks was effectively rendered safe for a liberal religious project.

Forbush also cast the blame for the Hicksite schism not on Hicks, but on British Friends, remarking, “No division among American Friends would have taken place without the direct interference of English Evangelical Friends traveling with the weight and authority of London Yearly Meeting.” In particular, Forbush blamed British evangelist Stephen Grellet for heightening tensions (Forbush 1956, pp. 134–42). This essentially made Forbush’s portrait of 19th century Quakerism take on a Manichean character, in which the good liberal Hicksites had been victimized by evangelical outsiders.

Some commentators did notice the theological project of Forbush’s book. Hugh Barbour, a Quaker scholar at the FUM-affiliated Earlham College, remarked in a review in *Church History* that Forbush’s take was far too inspired by the work of liberal Quaker leaders and historians Elbert Russell and Rufus Jones (Barbour 1957). A non-Quaker reviewer in *William and Mary Quarterly* questioned whether Elias Hicks, who had opposed so many forms of modernity, such as any schooling beyond literacy as well as technology and science, could really be considered a religious liberal by 1950s

standards (Davison 1956). Another non-Quaker reviewer pointed out that evangelical Quakers could also cite evidence that they too were the heirs to the traditions of the early Quakers (Graymont 1957). Yet because of the lack of other options, and the limited background most scholars had on the subject, Forbush's account of Hicks became the standard for a generation.

*The Hicksite Separation* was written by sociologist Robert W. Doherty and published by Rutgers University Press in 1967, and was the first significant work on the subject by a non-Quaker. Doherty largely drew from the work of liberal Quakers such as Forbush and Howard Brinton when he discussed the theology involved in the split, probably because their work was most visible (Doherty 1967). However, for the most part, Doherty's interest was not in Quakerism itself; rather, he saw the Hicksite split as a test case to prove that the "structural-functional analysis of religion" and "sociological theory" could be a useful tool to social scientists and to historians.

Doherty attempted to quantify data on wealth, occupation, and real estate holdings to prove that the Hicksite schism was principally about the economic alienation of the Hicksites and the upward economic trajectory of the Orthodox Quakers. Even at the time of the split, observers had noticed that the Hicksites, at least in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, tended to be poor and rural, while the Orthodox were richer and more urban. Thus, Doherty's efforts elaborated upon a point largely agreed upon by Quakers, but because of his commitment to quantitative social scientific methodology, his work simply did not function as a theological narrative in the way that they wanted. No faction within the denomination liked the idea that their actions were the product of functionalist causes rather than divine leadings or individual agency.

Doherty may also have been seen as suspect by Quaker historians simply because he was not a Quaker himself. University of Vermont history Professor T.D. Seymour Bassett, a Quaker who had taught at Earlham College several years earlier, reviewed the book for *Quaker History*. He perhaps encapsulated the prevailing reception toward the work in Quaker circles when he called the book "the most stimulating sketch of the separation by an outsider" (Bassett 1968, pp. 52–54). While Bassett couched this as praise, for Quakers, an author focusing on the Quaker past without a clear religious stake in the matter was unusual, and Quakers commentators remained unsure of how to handle the resulting work.

Over two decades later, H. Larry Ingle, a "convinced" (the Quaker term for converted) liberal Friend who had been trained as a historian at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, wrote another history of the schism. Published by the University of Tennessee Press, the book was mostly concerned with Philadelphia Quakers and ended its account around 1830, shortly after the schism occurred. This meant that Ingle's book, *Quakers in Conflict*, went over much of the same historical ground that Forbush and Doherty had already covered, although Ingle mined further into the papers kept in the Hicksite-founded Swarthmore College, and found several sources that had not been used by earlier authors (Ingle 1986, pp. 296–97). The use of Hicksite sources may have been a factor in why the book seemed to favor that side of the schism.

Quaker reviewers were quick to spot a clear theological agenda in Ingle's writing. Dorlan C. Bales, a scholar who at the time was a member of a Friends Church-affiliated with the FUM and EFCL, reviewed the book for *Church History*, and wrote that "Larry Ingle makes no attempt to conceal his admiration for the Hicksites, on whom he bestows the mantle of George Fox, John Woolman, and Job Scott" (Bales 1988, pp. 242–43). Bales put the matter mildly; in Ingle's vision of history, the "evangelicals" (what Ingle called the Orthodox faction) had tried to move "Friends' thinking in an un-Quakerly direction", while the Hicksites, whom Ingle rebranded "traditionalist reformers", opposed them by holding true to Quakerism. The evangelicals, Ingle felt, sold out all Quaker distinctiveness and acquiesced to the innovations of the secular world (Ingle 1986, pp. 248–50). This particular interpretation—the idea of "evangelicals" totally abandoning tradition—ignored that one of the main groups that descended from the Orthodox was the Wilburites, which was the only Quaker group that maintained plain dress, speech, and the old disciplines that regulated Quaker life into the 20th century.

