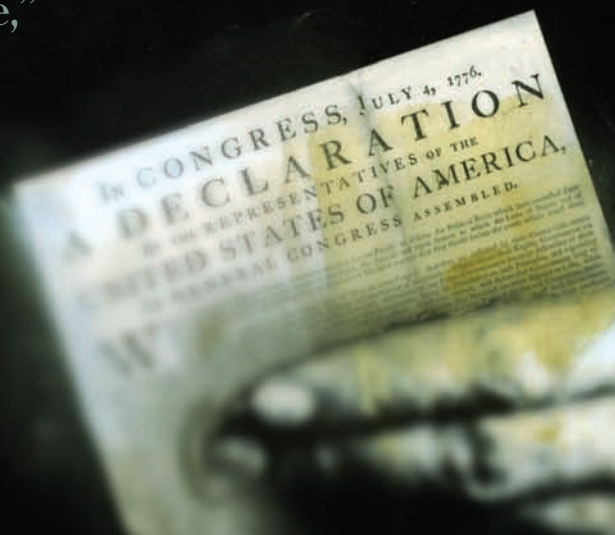


In 1858,
tumbling financial markets
prompt a religious revival,
the government launches
a “diversionary crusade,”
and a new leader
finds his voice.



Lincoln's AMERICAN DREAM

BY WALTER MCDUGALL

Buchanan rode to the White House on a boom the like of which even Americans had never experienced. Since 1846 their economy had received successive injections of adrenaline including Britain's embrace of free trade, the Mexican War, the California gold rush, railroad mania, and voracious European markets for cotton and then for commodities of all sorts during the Crimean War (1854-1856). Wall Street bulls binged on real estate, shipping, and especially railroad stocks until, by June 1857, the situation became scary. "What can be the end of all this but another general collapse like that of 1837, only upon a much grander scale?" asked James Gordon Bennett in the *New York Herald*. "Government spoliations, public defaulters, paper bubbles of all descriptions, a general scramble for western lands ... hundreds of thousands in the silly rivalries of fashionable *parvenues*, in silks, laces, diamonds, and every variety of costly frippery are only a few among the many crying evils of the day. The worst of all these evils is the moral pestilence of luxurious exemption from honest labor, which is infecting all classes of society." Bennett feared a crisis. Clever bears, such as Winston Churchill's grandfather Leonard Jerome, spied opportunity. Jerome sold short (betting that stocks would fall), then spread rumors of weak banks and rickety railroads. In July, when a dip in exports lent credence to croaking, the market started to tumble. By August one firm after another went belly-up. The Panic of 1857 was on.

Jeremiah Calvin Lanphier recommended sackcloth and ashes. He had tried for two decades to get rich in New York before giving up at age 48. He decided that Wall Street must burn as it did in December 1835, but this time by the fire of the Holy Spirit. On a Wednesday in September 1857 he called businessmen to noontime prayer in an upper room of the North Dutch Church at the corner of William and Fulton streets. Just six stragglers peeked in. The following Wednesday 20 desperate traders showed up, and a week after that, 40. During those "melancholy days," as

Excerpt

Whitman called them, prayer meetings spread all over New York; and then to Chicago, where Dwight Moody rededicated his life; and to Philadelphia, where the retailer John Wanamaker and the Quaker Hannah Whitall Smith evangelized high society; and then to "every nook and cranny of the great Republic."

Southern businessmen prayed, too, but the revival was strongest in the North. It seemed the Lord was calling men in the free states to repent of materialism and stand up against slavery. Best-selling accounts such as Samuel Irenaeus Prime's *The Power of Prayer* and William Conant's *Narratives of Remarkable Conversions* suggested

that the triumph of contrition over pretense and pride might be a sign of the coming millennium. By February 1858 the revival was front-page news. Banner stories tallied attendance at meetings and featured celebrity converts. The clergy and women got into the act, but the leadership of lay businessmen marked the inception of a "muscular Christianity" that defined the rest of the century. The YMCA, founded in England in 1851, took flight in America during the revival of 1858.

