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John N. Fain, ed. *Sanctified Trial: The Diary of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, a Confederate Woman in East Tennessee.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004. Illustrations + notes + bibliography + index. $42.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57233-313-0.

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A View from the Home Front

Sanctified Trial is one of the most recent titles in the University of Tennessee Press's Voices of the Civil War Series. The expressed goal of this series is to make widely available previously unpublished primary source materials that offer new light on "the battlefield, the home front, and the western front, as well as other aspects of this historic era." Since its inception eleven years ago, the series list has grown to include thirty-four personal accounts. The series as a whole is excellent and many of the individual works make for riveting reading. And yet only three of the "voices" in the series belonged to civilians. This is discouraging but hardly surprising. The series clearly is aimed at a broad audience, and although non-academic readers continue to show an insatiable appetite for Civil War history, it is the war's military dimension that consumes them. It is probably but a slight exaggeration to say that, for most Americans, the history of the Civil War is the history that played out on the battlefield, perhaps with a dash of Abraham Lincoln or Jefferson Davis thrown in for good measure. Scholars have worked hard in recent years to complicate this popular impression by calling attention to the millions of civilians who experienced the war from behind the front lines, not from the vantage point of the Hornet's Nest or Marye's Heights or Missionary Ridge. Giving voice to this "silent majority" is no easy task, however, and historians investigating life behind the lines have learned the truth of the poet Thomas Gray's lament concerning "the short and simple annals of the poor." Although the planter elite sometimes left extensive records of their experiences on the home front, more typical Southerners–white and black–seldom left much of a paper trail. This is what makes *Sanctified Trial* so extraordinary. Diarist Eliza Fain was at once a member of five groups traditionally underrepresented in social histories of the South during the Civil War: she was a civilian, a woman, a member of a family of moderate means, a resident of Appalachia, and a staunch Confederate in a disproportionately Unionist region. Forty-five years old when the war began, Eliza lived with her husband, Richard, and their twelve children on a farm outside of the village of Rogersville in upper East Tennessee. In 1860 they were members of the county's "second tier" of wealth holders (p. xxviii), owning two hundred acres (mostly pasture and woodland), as well as eight slaves. Because Richard Fain devoted much of his time to business in town, most of the work on the farm was coordinated by Eliza and performed by her older sons and the family slaves, only two of whom were adult male field hands. We know this because in her "spare time" Eliza recorded her thoughts and experiences with a level of detail–and of persistence–rarely equaled. Her diary, which she kept with occasional interruptions for nearly sixty years, eventually filled twenty-eight volumes totaling 3,750 pages. The selections chosen for publication (about 13 percent of the original diary) date almost entirely from the years 1860-65. Full of suggestive insights, they will make fascinating reading for academic historians and Civil War buffs alike.

Perhaps it is best to deal with frustrations first. The diary is not edited by a trained historian but by a physician and distant relative of Eliza Fain's who inherited the diary. This is common for titles in the Voices of the Civil War Series, barely half of which are edited by professional historians. Editors of the remaining titles include scholars from other disciplines, but also attorneys, accountants, military officers, etc. This often leads to mixed results. In the case in question, editor John Fain

provides a mostly competent introduction to the Civil War in East Tennessee, and he has gone to admirable lengths to provide useful annotation; indeed, the footnotes are full of helpful clarifications explaining particular allusions to little-known persons or events. Less useful is his extended (twenty-four-page) introduction to the diary's "principal characters," a section in which the editor functions more as genealogist than as historian, often including details that no reader unrelated to the Fains could possibly find interesting. (Do we need to know that Eliza's second daughter, Sallie, had a daughter named Martha who was secretary to the president of the University of Tennessee? Is the name of Eliza's sister-in-law's second child's husband really that crucial?) Finally, the editor has adopted an unsettling editorial policy, omitting the "less interesting sections" (p. xix) from the war years without indicating by means of ellipses when he has done so.

Such problems aside, the diary itself is richly rewarding and speaks directly to numerous questions of interest to students of the Civil War. For example, Eliza's entries testify to the bitter local struggle that often divided whites in the Appalachian South. While her husband and five grown sons were enlisting to defend the Confederacy, Eliza was horrified to learn that many in her community were unwilling to place their all "on the altar of Southern Freedom," indeed, were even siding with that "Monarch of Tyranny," Abraham Lincoln, in his fanatical crusade to "destroy the rights of American freemen" (pp. 17, 36, 111). Some of these eventually donned blue uniforms and made their "treason" overt. Others stayed at home and tried to mind their own business. A small minority joined guerilla units and terrorized their Confederate neighbors, including the Fains. All earned Eliza's scorn. East Tennessee's most outspoken Unionist, "Parson" William G. Brownlow, frequently derided the region's leading secessionists as a pseudo-aristocracy that held poor whites in contempt and dismissed the region's Unionist majority as ignorant and uncouth.[1] Eliza Fain certainly fit the mold. Local Unionists included a "respectable" minority, she conceded, but she described the "larger proportion" variously as "poor," "wretched," "deluded," "infatuated," and "degraded" (pp. 323, 4, 30, 204, 323). At the war's conclusion, Eliza lamented that Union victory had elevated the "lowest down element of whites" to a "place they cannot appreciate not having moral capacity to do it" (pp. 326, 328).