Yet because Ingle ended his account promptly in 1830, he could avoid complicating his narrative by mentioning the Wilburites.

While there is much to praise about Ingle's scholarship on the Hicksite separation, particularly his intensive research into archival sources, the agenda of this work was often not made clear to outside readers. Ingle does acknowledge that Hicks's views were often antimodern; for example, he opposed the Erie Canal and the study of chemistry as satanic, but the Hicksites ultimately come across in the narrative as the heroic forbearers of authentic Quakerism and contemporary religion. At one point, Ingle argued that Hicks' view of the Bible was not only "reaffirming the truth that Fox had insisted upon", but was also making "the same point" as the work of mid-20th century liberal theologian Paul Tillich (Ingle 1986, pp. 44, 46). This made early 17th and 19th century Quaker thought seem very much like that of liberal Quakerism in the 20th century.

Ingle's study remains the current standard work on the Hicksite schism. There have been other writers who have touched on the topic, particularly in works published by Quaker presses. In 2013, Quaker author Paul Buckley (Buckley 2013) published *The Essential Elias Hicks*; this was a biographical work bordering on hagiography, which attempted to reinterpret Hicks's theology in light of contemporary problems such as the environmental crisis. T. Vail Palmer's *A Long Road* addresses the Hicksite Separation along with a number of other British and American controversies in the 19th and 20th centuries. Palmer argued that neither the Hicksites nor Orthodox factions understood the teachings of George Fox, and accordingly suggested the need to return to a founding Quaker vision, which he saw as a continuation of early Christianity (Palmer 2017, pp. 9–10). As of yet, neither of these works have received much attention outside of Quaker circles. Mainstream academia has largely accepted an interpretation of Quaker history told almost entirely from the Hicksite side.

### 3. Revivalism and the Emergence of the Pastoral System

Unlike the Hicksite schism, a later religious upheaval has seen moderate (FUM) and evangelical Quaker (EFCI) academics weighing in. Yet, the presence of multiple factions debating on the topic does not mean that the scholarship is any less problematic. Instead, the treatment of late 19th century Quaker revivals is actually more emotional, and scholarship serves as a proxy for what in another denomination would be bitter public arguments over doctrine.

A series of revivals in the late 19th century (around 1870 to the 1910s) led to the appearance of the pastoral system in many American Quaker meetings. Worship services in these programmed meetings, as they were called, began to resemble those of most mainline and evangelical denominations. Theologically, these programmed Friends were also changing; they became more evangelical, and Holiness theology—the belief in a post-conversion experience of instantaneous sanctification and perfection—was widely embraced by many Midwestern and Western Quakers. Religious rituals that had once been shunned, particularly water baptism, were adopted by many Friends who began to label themselves the "Friends Church". Groups affected by the revival attempted to create a controversial formulation for their common doctrine in 1887. The Richmond Declaration of Faith, as it was known, was perceived by many of its critics as a creedal statement. By the turn of the century, pastoral Friends had created the Five Years Meeting, which was an overarching denominational structure that would become one of the major branches of Quakerism (it was later renamed Friends United Meeting in 1952).

In his 1921 *The Latter Periods of Quakerism: Volume Two*, Jones opined on what these developments meant. As scholar Alice Southern observed in her study of the Rowntree History Series, Jones showed some appreciation for the increased religious involvement that the early phase of the revivals generated, but was harshly critical of the developments such as paid pastors and water baptism, which he saw as departures from authentic Quaker teaching (Southern 2011, p. 40). Jones documented the positive effects of revivalism (what Thomas D. Hamm would later call the "renewalist" movement) in a chapter called "The Great Revival", while the negative effects were documented in the subsequent chapter, "American Quakerism in the Latest Period". His ultimate measuring stick for the success of the revival

was how it contributed to his goal of a unified, theologically modernist version of Quakerism that embraced mysticism.