If the Holy Spirit blows and lists so mysteriously that even theologians cannot explain spontaneous revivals, what can historians make of them? Certainly none would dare claim the spiritual burst after the Panic of 1857 helped to spark civil war. But it is at least plausible that the upper-class urban revival helped reinforce the North's growing political consciousness urged by the Republicans, the growing revulsion against corruption and vice, and the growing tolerance for moderate antislavery opinion. Among southern opinion leaders the panic itself reinforced contempt for the North. The *New Orleans Picayune* considered the stock market crash a judgment on the North's moral turpitude, while boasting that sturdy southern banks weathered the storm. *DeBow's Review* declared, "The wealth of the South is permanent and real, that of the North fugitive and fictitious." The *Charleston Mercury* asked, "Why does the South allow itself to be tattered and torn by the dissensions and death struggles of New

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID HOLLENBACH

York's money changers?" It seemed to the abolitionist Elihu Barrett that "the North and South were wholly occupied in gloating upon each other's faults and failings." In sum, there is evidence that leaders in both sections were getting fed up with falsehood. It remained to be seen how much truth the Union could bear, and for how long.

Moral rehabilitation found immediate expression in two sensational episodes, one absurd (though bloody) and the other sublime. The absurd one was Buchanan's diversionary crusade against Mormonism. Utah's legislature (elders hand-picked by Brigham Young) twice requested an enabling act for a state constitution. Twice Congress refused, because of Utah's polygamy and alleged encroachment on Indian lands. Pierce had tried clumsily to impose federal authority by appointing three territorial judges. Two were Mormon apostates; the third was a philanderer and profiteer ("Money is my God," he bragged to reporters). Utahans accused these judges of trying to steal their land and vowed to recognize no authority other than Young. One judge ended up mysteriously dead. Eight federal surveyors were "killed by Indians." When rumors reached Salt Lake City of federal troops on the march, Young prophesied death to gentile invaders. Death came to 137 innocent pioneers whose California-bound wagon train was assaulted in September 1857. Young claimed that Paiutes were responsible for this "Mountain Meadows massacre." Others accused Mormons of dressing like Indians or putting the Paiutes up to it. The truth is unknown. But back east moral outrage fanned by the revival and a prurient exposé called *Horrors of Mormonism* gave Buchanan the chance to look tough and proceed against a scapegoat nobody loved. He appointed a governor to oust Young and ordered Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston to march on Salt Lake City. The

Mormons' riposte in spring 1858 was to torch their own homes and fields, attack the army's supply trains, and prepare for a siege. Johnston's men were hot to slaughter the "modern sodomites" and might have done so had Thomas L. Kane, a sympathetic Pennsylvanian, not reached Utah first. Kane brokered a modus vivendi in which Young pretended to honor civil authority so long as he retained religious authority and no soldiers came within 36 miles of Salt Lake City. Buchanan washed his hands of the "Mormon war" by granting a blanket pardon. All he achieved was to puff up the legend of Brigham Young and make the federal government appear impotent in the face of odious sin. Republicans noticed.

The sublime expression of the new moral climate occurred in the state that had driven the Mormons into the desert: Illinois. Stephen Douglas, having mended his fences after the storm over the Kansas-Nebraska Act, hoped that reelection to the Senate in 1858 would catapult him to the White House. The Dred Scott decision was a body blow to that hope because it seemed to strike down his precious principle of popular sovereignty. But Douglas parried with a new doctrine even less respectful of the rule of law. The Supreme Court might insist on a citizen's right to enjoy his property (i.e., slaves) in the territories, but that right would be a "dead letter" if territorial legislatures refused to enforce it through slave codes and police regulations. In short, the way to save popular sovereignty was nullification. That plus the Little Giant's defiance of Buchanan over Lecompton restored his popularity among Free-Soilers in Illinois. Some Republicans even heeded Greeley's advice that they not contest Douglas in 1858, in hopes that he would gravitate into their camp. At their convention in Springfield in June they fought off that temptation in the belief the Democrats' split and Douglas's tortured logic made him vulnerable. The

