

Mennonites, Amish, and the American Civil War. By JAMES O. LEHMAN and STEVEN M. NOLT. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. xi, 353 pp. Illustrations, tables, maps, appendices, notes, references, index. \$39.95.)

Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, a *Washington Post* writer described pacifists—and particularly religious pacifists—as traitors. The president boldly asserted, “You’re either with us or against us.” Vocal media spokespeople called for more complete assimilation of “immigrant peoples.”

James O. Lehman and Steven M. Nolt’s book, which offers a fascinating look into the response of Anabaptists to the Civil War, demonstrates that such sentiments are not new in American history. The authors utilize letters, diaries, and other records to put a very human face on the conflict. They also rely on extensive personal experience with the Mennonite and Amish spiritual landscape and scholarship to display the complex and nuanced attempt to balance a Christian ethic with civic identification. More importantly, they focus on the price paid for the different decisions made.

Some of these heirs to the Radical Reformation chose to participate not only in the political processes leading up to the war, but also in the conflict itself. Others chose to pay a fee, hire a substitute, “skedaddle” away from the fighting, march with the troops as nonresistant “food for gunpowder” (189), or even take up arms but refuse to kill, as one young Mennonite explained, because “we don’t shoot people” (58). Lehman and Nolt make the variety of decisions, and the penalties borne by resistant and nonresistant alike, poignantly personal and moving.

The authors also explore the varied responses of Anabaptists in the Midwest, in Pennsylvania, in the Shenandoah Valley, and even within particular districts. Evolving understandings and reactions of Anabaptist leaders are presented, along with portrayals of their positions by politicians and the press. Comparisons and contrasts are drawn with other pacifists like the Quakers.

The Civil War changed the nature of Americans’ views of death, the federal government, and race. It also had a significant impact on the ways postwar Mennonites and Amish (and Quakers!) saw themselves. If the book has a shortcoming—and it has precious few—it would be in not giving lengthier attention to this area.

I have only two other minor quibbles with the authors. They could have added a further dimension to the book by exploring how Anabaptists, like Quakers in North Carolina, comprised a “new South,” even in antebellum times. They also fail to note that Lincoln’s secretary of war, Edwin Stanton, was from a Quaker background—strong evidence that none of the pacifist groups was monolithic.

Nevertheless, *Mennonites, Amish, and the American Civil War* is not only a

marvelous piece of scholarship, but it is a moving and highly readable account of issues that continue to shape our world today.

Friends Center, Guilford College

MAX L. CARTER

Fanny Kemble: A Performed Life. By DEIRDRE DAVID. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007. xix, 350 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95.)

This very lively and engaging volume is a wonderful introduction into the world of one of the nineteenth century's most celebrated theatrical performers. From Fanny Kemble's debut at Covent Garden in 1829, where she was an instant sensation, until her death in 1893, by which time she was a beloved friend of Henry James, she became an acclaimed actress and author on both sides of the Atlantic.

David begins her chronicle by promising to pay "tribute to that bright abundance" of Kemble's "vivid occupation of the moment," and the book delivers on these grounds (xix). David takes her cue from Henry James, who suggested that Kemble was "dramatic long after she ceased to be theatrical," and this biographical portrait offers a bounty of material on Kemble's theatricality (287).

As David's subtitle indicates, she seeks to highlight Kemble's life as a kind of performance art. At times, her interpretation stretches this idea to its limit, such as when she notes that, "From this moment onward, a time that coincides with the beginning of her married life, she begins even more consciously to assume attitudes of her own making, to wear masks, and to assume a variety of roles" (131). But David, like many Kemble biographers, is ensnared by Kemble's autobiographical writings—she published nearly a dozen volumes of memoirs and several books of poetry in her lifetime. David explains that, "She worked on the memoirs as if she were performing in repertory; in the mornings she sorted the letters and proofread what had been cleared (by herself) for publication, and in the evenings she wrote her interpolated commentaries. Disturbing material was excised by a disciplined, theatrical hand and what remained was fashioned into a rhetorical spectacle of impressive historical and cultural scope" (274). David's interpretive framework, bolstered by footnotes that exhibit an impressive command of the literature, only occasionally seems to overwhelm.

More often, David provides riveting insights into Kemble's character, such as when she suggests that early in Kemble's life she absorbed lessons from her legendary aunt, Sarah Siddons, whose retirement from the stage did not allow her to enjoy a "vent for her private sorrows which enabled her to bear them better" (47). David's rereading of Kemble often puts her subject on the couch, observing that, "symptomatic of a masochistic self-destructiveness she displayed when at