

achievements. First, it affords the author a rarely seen "grassroots" look at local Methodist clergymen (p. 24). Dunn thus avoids a shortcoming common to Methodist studies, that of emphasizing itinerant or "circuit riding" preachers entirely and at the expense of local parsons. Second, the author's meticulous examination of such rarefied sources reveals how integrated African Americans remained in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South's polity and economy until immediately before the Civil War. By placing black members so squarely in the picture of antebellum upper southern Methodism, Dunn offers new insight into the persistence of southern Appalachian antislavery sentiment.

While *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism* recounts a local history within a broader but nevertheless particular faith tradition, the study's historiographical impact is expansive. In telling a story of competition between itinerant and local preachers, Dunn features the same economic and social forces that were determinative in the locality's secular life. Itinerants, more educated and arguably more acquisitive than the local laity, grew increasingly proslavery as the antebellum years unfolded. Most local Methodists in places like eastern Tennessee and southern Virginia, by contrast, resented both the wickedness that characterized slavery in their estimation and the intrusive power of its purveyors. But like many of their fellow countrymen throughout southern Appalachia and notwithstanding the presence of African Americans in their denominational history, antislavery local clerics were customarily conservative and stubbornly provincial. Local preachers and laymen in East Tennessee, for instance, railed against both the disruptive radicalness of abolitionists and the political dominance of Middle and West Tennesseans. Dunn's careful consideration of such juxtapositions within and among local Methodists adds to our scholarly understanding of wartime Unionism in southern Appalachia and, more specifically, of East Tennessee's ultimate rejection of Confederate nationalism.

There are no shortcomings in this book that I can detect, save its sometimes overly detailed and discursive notes. Certainly its author is far from hagiographic; he does not palliate the proslavery history of Emory and Henry College, for example, or gloss over the fealty that leading Methodist lights exhibited toward the planter elite. Instead, Dunn offers a valuable addition to the growing literature illuminating the crosscurrents of religion and politics before and during the American Civil War. It is the more than worthy final offering of a masterful historian.

Pennsylvania State University

TIMOTHY WESLEY

Lincoln and the Triumph of the Nation: Constitutional Conflict in the American Civil War. By Mark E. Neely Jr. Littlefield History of the Civil War Era. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. Pp. [viii], 408. \$35.00, ISBN 978-0-8078-3518-0.)

To paraphrase Mark Twain, the historian Mark E. Neely Jr. almost always seems to write with the calm confidence of a Christian with four aces. For more than three decades now, Neely has been producing monographs that

specialize in puncturing myths about the political and legal history of the Civil War era. Neely usually manages this startling revisionism by the simple act of reading primary sources. He appears to read almost everything whenever he tackles a subject, with a close, discerning eye that invariably makes his analysis stand out. Neely's latest effort, *Lincoln and the Triumph of the Nation: Constitutional Conflict in the American Civil War*, only confirms the value of this type of professional devotion. Yet this particular monograph is also easier to admire than to love, because of its peculiar organization. Neely seems aware of this limitation and goes out of his way to assert that he wants only to "stimulat[e] interest in the constitutional history" of the Civil War, and not to "kill the subject with claims of 'definitive' treatment" (p. 17). But that odd framework sometimes translates into an excuse to hold back analytical cards and leave evidence to speak for itself in ways that will leave some readers confused.

Neely divides the monograph into three parts. The first section focuses on Abraham Lincoln's nationalism and how it impacted his interpretation of the Constitution. In doing so, Neely tackles two classic topics of Civil War constitutional history—secession and habeas corpus—before spending considerable space detailing the constitutional debates regarding emancipation. The second section of the book, by far the shortest although in some ways the most interesting, surveys a series of obscure wartime cases in both state and federal courts. The remainder of the book devotes its attention to the Confederacy.