Q&A with WALTER MCDUGALL

Dr. Walter McDougall, the Alloy-Ansin Professor of International Relations and professor of history, calls himself "a dinosaur, one of the last historical generalists." In part, he says, he was trained that way, earning his PhD at the University of Chicago mentored by "the great world historian" William H. McNeill. But circumstance also played a role.

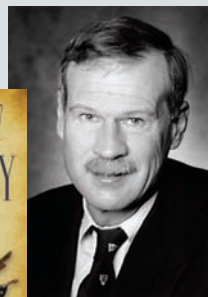
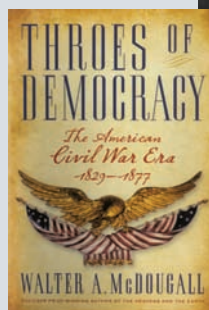
For instance, he started on *The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age*, after the leadership of the history department at Berkeley, which he'd joined as an assistant professor, insinuated that the European diplomatic history he'd been trained in and indeed hired to teach was methodically old-fashioned and politically incorrect, he says. That book won the Pulitzer Prize in 1986, which must have made switching gears all the sweeter.

Subsequent "reinventions" produced *Let the Sea Make a Noise: A History of the North Pacific from Magellan to MacArthur*—which

McDougall describes as his "long and loving" farewell to California (he'd accepted a bid to join Penn's faculty by then) and which one journal called "Moby Book"—and *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776*.

Earlier this year McDougall published the second volume in his history of the United States, *Throes of Democracy: The American Civil War Era 1829-1877*, which is excerpted here. The first volume, *Freedom Just Around the Corner: A New American History 1585-1828*, came out in 2004.

Originally, the idea was to do a "fat single-volume American history," similar to but less partisan than "Howard Zinn's hypercritical A



People's History of the United States and Paul Johnson's flag-waving *A History of the American People*," McDougall recalls. That changed as his ambitions for the book—and his determination to cover subjects,

geographic regions, and immigrant groups that had been neglected in earlier narrative histories of the U.S.—outgrew even the fattest single volume. "I confessed my failure as a grand synthesizer and suggested instead a multi-volume project," he says. "To their credit, HarperCollins agreed."

To a query on the status of a possible volume three he replies, "Everybody asks that! Have they no mercy?"—but then sketches out a continuation reaching to "1920 or maybe 1929."

First, though, McDougall plans a "respite of indeterminate length to recuperate" and work on other projects—from which he took time out to discuss *Throes of Democracy*, his work-

decisive factor, however, might have been local: office-hungry Republicans could hardly expect to prevail in lesser races if they failed to contest the top of the ticket.

Their nominee's acceptance speech did not disappoint. Abraham Lincoln's words cut to the marrow, beginning with an allusion to Jesus from the gospel of Mark: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*. I do not expect the Union to be *dissolved*—I do not expect the house to *fall*—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become *all* one thing, or *all* the other." How had the house been divided during five years when Democrats promised to end the strife over slavery? Timber did not turn into a house on its own, premised Lincoln. The frames were cut and joined by craftsmen named Stephen, Franklin, Roger, and James (Douglas, Pierce, Taney, Buchanan). Their carpentry fitted so well that it was impossible to suppose they worked without a plan. If the conspiracy was not checked, Lincoln warned, "We shall *lie down* pleasantly dreaming that the people of *Missouri* are on the verge of making their State *free*; and we shall *awake* to the *reality*, instead, that the *Supreme Court* has made *Illinois* a *slave State*."