Eliza Fain also recorded countless meditations on the South's "peculiar institution." She entertained not a particle of doubt that slavery had been divinely ordained for the moral elevation of a heathen race, and when the war began she was equally confident that her slaves shared her view. They had not given her even an "hours [sic] uneasiness," she noted in April 1861, and if all Southern slaves were like hers, she was "not afraid of one of the [sic] Ham's descendants on this side of the Atlantic" (p. 10). The events of the next four years gradually shattered her faith in Southern slaves and even, to a degree, in Southern slavery. The family's "servants" turned out to be just as easily "deluded" as the poor whites around her. Deceived by the North's "false philanthropy" and forgetting all that she had done for them, they eventually succumbed to the sin of discontentment and abandoned her (pp. 315-316). They would rue the day, she predicted, for "the Southern heart was the only place where any true feeling of humanity and kindness existed towards [their] race," and she prayed that in their hunger and nakedness under Yankee "freedom" they might "learn wisdom and choose slavery such as they had with us" (pp. 318, 344-345).

Although Eliza steadfastly condemned the North's hypocritical attempt to elevate to equality a race "all nations" deemed inferior, in the end she acknowledged that the white South was not entirely guiltless either. Her realization that an omnipotent God had allowed the demise of slavery led to a reassessment of the institution. The scriptural defense of slavery was unassailable (of that she never doubted), but Eliza did come to believe that God was judging the South for tolerating "the dark and heinous crime of amalgamation" (p. 88). Five of the Fain's eight slaves were listed in the 1860 census as mulatto, and the editor maintains (while providing no evidence) that Richard Fain "could possibly" have fathered at least two (p. xli). This is impossible to rule out, and the editor may be right in suggesting that Eliza was indirectly chastising her husband. At any rate, the sin this pious Presbyterian condemned in her private diary was never "adultery" or "fornication" per se but "amalgamation," and the primary casualty of this crime, as she denounced it, was never the spurned wife (and certainly not the abused slave), but rather the purity of the white race. Six weeks after Appomattox she contemplated what it meant "for a nation favored of God as no other has been to mix blood with a race whom God for reasons unknown to us has doomed to a state of servitude." The answer was clear: "God is pouring out his wrath upon the South" (pp. 342-343).

Eliza's conclusion points to perhaps the single most striking feature of her diary: almost every page underscores the centrality of her religious faith and her propen-

sity to interpret the national crisis that engulfed her in primarily religious terms. "I am ... fixed in my conviction concerning this war," she observed in the fall of 1862, "that religion will be more intimately interwoven in its history than any which had ever preceded it" (p. 45). With this in mind it is useful to read the diary in light of several recent and extremely important works that speak to the broadly defined religious dimensions of the Civil War. Eliza's scriptural defense of slavery reinforces the conclusion of Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese that, however much elite theologians may have ridiculed the "curse of Ham" argument, it still figured prominently in the "everyday theology" of the white South.[2] Eliza recorded at length her pastor's teaching from Genesis 9:24-27 and pronounced it "a sermon which I wish all could hear." (He preached on the same text only a few months later.) Adding her own commentary, she noted that human history ever since the pronouncement of the curse underscored the truth that the sons of Ham had been doomed to servitude "under the descendants of Shem and Japheth" (p. 180). Similarly, Eliza's condemnation of the North underlines Mark Noll's observation that the certainty with which Americans interpreted their bibles could transform "the conclusions reached by opponents into willful perversions of sacred truth."[3] In Eliza's view, Northern opponents of slavery had set aside the word of God to further "the machinations of wicked men" (p. 5). The Southern cause, then, was nothing less than a holy struggle for religious freedom, a point she made time after time after time. It was necessary to drive the "idolaters" and "infidels" from the South so that "we may worship our God according to the dictates of our own consciences" (pp. 48, 36).

Finally, the contrast between Eliza's extensive moral justifications for the onset of the war and her minimal moral reflection about how the war was being waged largely illustrates a broader pattern which, according to Harry Stout, characterized both North and South during the conflict.[4] In fairness to her, Eliza did not wholly ignore the latter question. She was disturbed by a report of local Confederates who "acted badly" by taking horses they did not need, and she was clearly unsettled when she first heard of the burning of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania by Confederate troops under Jubal Early. She wondered "whether this is part of God's mighty plan to bring our enemies to see what they have done to us," but she still had misgivings, closing her meditation on the news with a prayer that God would grant strength to Confederate leaders "to act as a Christian people should" (pp. 207-208). These were isolated musings, however, and most of her reservations about the South's prosecution of the war were less penetrating. It distressed her that so many major battles were fought on Sunday (her most frequently expressed reservation) and that so many Confederate soldiers took the Lord's name in vain, and she worried that her soldier-sons might be corrupted by exposure, not to unspeakable violence, but to alcohol. In sum, readers interested in the Civil War home front will be hard pressed to find a more revealing source than *Sanctified Trial* or to encounter a single individual who better embodied the strong currents and contradictions in the white Christian South's response to the sectional struggle.

Notes

[1]. Robert Tracy McKenzie, *Lincolnites and Rebels: A Divided Town in the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[2]. Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 526.

[3]. Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 20.

[4]. Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Viking-Penguin, 2006).

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