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 ***Black Freedom: The Non-Violent Abolitionists from 1830  
Through the Civil War (review)***

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REVIEW

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**In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:**

BOOKREVIEWS55 historical reexamination of Quaker plainness. And I hope that whoever is moved to that task will examine in depth the history of those fascinating religious words "plain" and "plainness," which the Mennonites borrowed from the Quakers and the Quakers borrowed from die Puritans. University of PennsylvaniaDon Yoder *Black Freedom: The Non-Violent Abolitionists from 1830 Through the Civil War*. By Carleton Mabee. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1970. 435 pages. \$9.95. Neither the title nor the subtitle of this excellent book gives Friends glancing at it perfunctorily an accurate idea of what it is about. "Black Freedom" has to do with blacks indeed, but only those in the United States in the generation before the Civil War. "Nonviolent Abolitionists" might mean Quakers, but it really doesn't. For although most Friends of

that generation, and most today, think of themselves as against slavery, the word "abolitionist," after William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* burst on the scene in 1831, became a scare word. Like "red" or "radical" or "rad-lib" today, it meant something and somebody to be avoided by sober Friends. "Anti-Slavery," spelled then as I spell it here, was even worse. A Quaker might have abolitionist leanings and still remain a member in good standing. If, however, he joined an "Anti-Slavery Society," he put himself near or beyond the pale. The fear of mingling with the world's people and being compromised by worldly principles and policies, hung like a pall over Quakerism a century and a quarter ago. None but the most daring, or the "over-concerned"—the Lundys and the Whittiers, the Lucretia Motts, Thomas Garretts and Isaac T. Hoppers, the Levi Coffins, and their lesser but equally committed colleagues in the Philadelphia, New York, and Indiana regions—dared even to associate with the abolitionist radicals of the Garrison, Theodore Weld, Arthur and Lewis Tappan, and James G. Birney stripe. They did so on pain of excommunication, as some of them found out to their sorrow. Quakers were nonviolent opponents of slavery all right. But it is not of Quakers—or of 95 percent of the Quakers of the antebellum age—of which Carleton Mabee speaks. His people are the white men and black men who, in the thirty years before 1861, experimented with nonviolence as a weapon in the effort to abolish chattel slavery in the United States. As such it is an excellent history of a campaign that failed, and a manual and warning for our lives, which is what the author intended it to be. Briefly, Mabee identifies "three major schools" of deliberately nonviolent abolitionists, all of whom agreed in principle to pursue the destruction of slavery without resort to violence, to discourage slave revolts, and to seek emancipation by peaceful means. He recognizes the Quakers as the first of these groups, sees them as "complete nonresistants," and dismisses them except as their activities pointed the way to the others. Quakers helped organize the first abolition society, for instance, the old Pennsylvania Abolition Society, which dated from the Revolutionary epoch. Quakers also originated the boycott of slave goods known as the Free Produce Movement, nonresistant but comparatively unimportant in its influence. William Lloyd Garrison, who had rather few followers, had been converted to abolitionism by the radical Quaker, Benjamin Lundy, and Garrison was supported in the early years of his campaign by the ardent young Quaker reformer, John Greenleaf Whittier, who was also a complete nonresistant. The rest, the majority element in the antislavery movement from 1830 to the Civil War, Carleton Mabee classifies as "limited nonresistants" of various kinds, and lumps them under the name "Tappanites," which he derives from the two abolitionist brothers, Lewis and Arthur Tappan, New York merchants, philanthropists, and patrons of the antislavery cause. The book tells of the principles and practices of these nonresistants—boycotts of all types, sit-ins, ride-ins in trains and steamboats, efforts to integrate schools, help for fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad—all this in great detail. It shows what present-day nonresistants may do and not do in order successfully to move the Establishment by peaceful means. It also analyzes what is seen as...

historical examination of Quaker plainness. And I hope that whoever is moved to that task will examine in depth the history of those fascinating religious words "plain" and "plainsness," which the Mennonites borrowed from the Quakers and the Quakers borrowed from the Puritans.  
*University of Pennsylvania* DON YONAS

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