Who was Abraham Lincoln—and why? The ever-expanding library devoted to America's martyred high priest cannot be distilled into thumbnail biography. All one can do is posit the familiar facts of a life that began in a log cabin in Kentucky in 1809. Abraham's unlettered parents, Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln, were content to be dirt farmers fighting daily to stay warm and fed. Their faith as primitive "Hard-Shell" Baptists sustained them. It also made them hate slavery. In 1816 the usual disputes over land titles caused the family to start over in Indiana. When Nancy died from poisoned milk, Thomas married the widow Sarah Bush Johnston, who proved to be Abe's

best friend and advocate. By day the boy worked with ax and plow under a father who imagined no other life. By night, and during rare months of schooling, the boy learned the three R's under his stepmother's wing. By 1830, when the family migrated again, to the Sangamon valley in Illinois, Abe itched to invent himself. But poling corn and pork to New Orleans on rafts stiffened his resolve never to work for the profit of another man (including his father, who sequestered Abe's wages), and jobs as a clerk and postmaster soured him on unremunerative tedium. So Lincoln tried politics, choosing as his beau ideal Henry Clay of Kentucky. The choice was automatic. Whigs stood for the education, internal improvements, commerce, and industry that young men like himself needed to rise in the world. Democrats extolled the stagnant, ignorant life of the yeoman that Lincoln was fleeing.

The lanky youth's hopeful message peppered with barnyard humor struck a chord with farmers and townspeople. From 1834 to 1841 Lincoln served in the legislature, mastering the art of logrolling on behalf of banks, steamboats, and railroads. He also kept reading everything within reach, including philosophy, science, mechanics—and law, a profession for which his experience and diligence uniquely suited him. After teaming with William Herndon in Springfield, Lincoln became one of the state's top trial lawyers. He handled some 5,000 cases, represented the biggest client around (the Illinois Central Railroad), and made a comfortable living. Yet Lincoln was somber, chronically so. He took little pleasure in possessions and spurned alcohol and tobacco. Around women he behaved like a rabbit. When Mary Todd at last caught the skittish Lincoln in 1842 ("a policy Match all around," judged his Whig mentor), Abe paid dearly for the social graces and political goad Mary imparted. Herndon likened her to a tooth-

ing methods, and what he has learned so far from his history of America in an email interview with *Gazette* editor John Prendergast.

Who do you think of as your audience?

The fan base for my books around the country is loyal, enthusiastic, and modest. None of my books has threatened the *New York Times* or Amazon.com top 100 lists. But every week or two I get an email or letter praising my books as the most refreshing, enthralling, exciting, or original history a reader has seen in ages. I assume the audience that HarperCollins had in mind was the same general mass market captured by Zinn and Johnson. I myself had no particular audience in my mind as I wrote except my own conscience, my own inner ear that strains for good cadence, and my own love of history, human foible, and America. What I mean is that I love history and the United States too much to exploit them for popularity, money, or a political agenda. Some of the most popular public historians, whose books are bestsellers

even before they're released, peddle what might be termed feel-good Americana rather than critical American history. I can't do that. I write for everyone in the sense that I hope that academic colleagues will respect my scholarship, students will enjoy reading and learning from my books, and the educated public will, too. But I write for no one in the sense of targeting a commercial market.

Can you describe the process of researching and writing the series?

When it came to researching and writing *Freedom* and now *Throes*, I proceeded in my usual way as a generalist. I just leapt into a whole new historical field with as open a mind as possible and a sort of studied ignorance. My research plan is simply to learn as much as I can by reading widely in the best scholarship and to let truths, insights, connections, and perspectives impose themselves on me. That is, I try not to mold the evidence like a sculptor, but let the evidence sculpt my thinking. I am helped in that because—again

unlike those best-selling popular historians—I have no research assistants and in fact would not know how to use them in any case. Every bit of research, writing, footnoting, revising, editing, and proofreading I do myself. And yeah, right now I'm burned out.