Jones took particular issue with the Richmond Declaration of Faith, which he claimed did not speak to the modern problems of religious faith. He ultimately dubbed the document “in every sense a relic of the past”, and he had even harsher words for evangelical Quakerism as a whole, which he declared to have been a failure that lost the “inner depth and mystical quality” of Quaker faith (Jones 1921b, pp. 931, 935). For Jones, the rise of evangelical Quakerism was a recent and pressing concern, and he had lived through many of the changes that he was lamenting. Decades earlier, as the editor of *The American Friend*, Jones had made a reputation for himself as one of the most visible champions of historical criticism in the Religious Society of Friends, and as a powerful opponent of the most evangelical figures in the denomination. Jones was writing history, but did not conceal that it was intended as one more theological salvo to challenge opponents he had been arguing against for a long time.

Many of Jones’s points found their ways into later works. Elbert Russell, in his landmark 1942 history of Quakerism, called the beginning of this story “The Great Revival”, and devoted one chapter to the shifts brought on by these events. Russell, a graduate of Earlham College, former Dean of Duke Divinity School, and a theological modernist, was also a Midwestern Friend raised in this tradition (Russell 1956). This combination of influences made him broadly sympathetic to this “Great Revival”, even as he decried its excesses.

Similar to Jones, Russell suggested that “The Great Revival” had brought “new life and interest into the Society [of Friends]”. This came particularly in the form of new converts, who broadened Quakerism beyond its birthright members. Russell praised how the influx of new converts had led to the abandonment of “meaningless old traditions and practices” such as separate Meetings for Business for men and for women, and the use of plain dress and speech. Yet Russell decried that the revival had caused schisms, and many conservative Friends had left due to the changes. As a result, Friends who remained “suffered from radicalism and lost much of their contact with past history” (Russell 1942, p. 432).

Russell pushed the most controversial effects of the Revivals into a much later chapter called “Changes in Doctrine”, in which he portrayed the advent of the pastoral system as alien to Quakerism. Although he tried to stay neutral in tone, he compared the pastoral meetings to “low church Protestantism”, and included a quote that they were a “strange contrast” with the silent Quaker meetings of “former days”. Russell also attacked the Richmond Declaration of Faith, which he declared merely “a conservative statement of English and American Gurneyism”, suggesting that it was created by and represented only a narrow subset of Quakers (Russell 1942, pp. 481–85, 490).

Russell’s work essentially drew denominational battle lines. At the time he was writing, modernists, including Russell, still hoped to win control of the Five Years Meeting (which would become the FUM). By suggesting that the revivals had initially been positive, Russell was siding with a generation of older “renewalists” in the Midwest, which included people such as Joel Bean, Charles Coffin, and Timothy Nicholson, who had wanted to rejuvenate Quakerism, but thought that the evangelicals had gone too far with the later revivals. Condemning the Richmond Declaration of Faith positioned Russell to make his allegiances clear to his readers, despite his supposedly neutral prose.

John Punshon, a Quaker Studies Tutor at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre writing a little over four decades later in another history of the denomination, *Portrait in Grey*, would be similarly hostile toward the rise of the pastoral system. Punshon tried to put the revivals in a transatlantic context, seeking to address why many American Quakers had become pastoral, while English Friends had not. He looked back to 1830s England as the origin of this process, examining Isaac Crewson, who was a firm evangelical Quaker and the leader of a faction called the Beaconites, which had been disowned from the Manchester Monthly Meeting due their repudiation of the inward light and condemnation of other Quaker practices (Punshon 1984, pp. 188–92).

Punshon drew from this example to assert that British Quakers were more effective than their American counterparts at suppressing evangelicalism, and thus experienced “only a few minor defections, but nothing resembling the upheaval in the United States”. He further posited that British Quakers were more closely connected to one another than Americans; rather than simply being a religious group, they were “to a considerable degree a system of kinship with intimate social and business connections superadded” (Punshon 1984, p. 190). Unlike American Friends, the English Quakers were generally inhospitable to new converts, and their missions’ work was typical to those of a class level far beneath the members of the Meetings. Thus, through disownment and their kinship ties, Punshon claimed, British Quakers were able to maintain their “Quaker” identities, while many American Quakers were not. Punshon’s views aligned him with FUM moderates and FGC liberals against evangelicals, although his focus on the need to disown those who were theologically wayward was far harsher than Russell’s emphasis.

