

constrained. While the Emancipation Proclamation could be based upon military necessity, and while the Thirteenth Amendment was a logical outgrowth of that position, it is far from clear what Lincoln's stance would have been, for example, on the Black Codes of Presidential Reconstruction.

In making his case, Fredrickson seeks to undermine the analytical concept of racism itself. He suggests that we might "acknowledge that 'racism' is an imprecise umbrella term and that there is a plurality of orientations . . . some of which may be more benign or less malignant than others" (41). Later, he argues that "there is actually a spectrum of attitudes that might legitimately be labeled 'racist,' ranging from genocidal hatred of the 'other' to mere conformity to the practices of a racially stratified society" (84). For Fredrickson, "Lincoln's personal attitudes . . . were much closer to racism as conformity than to racism as pathology" (84). Troublingly, his supporting footnote refers only to a single work of social psychology published in 1969.

Big Enough to Be Inconsistent offers significant opportunity for reflection. This little book confronts big ideas, and asks big questions of Lincoln students. Without saying so directly, Fredrickson challenges us to examine our own biases with respect to Lincoln and to return to the man's words and actions rather than to our preconceptions of them. While his attempts to redefine racism are underdeveloped and unsatisfying, Fredrickson reminds us that inconsistency is in fact a virtue after all.

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Jane E. Calvert. *Quaker Constitutionalism and the Political Thought of John Dickinson*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. xiv, 382. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$99.00.)

John Dickinson has been an enigma for most historians of the American Revolutionary period, who have had a hard time reconciling his role as the "penman" of the American Revolution with his refusal to sign the Declaration of Independence. Further complicating matters was his active participation on the battlefield during the war, after he refused to call for

independence. Jane Calvert has finally solved the puzzle by focusing on the influence of Quakerism in Dickinson's unique constitutional theory. In the process of explaining Dickinson, she has offered insight into the influence of the Society of Friends on U.S. constitutional history, as well as American reform from colonial times to the twentieth century.

Calvert's reassessment of John Dickinson's role in the revolutionary and founding era of the United States is so much more than another "founding father" biography. It is instead one of the most thorough treatments of American Quakerism in general and Quaker politics and resistance in particular. *Quaker Constitutionalism and the Political Thought of John Dickinson* offers new insight into the role of Quakers in the creation of governments in North America, as well as in the American Revolution. It also sheds new light on the influence of the often-unappreciated Dickinson. Finally, it describes in rich depth both the foundation and the legacy of Quaker reform.

Calvert begins her study with a promise to do what few scholars have attempted: "to show precisely what Quakers have contributed to American political culture and how they accomplished it" (1). She then systematically destroys the notion that during the American Revolution Quakers were passivists or "withdrawers" at best and Loyalists at worst. As her narrative unfolds, she describes a unique Quaker constitutional theory that shaped not only the earliest constitutions of Pennsylvania but also, ultimately, the U.S. Constitution. This theory contained two key ideas. First, the Constitution was a living and evolving document that would be guided to perfection by enlightened leaders, and second, those hoping to guide this evolution had a number of techniques at their disposal, the most radical of which was civil disobedience. According to Calvert, Quakers were very active in opposing laws that they considered unjust, but with few exceptions they could not support the notion that revolution was a legitimate option when fighting for their rights. Put simply, Quakers believed that reform was often necessary but that it had to be brought about in a systematic manner that respected the existing constitution. Otherwise, chaos would ensue and the rights of religious dissenters could be jeopardized.

After describing in detail the basis of Quaker constitutionalism, Calvert uses John Dickinson as a case study to describe how Quaker ideas affected and were affected by the tumult of the American Revolution. She argues persuasively that the notion of Quakers as passivists who withdrew from the political world in the years leading up to the break with England is too simplistic. Instead, she describes a trifurcated situation in which some Quakers did indeed withdraw because of their passivism while others, such as the Free

Quakers, joined the fight for independence with relative ease. A third group, best represented by Dickinson, pushed for colonial rights through civil disobedience and economic resistance but fell short of calling for independence. According to Calvert, Dickinson, a product of the Quaker milieu though not a professed Quaker himself, fought for change within the boundaries of constitutional resistance because he believed, as Quakers had for generations, that while it was one's duty to protest injustice, such protest must respect the existing constitution or the results would be illegitimate. Her explanation of Dickinson's actions in terms of the Quaker constitutional theory goes far in solving the historical puzzle that Dickinson's career has presented.

Calvert offers an analysis of the group's resistance and reform efforts that historians of any time period will find useful. She describes in great detail the foundations of civil disobedience, crucial to civil rights movements in the United States. Her analysis of this technique and its place in Quaker civil and ecclesiastical theory helps to explain much about the role of Quakers in the American abolition movement, the women's rights movement, and the twentieth-century civil rights movement. The Quaker protest tradition she describes opens new windows into the tension between gradual and immediate abolitionists, for example, and she also offers new insight into the nonviolent tactics of leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. by describing the influence modern Quakers Richard Gregg and Bayard Rustin had on his worldview.

Though her focus is on the founding era, Calvert's book offers exciting evidence for the importance of Quaker reform theories in the broad scope of U.S. history, and for this reason her book is essential reading to anyone interested in American reform in general, as well as the history of civil disobedience theories. Likewise, anyone interested in Pennsylvania history, Quaker history, American legal history, the American Revolution, or American intellectual history should read this book.

The only problem with the book is one that was beyond Calvert's control. Thanks to her engaging prose and clear writing style, this book could be used in a wide range of graduate courses, if not upper-division undergraduate courses, but the price will likely prohibit classroom adoption. Hopefully an inexpensive paperback edition will be issued soon to remedy this situation so the book can get the large readership it deserves.

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