In the preface you talk about Americans' talent for "self-deception" and how that may be a key to their and the country's success. Can you elaborate a bit on what you mean by that?

That's a perfect example of what I mean by letting the evidence impose itself on me. A major theme of *Throes of Democracy* is Americans' penchant for pretense, for largely unspoken conspiracies of silence or unspoken agreements to pretend certain things, in the interest of civility, of keeping a huge, diverse democratic society from tearing itself apart. But it never occurred to me even to think about pretense as a national trait, much less an often positive one, until I read Tocqueville, Trollope, Martineau, Dickens, Schaaf, and other European observers of the American

ache. Not least, Lincoln seems to have had no spiritual source of comfort. While he was a boy in Indiana he rejected his father's religion. In Illinois he courted political damage by writing a "handbook on infidelity." Even after marriage he attended no church. Instead, Lincoln clung to a Calvinist "doctrine of necessity" whereby irresistible forces of nature predestined men's thoughts and deeds so that free will and moral responsibility could not exist. No wonder acquaintances considered Lincoln a morose, brooding man, and biographers imagine pathologies to explain him. But it only made sense that a lonely bachelor, then an unhappy husband, whose human relationships revolved around litigation and legislation might conclude that no man was free except to act in his short-term self-interest. More interesting is the evidence that despite his stubborn defense of this doctrine, Lincoln acted as if contingency and judgment, not necessity, shaped the course of human events. Nobody worked harder to fashion the outcome of a lawsuit or a political race. Nobody upheld more strenuously the sovereignty of "cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason." Nobody dueled hypochondria more effectively than Lincoln did through incessant, sardonic humor.

Perhaps the riddle is better put by asking, not what the man believed at specific points in his life, but rather what faith he embodied throughout his life. That question at least has an answer. Abraham Lincoln embodied the American civic religion as Federalists, Whigs, Republicans, and most northerners knew it or came to know it through Lincoln himself. His address of 1838 to the Young Men's Lyceum in Springfield, entitled "On the Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions," began by anathematizing the passion, demagoguery, and mob rule of the Jacksonian era. The republic could not long survive such decadence, but must succumb to a tyrant trampling liberty in the name of slav-

ery or abolition. There was only one remedy. "Let reverence for the laws, be breathed by every American mother ... —let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the *political religion of the nation*; and the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay, of all sexes and tongues, and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars." But that early speech just hinted at the civic faith Lincoln embraced after years spent asking himself what made laws deserving of reverence. He drank in the rhetorical culture—Clay's buoyant nationalism, Webster's Romantic hyperbole, Calhoun's scorching syllogisms, Douglas's paeans to democracy, the Southern Whigs' satire, and the biblical quotes and allusions that struck Lincoln as expressive of truth and made politics sacred to the people. Then Lincoln drafted all those devices into the service of his American dream. It rested on law derived from the Constitution, but law was a mere instrumentality if it did not serve values derived from the Declaration of Independence. His congressional term in 1847-1849 planted more seeds that germinated during the five years his political career lay fallow. By the time the Kansas-Nebraska Act forced Lincoln back into the arena, his voice and faith were mature.

In 1854 Lincoln moved around Illinois like flying artillery to bombard popular sovereignty. If the founders had intended pioneers to decide for themselves about slavery, why had they declared the whole Northwest Territory free soil in 1787? If popular sovereignty was not meant to encourage the spread of slavery, why had Douglas torn down the fence containing it? Even the hogs would know better, Lincoln joked. If popular sovereignty meant men should govern themselves, how could it guarantee some men a "fair chance" to enslave others? How, in short, could moral democracy be twisted into a tool of immoral

scene in the 1830s and '40s, and was astonished to learn that they all remarked at length on something spread-eagle Yankees themselves were blind to, which was their own howling pretense. Americans pretend lots of stuff. They pretend in order to get along with each other, or to grease the skids of their institutions, obscure the contradictions in their politics and law, or just to sustain their common faith in truth, justice, and the American way.

