

READING LINCOLN'S MIND

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Allen C. Guelzo, *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999)

William Lee Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography* (New York: Knopf, 2002)

Stewart Winger, *Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003)

Since Good Friday 1865 most Americans have adored their sixteenth president. They venerate him because he so vividly embodies their two most cherished cultural stories—the poor farmer's boy risen to the top, the preacher of charity martyred for his people—while so strikingly surpassing even those mythic achievements. For the masses Lincoln lives on as the visionary emancipator, forgiving warrior, self-taught wordsmith, contemplative sage, and (most miraculous oxymoron of all) honest politician. For intellectuals Lincoln commands allegiance for his reasoned argument, his practical political judgment, his commitment to the principles underlying republican communities, and his tradition-rich eloquence (Shakespeare and the King James Version vying for prominence in his speech with authentic backwoods witticisms). How strange, then, that until Allen Guelzo's *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President* appeared in 1999 no historian had written his intellectual biography. Many important studies of Lincoln's thought have been produced, going back to Harry V. Jaffa's 1959 classic *Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Issues of the Lincoln–Douglas Debates* (Guelzo calls it (p. 469) “incontestably the greatest Lincoln book of the [twentieth] century”) and beyond that to William E. Barton's now forgotten *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln* (1920), a trenchant study of Lincoln's religious thinking. But Guelzo is the first to produce an intellectually disposed life of Lincoln, one that follows the lead of Daniel Walker Howe (most recently expounded in *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, 1997) by putting Lincoln's “Whig culture” and his distinctive theological musings at the heart of his personal and political story.

Guelzo points to one reason why intellectual biographers stood aloof from Lincoln until he himself took up the challenge. For all the grandeur of Lincoln's

speeches and depth of his occasional written ruminations, there was simply not enough material to go on. Some of Lincoln's letters presented a useful supplement to his speeches, but he left no essays or books, no diary or notebooks. His oratory displayed his mental acumen and rich biblical and Shakespearean endowment, but he penned no systematic reflections on his intellectual influences, his favorite books, his ideas and beliefs. (Having spent a total of one year in school and struggled in young adulthood to make ends meet, Lincoln apparently did not read many books, but he committed large chunks of those he read to his photographic memory.)

After his death several of his contemporaries—most notably his young law partner William Herndon—embarked on a quest for reminiscences about the early life of the president. The well-read Herndon made a point of trying to scrutinize Lincoln's intellectual development, highlighting his own contribution to his mentor's knowledge of philosophy and political economy. But as Guelzo explains, Herndon's work was labeled untrustworthy by the twentieth-century scholars who, beginning with Albert Beveridge and James G. Randall in the 1920s, seized the mantle of authoritative Lincoln interpretation from such renowned amateurs as John Hay, John Nicolay, and Ida Tarbell. For the next two generations Lincoln scholarship distanced itself from the supposedly uncritical endeavors of Herndon (and from the certifiably fictive enterprise of Carl Sandburg) by digging into the documentary record of Lincoln the politician—first centering on his presidency, then working back into the career of the Illinois lawyer–legislator. In the general dismissal of Herndon, his contentions about Lincoln's intellectual development got tossed out along with his sometimes dubious assertions about Lincoln's emotional life.

Guelzo shows that his own book was made possible by the turn taken by Lincoln studies in the 1990s, in which Herndon found redemption as professional scholars plumbed his interviews for evidence about Lincoln's private life. Douglas Wilson and Rodney Davis's *Herndon's Informants* (1997) became a convenient marker of the new era. While these and other scholars granted that Herndon's own views of Lincoln's life might be far-fetched—as in his fanciful rendering of the Ann Rutledge story, in which he took the doomed, tubercular New Salem maiden as Lincoln's first and only love—his research itself, they argued, could be trusted. The assembled reminiscences qualified as accurate transcripts of what Lincoln's contemporaries had told him. Those memories included much valuable information about Lincoln's personal relations, along with solid testimony about his intellectual life. As Donald and Virginia Fehrenbacher contended in their monumental *Recollected Words of Abraham Lincoln* (1996), scholars could legitimately use the reminiscences as long as they approached them critically, letting their readers know that some memories of Lincoln are flimsier than others. Guelzo, armed with the re-certified recollections, forged ahead to accomplish

what, in his words, “virtually no modern Lincoln biographer has managed to do, which is to read Lincoln seriously as a man of ideas” (p. 19).

Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President, by its publisher's decision, lacks the footnotes that would have permitted Guelzo to discuss the reliability of particular pieces of evidence, a serious detriment for scholarly readers. But the book still sets a new standard in Lincoln biography. That is saying a lot, since David Donald's magisterial *Lincoln* (1995) had come out only three years before Guelzo's book. Donald, a master of the art of biography, as he had amply shown in earlier lives of Charles Sumner and Thomas Wolfe, offered a deft recounting of Lincoln's private life along with a comprehensive treatment of his political career. Guelzo's biography rests upon the foundation of Donald's work even as it surpasses it in attending to Lincoln's thought. Donald's distinctive strength as a political historian and a narrator of day-to-day events allowed Guelzo to step back for a broader view, to portray a Lincoln embedded in intellectual contexts and a Lincoln himself stepping back and scanning the horizons of secular and religious culture as he embarked upon a typically Whig course of mental and moral growth.

Guelzo's rippling prose, full of passionate judgment and pointed claim-staking, makes a difficult achievement look easy: interweaving what Lincoln did and said, privately and publicly, with what he thought and believed. On his religious thought Guelzo offers more depth of treatment than any previous writer, a fitting accomplishment since his publisher, William E. Eerdman of Grand Rapids, Michigan, had signed Guelzo up for one of a series of “religious biographies.” But Eerdman's got far more than it bargained for; Guelzo shows that religion, an undeniably central preoccupation for Lincoln and hence for his biographers, cannot be excised from the wider Whig culture that defined him. Or, better, while Lincoln and many of his contemporaries saw and felt religion as an ideal realm that delivered them from small-minded materialism and socially imposed conventions (including the sometimes lifeless conventions of the churches), he also strove as president to bring his religious impulses into contact with his daily decision-making. Lincoln imposes a difficult discipline on his biographers, forcing them to elucidate the theological and philosophical ideas that so obviously mattered to him, but denying them any extended reflections of his own on how he came to his intriguing formulations or even what he meant by them. Lincoln compels intellectual biographers to attempt to read his mind. Guelzo rose to the challenge by constructing a sinewy narrative of Lincoln's likely intellectual development, religious and secular, as it intertwined with his personal relations and political career.

Guelzo begins with a counterintuitive burst, staking a claim that his stated evidence does not back up: Lincoln, he tells us, loved the Declaration of Independence but detested Thomas Jefferson. He cites an 1844 Macomb, Illinois

Eagle report of a speech in which Lincoln allegedly excoriated Jefferson for hypocrisy on slavery, for “puling about liberty” while bringing “his own children to the hammer, and [making] money out of his debaucheries”—a reference, according to Guelzo, to Jefferson’s affair with Sally Hemings and to “the slave children he had sired by her.” This 1844 story was recycled during the 1860 campaign by a Democratic paper in Chicago, and Lincoln, through intermediaries, issued a vociferous denial: he had never uttered those words or taken such a position. Despite Lincoln’s denial Guelzo sides with the newspaper; he believes the reported words accurately reflect Lincoln’s thinking in 1844. Had Lincoln really wished in 1860 to deny the story’s truth, Guelzo contends, he would have signed his published denial himself rather than farming it out to associates. Yet we know, from Guelzo as well as Donald, that candidates seeking to appear presidential at the time typically eschewed publicity, so it is not clear why Guelzo has such faith in the veracity of the newspaper report. It may be that William Herndon’s recollection in 1870 (mentioned by Guelzo) that “Mr. