

The American Civil War, by Peter J. Parish. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1974. pp. 750, bibliography, illustrations, index, maps, \$25 hardcover, \$12.50 paper.

For brilliant illumination of our country's history, Americans owe much to such eminent foreign scholars as Count Alexis deTocqueville (*Democracy in America*), Lord James Bryce (*The American Commonwealth*), and Sir Denis Bogan (*An Introduction to American Politics*). Now, to this distinguished company should be added the name of Professor Peter J. Parish, University of Glasgow, for his scholarly, lucid account of the American Civil War.

The American Civil War presents a superb synthesis and persuasive interpretation of the economic, military, political and social aspects of this fratricidal blood-letting. In his analysis of this conflict Parish interweaves military affairs with political and socio-economic developments, civilian morale, and the wider concerns of a nation at war. His vivid description of military campaigns is enhanced by many maps illustrating the opposing strategies of the two camps.

Parish holds that the war did not bring about social and economic revolution. "It is extremely doubtful whether the war of itself caused any fundamental economic change which would not otherwise have taken place." It did, however, facilitate the rise of industrial capitalism through the destruction of slavery. And, Parish states, "The war which saved the Union transformed it into a nation; if George Washington was the father of the Union, Abraham Lincoln was the father of the nation."

The Civil War was an effective nationalizing experience for millions of Americans. It encouraged or compelled in them a sense of belonging to the nation and of participating in its concerns. The victory of Union forces demonstrated the power of the nation. The Union Army, which involved some million and a half men, as well as their families, friends and neighbors, was a potent agency of American nationalism. The soldiers who returned home had seen places and people until then remote—but now viewed as part of their own nation. Those who did not return home gave to the nation "that stock of heroes and memories which a sense of nationality demands."

The "fiery trial" (Lincoln) through which the American people passed was the supreme test of the strength, meaning and purpose of the American experiment—"a test on the one hand of its stability, resilience and capacity for survival and, on the other, of its democracy, freedom, justice and equality."

—Robert Watland Rinden
William Penn College

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