

as democratic and science-friendly seems a bit overdrawn. Students of American religion, including Amanda Porterfield, Tracy Fessenden, and John Lardas Modern, are raising serious questions about Nathan Hatch's evangelicalism-as-a-democratic-movement thesis, which has reigned triumphant for several decades and is built into Wheeler's argument. And while the hands-on empiricism of the natural philosophy (science) taught in the old-time colleges may have inspired inventors and explorers, it drew on an understanding of moral and physical reality as divinely created, mechanical, and law-governed that ruled out the kind of open-ended skeptical inquiry upon which modern science depends.

God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War, by George C. Rable. The Littlefield History of the Civil War Era. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. 586 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth.

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Historians have written hundreds of volumes discussing the origin, course, and outcome of the Civil War. But the "absence of virtually any reference to religious forces in the standard Civil War narratives is remarkable," suggests award-winning Civil War historian George C. Rable, adding that this "would have struck those in the Civil War generation as very odd" (396). Indeed, Rable's thesis rests on the proposition that for many nineteenth-century Americans God's intervention in human history was an unquestioned verity of life. Thus, "many people on both sides of the conflict turned to religious faith to help explain the war's causes, course, and consequences" (9). This religious worldview provided a providential narrative that "offered ways to give all the bloodshed some higher and presumably nobler purpose" (9).

This book is an ambitious comprehensive religious history of the war covering both the North and the South, the battle front and the home front, soldiers and civilians, clergy and laity, men and women. Rable provides a cross section of denominational and theological perspectives that reaches beyond the dominant voices of the evangelical Protestant denominations and their ministers and theologians to include Catholics, Jews, and others. But the book is much more than just a wartime history of the churches.

Rable begins by reviewing the religious state of America going into the war, noting that religious faith had provided no cross-sectional

solution for the divisive slavery issue. Although religion was not a cause of the secession crisis, it “added a moral and often uncompromising intensity” to it. (49) The book chronicles how the war quickly developed beyond a purely political and military contest into a religious one as well—testing the spiritual character and commitments of individuals and the theological convictions of both lay church members and the clergy while fomenting controversy both within churches and in the body politic over the proper relationship between church and state as many churches became politicized.

The war as a test of faith for individuals is an important theme for Rable, one that is sometimes neglected in other studies. In letters between soldiers and their loved ones, in private journals and other expressions of personal sentiment, in wartime literature, in church records of various sorts—he searches for evidence to gauge shifting levels of religiosity in a population buffeted on every side by carnage and death. He examines common soldiers and their officers, battlefield caregivers both male and female, men and women on the home front in their homes and collectively in benevolent associations both religious and secular—and generally finds a wartime reaffirmation of religious faith in both the North and South. “It was sometimes amazing to see how talk of despair, declension, and judgment could so quickly turn to words of determination, revival, and vindication,” he writes (272).

Rable’s overarching point that recognition of God’s sovereignty and a belief in divine providence remained constant and survived the war is further illustrated in closing chapters on Lincoln’s murder and its aftermath. Indeed, Lincoln fares better than Confederate President Jefferson Davis in Rable’s estimation as he compares the seriousness with which each president confronted the war’s spiritual dimensions. Rable shares the view of most historians of American religion that Lincoln’s providential understanding of the war, as articulated most famously in his Second Inaugural Address, was more profound than that of most clergy and theologians of his time.

God’s Almost Chosen Peoples is the product of prodigious research in all manner of primary source material. It also reflects the scholarship of the past two decades by historians of American religion such as Harry S. Stout, Charles R. Wilson, Mark A. Noll, Richard Carwardine, and others who have focused increasing attention on the Civil War. Endnotes and bibliography consume almost 30 percent of the book’s pages. It will be the reference of first resort on religion and the war for the foreseeable future. However, even though Rable writes lucidly, the book may prove to be a formidable read for the uninitiated.

Rable quotes from several published diaries and letters of Iowa soldiers and from a handful of wartime sermons published in Iowa.

But he provides no analysis specific to the wartime experience of the state. Students of Iowa history may well ponder whether religious forces have been adequately addressed in the state's Civil War narratives. Rable's book is a source for topics that can be more thoroughly explored within an Iowa context, and it provides a broader national perspective with which Iowa's experience can be compared.

Battle Hymns: The Power and Popularity of Music in the Civil War, by Christian McWhirter. Civil War America Series. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012. vii, 336 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer Brian Roberts is associate professor of history at the University of Northern Iowa. He is the author of *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture* (2000).

The experience is not uncommon. It is the weekend at a college, perhaps a school in the South, perhaps one in Iowa. Toward evening, students and professors make their way across College Avenue or University Street, going to the library, a game, or a favorite hangout. Suddenly they are scattered by a massive four-wheel-drive truck. As the machine roars by there are the standard sounds and sights: the "rebel yell" from the cab; the Confederate battle flag embossed on the rear windshield; the receding notes of a horn that plays "Dixie." According to Christian McWhirter, the experience would be a testament to the lasting power of music from the American Civil War.

During the war, McWhirter argues, popular music was both a "weapon" and a "cultural tool." Songs encouraged men to enlist and motivated them to fight and die. They expressed sectional hostilities and served as vehicles for the war's causes. They even allowed for a few antiwar messages. And so Americans of the time took songs very seriously. At the beginning of 1862, for example, the popular Northern singing group, the Hutchinson Family Singers, passed behind Union lines to give a series of concerts and buoy the spirits of the troops. During their first concert, they sang a song with lyrics by the poet John Greenleaf Whittier, lyrics that specifically named slavery as the cause of the war. Some in the crowd hissed; others came to the singers' defense. For a moment it looked like a brawl would break out. The next day the order came down from the top, from, it seems, General George McClellan himself: the Hutchinsons were banished from the Union lines. Here, McWhirter's focus on music succeeds not just in providing a different approach to the Civil War but in telling a new story. As this