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BOOK REVIEWS

With Good Intentions: Quaker Work among the Pawnees, Otos, and Omahas in the 1870s.

By Clyde A. Milner II. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982. Maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. xiii + 238 pp. \$21.50.

Early in 1869, President Ulysses S. Grant began his "Quaker Policy" by inviting the Society of Friends to take responsibility for the administration of Indian affairs in Nebraska, Kansas, and the Indian Territory. The Friends, by appointing superintendents, hiring all reservation employees, and operating mission schools, would replace a corrupt patronage system and at the same time help tribes accommodate to a new way of life. The federal government, for its part, would supply goods, money, and official endorsement. Clyde A. Milner investigates the results of this experiment on three small reservations in Nebraska.

Over the past twenty years historians Henry Fritz, Robert Mardock, and especially Francis Paul Prucha have placed the Quaker Policy, or Peace Policy, in the larger context of nineteenth-century Indian affairs. These studies concentrated on the role of Congress and the Indian Office in Washington, D.C., and did not reveal how Grant's reform, which was expanded to include churches other than the Quakers, influenced the lives of missionaries and Indians in the West between 1869 and 1882. To learn this, one needs considerable detail about fourteen denominations working in ten geographic regions on more than seventy reservations. Few such tribal histories existed until recently. Milner now brings us one step closer to a complete picture with his account of the Oto, Pawnee, and Omaha Indians, and their Liberal Friends.

Few studies can match Milner's for skill in combining church history, ethnology, everyday

life at agencies, Indian and white religious beliefs, government policy, and statistical analysis. Few come close to Milner in capturing how the Quaker Policy must have seemed to missionaries delivering the services and to Indians receiving them. Milner contends that when idealistic, well-meaning eastern Quakers arrived in Nebraska to bring tribal people a superior way of life, the Friends ran directly into Indian and white resistance. They encountered factionalism and local politics, violence and bad faith. The Quakers learned that cultures change slowly and conservatively, and they discovered that friendly persuasion did not always work, even among other Friends. In short, the Quakers experienced some success, considerable failure, and occasional disaster. While providing much detail, Milner holds this story in the context of American westward expansion.

Other virtues of the book include clear, firm prose based on extensive research and documentation. Numbers and measures, dearly loved by Quaker reformers, do not overshadow more important evidence about attitudes and values. The author correctly identifies the role of the William Penn legend in U.S. Indian policy, he recognizes the difference between eastern and western perceptions of Indians, and he provides an ample sense of Oto and Pawnee daily life in the 1870s. Milner understands the tradition of Christian perfectionism and ethical idealism, tested and tried in frontier Nebraska, and he shows how temptation, human flaws, and unconscious bias can compromise ideals. No study better describes how the Peace Policy was sabotaged and hypocritically subverted by the Hayes administration through its humanist secretary of the interior, Carl Schurz.

Policy could not save Indian people from misery and degradation even when government plans were humane and Christian. Thirty years ago Poul Anderson published "The Helping

Hand," a short story about two alien societies in outer space. One society accepted Earth's technology and the other refused help. The first culture disintegrated and became a curiosity living off tourists from Earth, while the independent group prospered by retaining its own culture. In the end, one of the aliens recalled the Earth mission's arrival and how, "with the best intentions in the world, the West annihilated all other ways of life." Although his story is more complex and less absolute, Clyde Milner concludes with a similar message: "The actions of these Quakers precipitated, rather than prevented, the decimation of the Indians' land base. The good intentions of the Friends had not been good enough."

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