

*Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists.*

Edited by Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979. Pp. xvi, 348. Notes, tables, index. \$20.00.)

The American abolitionists, who so ardently believed in freedom, have themselves now been liberated from their over-identification by historians with the internal dilemmas and tactical and ideological disputes of the civil rights reformers of the 1960s. Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman are correct in their introductory comment that "if ever a decade and an historical subject were meant for each other, they were the 1960s and abolitionism." But however appealing this match has been, it is time that both partners be understood in their own right and in the context of their own times.

This superb collection of fourteen original essays does just that. The antislavery movement is seen here against the larger backdrop of its age: religious revivalism, Jacksonian politics, law, literature and fugitive slaves, the northern competitive labor market, the black church, antislavery in Ireland and Scotland, and the intellectual and popular "collisions" between proslavery and antislavery forces in the 1850s. The variety of methodological lenses used in studying abolitionism, as well as the scope, is widened by these essays, which reflect quantitative techniques, the new political history, feminist and black perspectives, and other developments of the past decade. If there is a somewhat consistent point of view in this eclectic collection, it is a preference for cultural rather than economic analysis.

The new approaches and fresh perspectives are represented generally at their best. There are two excellent studies of the "connections" between feminism and abolitionism. In one, Ellen Du Bois argues that feminist consciousness, if not strategies for change, preceded the Garrisonian relationship; in the other, Blanche Glassman Hersh shows how feminist abolitionists like Abby Kelly and Lucretia Mott set model examples "for a new type of woman who was both a private and a public person." There is a compelling and sensitively written essay by James B. Stewart on the way in which Wendell Phillips' need to balance intellectual control and emotional impulsiveness in his own life, in part because of marriage to an invalid, was reflected in his vision of heroes (Elijah Lovejoy, John Brown, and Edmund Burke!) and villains (Daniel Webster, slaveholders, and French revolutionists!). And to mention just two others, Leonard Richards writes a convincing indictment of the Jack-

sonians as pro-southern and anti-black, and Michael Fellman offers a captivating study of the popular images that northern and southern settlers in Kansas had of each other (subhuman "Pukes" and "nigger-stealing" Yankees) and of themselves (chosen saviors of Puritan morality and Constitutional order).

Obviously a collection like this is bound to be uneven. Ronald Walters' opening essay on the "Boundaries of Abolitionism" is so brilliantly wide-ranging and concerned with establishing continuities that one is left with virtually no boundaries at all. Donald Scott's essay on "Abolition as a Sacred Vocation" suffers from too much religious analysis and not enough examples of sacred vocations. Alan Kraut's noble attempt to rescue the reputation of the Liberty party fails through an excess of methodological zeal. His social profile is based upon insufficient quantitative data and is internally contradictory.

Overall, however, *Antislavery Reconsidered* admirably succeeds, as Perry and Fellman hoped, in treating abolitionism as "an *historical* subject" and not for "its resemblance . . . to modern movements." Our knowledge and insights are enhanced not just about antislavery but about a fascinating and wide variety of intellectual, cultural, and social phenomena in antebellum American life. Any connections to the 1960s are left to the interpretive imagination of the reader. (And they are there.)

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*The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War.* By Kenneth M. Stampp. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. Pp. xv, 320. Notes, index. \$15.95.)

Kenneth M. Stampp, whom students of Indiana history will recognize as the author of an early study of Hoosier politics during the Civil War, has compiled a volume of eight interpretive essays, six of which have previously appeared in print between 1945 and 1978. Organized under four basic headings, each comprised of from one to three chapters, these pieces focus upon the issues central to the antebellum and Civil War years: the nature of the federal union, the effects of slavery upon its immediate victims, the birth of the Republican party, Lincoln's presidential nomination and his subsequent role during the secession crisis, the North-South dichotomy, the defeat of the Confederacy.