You also call American history a tale of "human nature set free."

I should not have been so surprised that pretense became a theme of my second volume, because a major theme of the first was Americans as a nation of hustlers. That is sort of what I meant by "human nature set free." Of course I trace the roots of what became the American character back to the Old World, especially the economic, political, religious, and legal heritages of the early modern British Isles. But insofar as the institutions designed by the founders of the United States maximized

the individual liberty of Americans (excepting always the enslaved), and insofar as the expanse and resources of North America maximized the prosperity and opportunity of Americans, then they enjoyed a freedom and power to express themselves, to pursue their happiness, to give full vent to the good, bad, and ugly behavior of which people are capable: more so, I think, than any whole nation before them. The upshot, as I argued in *Freedom*, was that Americans became past masters at hustling: both in the pejorative sense of scofflaws, speculators, imposters, tricksters, self reinventors, and conmen, but also in the positive sense of hard workers, strivers, builders, doers, joiners, and team players.

My particular insight, or to give proper credit, my elaboration of Samuel Huntington's old insight about the utility of corruption, is that Americans simply have no patience for any law, authority, or bullying faction that stands in the way of their pursuits of happiness. Accordingly, Americans are very tolerant of what I call creative corruption of the sort that may enrich a

few, but which expands opportunity for all (think Transcontinental Railroad or Brooklyn Bridge).

The role of religion in society is also very much present in the book. Is that a unique aspect of America in this period?

I think the pervasive religiosity of the American people as a whole might have been, and may still be, unique. But I cannot assert that without studying and comparing every other country on earth. I am confident that the character of the spiritual impulses operating in American society is unique for at least two reasons. The first is the so-called "lustre of our country," freedom of religion. The First Amendment's free exercise clause was born of necessity. Because of the wild profusion of sects among the 13 new states, some of whom had established churches and some not, the Constitutional Convention dared not mention religion for the same reason it dared not mention slavery: it was a deal-breaker.

But once James Madison and others got around to drafting the "ten commandments"

tyranny? In Peoria Lincoln soared above rhetorical questions to confess a creed. He said, “My ancient faith teaches me that ‘all men are created equal’”; he invoked “our ancient faith, that just powers of governments are derived from the consent of the governed”; he called voters back to “the national faith”; he called liberty the “first precept of our ancient faith.” He alluded to Moses, the prophets, and Paul the apostle on behalf of natural law. He argued that 433,643 Negroes with a “market value” of \$200 million would not be living in freedom “but for SOMETHING which has operated on their white owners, inducing them, at vast pecuniary sacrifices, to liberate them.” That something was conscience. Lincoln’s climax was millenarian. If Americans reaffirmed the faith of their fathers that all men are endowed with rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, then “we shall not only have saved the Union, but we shall have so saved it, as to make, and to keep it, forever *worthy* of saving. We shall have so saved it, that succeeding millions of free happy people, the world over, shall rise up, and call us blessed, to the latest generations.”

Whether one calls this biblical republicanism, the American creed, Romantic nationalism, or the democratic faith, Lincoln’s civic religion rested on mutually supporting propositions about natural rights, practical politics, and utilitarian interests. He never stopped being a Whig insofar as he believed in vigorous government to promote progress and expand opportunity for all. The sectional divide frustrated progress. Worse still, the move to spread slavery to the territories threatened to choke the opportunity of future generations of farmers and mill hands clambering for the next rung up on the ladder of self-improvement. But republics could not survive on material interests alone; that was the error of Douglas and the slavery. Citizens must defend each other’s rights and dignity or

else risk their own. If Americans did so, then Lincoln believed as firmly as any churchgoer that the author of natural law would bless their republic “to the latest generations.”