Punshon would subsequently change his perspective and ally himself theologically with evangelical Quakerism to defend the Holiness tradition. In a 2001 work of theology written for an evangelical Quaker audience, *Reasons for Hope*, he acknowledged that Holiness had its origins in Methodism and was adopted by Friends only in the 19th century, but he now maintained that it had continuities with early Quakerism, particularly with the thought of William Penn, Robert Barclay, and Isaac Pennington. One of the factors that caused Friends to embrace these Wesleyan ideas, Punshon suggested, was that they deeply resonated with Quaker ideas of perfection that other Friends had neglected. Holiness and early Quaker thought were “twins,” albeit “not identical twins” (Punshon 2001, pp. 280, 290). What is particularly striking about *Reasons for Hope* was that many of its conclusions were at odds with Punshon’s conclusions in *Portrait in Grey*. Where British Quakerism in the earlier book had heroically held onto Quaker traditions in the face of revivalism, Punshon started *Reasons for Hope* by declaring that he was upset that over the past 100 years, because British Quakers “gave up far more [of] the Quaker and Christian traditions than I now find myself willing to part with” (Punshon 2001, p. xi). The shift in Punshon’s own religious views had also caused him to reevaluate 19th-century schisms.

In 1988, Thomas Hamm, who was then the college archivist and a history professor at Earlham College, published *The Transformation of American Quakerism*. This was the first academic press book that addressed the topic of Quaker revivalism and the establishment of the pastoral system. Hamm’s book, which was an expansion of his dissertation at Indiana University, argued that the influence of evangelical Holiness (particularly Methodism) had caused Quakers to move closer to the American mainstream and abandon many of their distinctive practices. Hamm’s book was released shortly after *Richmond 1887*, which was a revised version of Friends minister Mark Minear’s Masters thesis, which was published by Friends United Meeting press and sympathetic to the drafting of the Richmond Declaration (Minear 1987). After Hamm’s book was released, a reviewer in the journal *Church History* urged academics to “bypass [Minear’s book] for Hamm’s brilliant new analysis of the era” (Wood 1989, p. 144). Hamm’s book winning the American Society for Church History’s Brewer Prize made it one of the few works primarily devoted to Quaker scholarship that has received any significant recognition outside the denomination.

Hamm came from a Midwestern pastoral Quaker background, but he was critical of the path the denomination had taken. While Hamm’s book was decidedly neutral in tone, especially after his book was edited, he would later write that his initial intention had been to “undermine, if not utterly destroy, the intellectual foundations of pastoral Quakerism” (Hamm 2004, p. 186). Hamm neatly divided what prior authors such as Jones and Russell had treated as the positive and negative aspects of the revival into two separate phases, a calm “renewal” phase that “tried to preserve Quaker distinctiveness”, and a more dramatic “revival” phase that “drew its driving forces from outside the Society of Friends” (Hamm 1988, p. 74). By suggesting that the move to pastoralism was an attempt to be better accepted by American society, rejecting Quaker identity, Hamm offered a subtle critique of the motivations of those advocating a pastoral system.

Carole Dale Spencer's 2007 *Holiness: The Soul of Quakerism* represented an evangelical Quaker reply to Hamm's work. Spencer, a church historian who had earned a PhD from the University of Birmingham's Quaker Studies program and taught at George Fox Evangelical Seminary, took all of Quaker history as her scope to argue that rather than being a departure from Quaker tradition, the embrace of Methodist-style Holiness and pastoralism in the late 19th century was a return to the traditions of George Fox and the early Quakers. Holiness, Spencer wrote, is the "common denominator of normative Quakerism", from which she argued that the modern Evangelical Friends Church is a "legitimate adaptation in continuity with historical Quakerism rather than . . . a radical departure" (Spencer 2007, pp. 2–3). Religious liberals, in this view, were the ones who were really deviating from tradition.