"Nationalism was the first source of Lincoln's ideas on the Constitution," writes Neely with his usual authoritative flair (p. 30). Though such an observation sounds rather tame, the scholar takes this concept in unusual directions. Borrowing from noted political scientist Benedict Anderson, Neely offers a series of strikingly original close readings of wartime documents such as Lincoln's first inaugural address to demonstrate just how far he thinks Lincoln was going in his re-imagining of the American national community between 1861 and 1865. By Neely's reckoning, Lincoln was engaged in a full-scale and original reinterpretation of the Constitution and presidential power in a way that "deserves praise not yet lavished on him" and that thoroughly separated him from his previous background as a Whig attorney (p. 110).

Neely is not nearly so impressed, however, by Lincoln's constitutional ideas regarding emancipation. He terms it a "false impression" among scholars that the president's steps toward emancipation were "methodical" or even "rational" (pp. 125, 126). By contrast, Neely practically mocks all the twists and turns on the controversial policy, claiming at one point that "Lincoln could hardly have done a poorer job of managing the news of the Emancipation Proclamation" (p. 127). Then to prove his points, Neely quotes at length from the disputatious pamphlet war that erupted in 1862 and 1863 over the subject.

The value of these wartime pamphlets should be obvious to any serious student of the period, even as Neely's use of them demonstrates just how obscure some have become over the years. So, too, are the court cases that Neely turns to in his second section. Beyond a handful of notable

Civil War-era Supreme Court opinions, such as the *Prize Cases* (1863), the various state and lower federal court decisions on underage soldiers, conscription, and legal tender are all unfamiliar terrain. Yet they were important, sometimes critical, to the Union war effort. Neely paints a vivid picture of a nineteenth-century judicial tradition that was as much partisan as legal and that often centered on questions of nationalism. One of the most revealing gems of this section involves the story of how Union officials rediscovered *Ableman v. Booth* (1859), a controversial antebellum decision from the Taney Court, and made it into "the turning point of the legal and constitutional history of the Civil War in the North" (p. 179). *Ableman* was a case concerning fugitive slaves, and nothing delighted Unionists more than redirecting Chief Justice Roger B. Taney's prewar animus against abolitionists into an effective wartime doctrine for federal supremacy.

Neely has less interesting primary source material to work with on the Confederate side of the constitutional ledger. Once again, however, he offers a series of thought-provoking close readings of documents such as Jefferson Davis's inaugural address and various extant wartime pamphlets. He analyzes the secession conventions at length and key state court cases from Virginia. Occasionally, he takes aim at modern-day conventional wisdom, asserting that the secessionist movement was more democratic than generally acknowledged and that the Confederacy "did not die of state rights" (p. 342).

The book ends rather abruptly, admittedly raising more questions than it answers, but the questions are good ones, worth considering in classrooms and roundtables and certainly with further scholarship.

Dickinson College

MATTHEW PINSKER

Union and States' Rights: A History and Interpretation of Interposition, Nullification, and Secession 150 Years After Sumter. Edited by Neil H. Cogan. Law and Legal Thought Across Disciplines. (Akron, Ohio: University of Akron Press, 2014. Pp. [xii], 299. Paper, \$24.95, ISBN 978-1-937378-13-4.)

What are we to make of twenty-first-century Americans' rhetorical and legislative efforts for interposition and nullification of federal legislation, especially the statutes that regulate firearms, healthcare, and marijuana? To take a more troubling case, consider threats of separate state secession made by contemporary Americans, including the governor (Rick Perry) of the second-most populous state (Texas)—a state that already tried to secede by force of arms a century and a half ago. Fortunately, we can turn to *Union and States' Rights: A History and Interpretation of Interposition, Nullification, and Secession 150 Years After Sumter* as a primer on states' rights. This slim volume collects essays written almost exclusively by law professors on various aspects of the interrelated ideas of interposition, nullification, and secession. Interposition is the right of the states to intercede to protect their citizens from the unconstitutional exercise of federal power. Nullification is the right of the states to suspend an unconstitutional

Copyright of Journal of Southern History is the property of Southern Historical Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.