Did Lincoln believe Negroes were equal in natural endowment? By no means. He shared the assumption of his era that Africans were innately inferior. Did Lincoln mean to assault slavery where it already existed? He denied this loudly and often, wishing only that slavery tread a “course of ultimate extinction.” Did Lincoln believe in pure democracy? On the contrary; he respected states’ rights to determine their own suffrage. Did Lincoln sanctify individualism? No, again. His obscure but telling “Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions” argued from the Bible and history that no progress was ever achieved except through human cooperation inspired by reason. Nor was he a determinist, for Lincoln wrote that speech to rebut a lecture by George Bancroft, “On the Necessity, the Reality, and the Promise of the Progress of the Human Race.” The factors that drove progress in recent times, Lincoln held, were the printing press, the discovery of America, and patent law. None was inevitable; all were cooperative. What lurked at the core of Lincoln’s faith was humanity itself. No man had a right to rule other men, own other men, or eat the bread other men earned by their sweat. Either America stood for that or it stood for nothing. Negroes were human beings and everyone knew it. Ergo, Americans North and South must cooperate to adjust to those truths lest they cast away reason, progress, and their future. That made Lincoln more radical than the hottest abolitionist or secessionist. Lincoln, the border state Whig, insisted on liberty and union, now and forever. ♦

Excerpted from pp. 372-80 of *Throes of Democracy: The American Civil War Era 1829-1877* by Walter A. McDougall. Copyright © 2008 by Walter A. McDougall. By permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

known as the Bill of Rights, their first priority was to ensure free exercise of religion in the belief and the hope that religious faith and practice would be most flourishing and most sincere if citizens enjoyed a free market in spirituality. The result was a fantastic kaleidoscope that reflected a veritable interference pattern of spiritual light on to American culture, law, and politics. The Second Great Awakening in general, and northern Revival of 1858 in particular, are certainly among the important, if immeasurable, origins of the election of Lincoln and the ensuing Secession Crisis.

The second reason the character of American spiritual impulses is unique, however, is that sectarian faiths shared the landscape with an even more powerful civil religion. That is a taboo subject, I know. That Americans pretend not to notice that their republic competes for allegiance with the God they worship on the Sabbath, that their civil religion must in fact be a higher loyalty because it is what guarantees the freedom of sectarian faiths, that their civil religion can in need command their treasure

and very blood in ways their religious sects no longer can, that the creed and promise of their American civil religion in fact conflate the worship of God and Mammon: all those (and more) are unmentionable, indeed heretical, from the perspective of the civil religion.

Or, to put it another way, the Founding Fathers implicitly (or in Tom Paine’s case, explicitly) turned the idea of America itself into a sort of religion. The whiff of religions—sectarian and civil, now reinforcing, now competing—is especially pungent in the Civil War era. The challenge of history is in sorting out the religious odors and trying to put them in words.

Can you take a stab at summing up what you’ve learned about Americans through this process of research and writing?

I don’t say this expressly in the book, so I am not stealing my own thunder to finish by listing four character traits the Civil War seemed to hard-wire into the character of Americans, traits they would display time and again during the 20th century. The first is a *gay abandon* insofar

as the American people and political system invariably put off pressing problems until they cannot be ignored any longer. As a result the solutions prove exponentially more costly and less satisfactory than they might have been. The second is a *collective amnesia* insofar as the American people tend to forget or misremember their mistakes and ordeals out of cheerful optimism and a faith in the future born of their civil religion. The third is an *amazing resilience* insofar as Americans confidently rebound from the ravages of wars, depressions, and other calamities in a very short time. In that sense, having no room for tragedy in one’s culture is a plus. The fourth, to paraphrase G. K. Chesterton, is a nationalism *with the soul of a church*. For the United States, resurrected after the Civil War, purged old myths only to fuse its sense of national destiny even more inextricably with a cult of material progress disguised as a holy calling. That coalescence of Union and Creed, power and faith, rendered Americans uniquely prone to sanctimony, but also uniquely immune to cynicism.