Predictably, Spencer found her work criticized by Quakers from other branches of the denomination. Chuck Fager, a liberal Quaker and editor-in-chief of *Quaker Theology*, sarcastically remarked that in *Holiness: The Soul of Quakerism*, "[Spencer's] 're-mapping' of American Quakerism just happens to put Newberg, Oregon at the center. The 'key' it produces turns out to unlock the doors of George Fox University and its Seminary" (Fager 2009). Hamm reviewed Spencer's book for *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, and while generally positive about the work, he noted that Spencer's argument was "already bringing challenges" from theologically liberal Friends. He then offered pointed criticism, suggesting that Spencer had fundamentally misunderstood the Quakerism practiced between 1870 and 1890. Hamm noted that Spencer had ignored the actual leaders of the Holiness movement by focusing on Quaker revivalist Hannah Whitall Smith rather than "far more influential Holiness Friends, such as Dougan Clark and David B. Updegraff" (Hamm and Spencer 2009). These were valid critiques, as Spencer had examined only a narrow range of views within Holiness circles (almost exclusively looking at Smith); she had also not included any substantial archival research to rebut Hamm's claim that many of the Holiness practices that the revivalists wanted to introduce, such as water baptism, were imports from other denominations.

Hamm and Spencer continued their debate in the pages of *Quaker Theology*. Hamm pointed out that Smith, the key figure in Spencer's history of the revival period, had not been a leader in the Quaker Holiness movement, having left Quakerism for a large period in her life starting in 1872. He further explained that she had been suspected by the radical wing of the movement (which gave rise to evangelical Friends) because of her belief in the possibility of universal salvation. He suggested that ultimately, at the end of her life, Smith had admitted that traditional Quaker worship was superior to the revivalism espoused by Holiness-centered Friends (Hamm and Spencer 2009). Thus, Hamm plausibly positioned Spencer's idol as closer to his particular brand of liberal-leaning pastoral FUM theology than to Spencer's views.

Spencer, surprisingly, agreed with many of Hamm's criticisms, and admitted that Smith had been atypical among the Quaker Holiness revivalists. Instead, Spencer modified her argument, suggesting that there were two kinds of Holiness. She indicated that Hamm was really critiquing a flawed Wesleyan kind of Holiness that abandoned Quakerism for Methodism. She argued that this was what most Quaker Holiness adherents and many contemporary Quaker evangelicals believed, while she suggested that she and Hamm valued "Barclayan Holiness". This kind of Holiness, Spencer insisted, was as much mystical as revivalist, and was the religion to which Smith adhered, as well as the true core of the beliefs of George Fox and early Quaker theologian Robert Barclay. Spencer's shift in theology essentially moved her away from evangelical circles into alignment with moderates in FUM (Hamm and Spencer 2009). Her ideological revision was followed by her subsequent departure from her position at George Fox Evangelical Seminary to take up a professorship at Earlham School of Religion (a seminary in the Midwest associated with the FUM).

It is clear that the revivals of the late 19th century are still contentious and emotionally raw for many Quaker scholars. They are not likely to become less controversial, as these issues still animate charged denominational politics. The second decade of the 21st century has seen Quakerism beset by numerous schisms that have been principally connected to debates about the recognition of same-sex

marriage and LGBTQ acceptance. Wilmington, Northwest, North Carolina, and the Indiana Yearly Meeting have all split apart in the last five years, and further schisms seem likely. Religious questions, such as whether monthly or yearly meetings have ultimate authority over Quaker polity, or if the Richmond Declaration should be considered a binding statement of Friend's beliefs, are often critically important in these disputes. The historical work of Quaker scholars in such circumstances has not only theological ramifications but also legal and organization ones (Angell 2017; Fager 2015, 2017; Carter 2014).

#### 4. Implications for Quaker Studies

British historian E. H. Carr once gave a famous dictum, "before you study history, study the historian" (Carr 1990). For scholars of Quakerism, to know which branch of the denomination they came from has often been enough to figure out how they would opt to interpret the largest controversies in the denomination. For over a decade, Quaker intellectuals such as Ben Pink Dandelion and Stephen Angell have tried to make the case for accepting "Quaker Studies" as an academic enterprise—a multidisciplinary approach to studying the Religious Society of Friends that was intended to be more nuanced than church history approaches. That historians and other scholars continue to ponder religious questions in scholarly venues poses a problem for the legitimacy of the project, and for its acceptance by a generally secular academy.

For Quaker studies, the issue is not simply that scholars have strong opinions; rather, it is that historical study has been given a central role in shaping and mediating religious understandings that is often occupied by theology in other groups. To see the most intense contemporary religious disputes between Quaker intellectuals by looking in *Quaker Religious Thought*, the most prominent journal of Quaker theology, would yield less than examining *Quaker History* and *Quaker Studies*, which are often full of heated debates.

Some Quakers have deplored that scholarship has served this role. In 2008, John Punshon expressed his hope that Quaker academics would stop producing history that is intended to be used in doctrinal disputes and instead simply follow evidence where it leads (Punshon quoted in Fager 2015). J. William Frost expressed pride that when Thomas D. Hamm reviewed his co-authored book with Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers*, Hamm could not detect which side of the Hicksite controversy Frost favored, because of his impartiality (Frost 2017, p. 26). Other Quaker scholars have celebrated the elevated role of Quaker historians. Larry Ingle suggested that historians take on a quasi-clerical role as "stewards of a tradition that has historically employed no professional clergy", and that they should protect a normative notion of Quakerism in their scholarship (Ingle 2016).

Quaker Studies would benefit from drawing on the rich literature that has been created by more established scholarly attempts to organize the study of religious (and ethnoreligious) groups, such as Jewish Studies and Mormon Studies. These academic communities demonstrate that the dilemma Quaker Studies confronts is not unique. Similar to Quaker Studies, Jewish Studies and Mormon Studies tend to be carried out mainly by religious insiders, who often connect their writing to religious objectives (Hughes 2014). Participants in both communities have sought to find a balance between loyalty to their own traditions and a commitment to rigorous scholarship.

Historian J. Spencer Fluhman, in one proposed remedy for the perceived insularity of Mormon Studies, argued that scholars of the subject need broader engagement with other academic fields, and to let their research be defined by those fields. As an example, he pointed out that engagement with the broader study of American religious history has provided new context for Mormon history (Fluhman 2009, pp. 215–16). In Quaker Studies, putting events such as the Hicksite Separation into further conversation with other denominational schisms, such as the roughly contemporaneous Unitarian Controversy, might offer a way to go beyond simply taking sides for or against the Hicksites.

In Jewish Studies, over three decades ago, historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi in the seminal book *Zakhor* wrote about the rupture between the religious way that Rabbis had understood the past, and how modern Jewish historians saw it. Yerushalmi cautioned that history could not heal faded

communal religious memory, and that attempts to do so using academic history were likely to fail because “the historian seems at best a pathologist, hardly a physician” (Yerushalmi 1982, p. 94). Zakhor raised many of the points about the division between sacred and academic history that Jeff Dudiak later would engage in the Quaker context, but Yerushalmi offered a pointed critique of the ability of history to fill the place of theology. Historians are not mythmakers in the way that rabbis are, and their work presupposes that history is driven by natural and human events rather than a divine plan. Rather than vigorously defending a position on whether historians should intervene in religious matters, he offers the useful insight that they rarely do so persuasively.

Above all, engagement with these other disciplines makes it clear that Quaker Studies should aim to be overt about pervasive theologically-motivated views, and make clear how theology has shaped history. This is a conclusion that Quaker scholars themselves may be realizing. Recently, in a reflection on Dudiak’s address “The Meaning of Quaker History”, R. Melvin Keiser, a Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at Guilford College, made a number of insightful suggestions regarding how Quaker historians could balance their religious commitments with their scholarship. The most pertinent of these suggestions to scholars was that they should “Do publicly verifiable factual history and embark on its inward [religious] meaning, being honest about the lens you are using” (Keiser 2018, p. 68). While his case that such committed history is best done in first person is arguable, his point that scholars should not hide their religious agendas is useful. Theological perspectives will always slip into historical work, even when attempts are made to be neutral. Nor does a scholar’s commitment to serving as a caretaker of a tradition mean that his or her scholarship is inherently compromised. However, if Quaker Studies and Quaker history are to serve a wider audience, and function as academic fields that are more than a forum for intradenominational verbal sparring matches, they must become more user-friendly to academics outside Quaker intellectual circles. They also need to engage with questions driven by scholars outside Quakerism.

Quaker scholars do not have to sacrifice their own convictions about historical or religious truth; however, they should acknowledge that there are other branches of Quakerism with differing interpretations, and provide readers access to sources where they can find those views. The theological opinions informing works of scholarship must be brought out into the light. This is not only an issue of creating good scholarship; it should also be a basic standard of respectfulness to other historians, even if they are one’s theological adversaries.

Despite being a group comprised of mostly pacifists, perhaps the most apt metaphor for Quaker scholarship is a battlefield. Frequently, scholars without a background in Quaker history seeking insight on this unique religious group are simply dropped right in the middle of this chaotic intellectual struggle with no reference point. Quaker scholars do not have to call a truce, but they should be considerate enough to at least fly flags to make clear what causes they are fighting for.

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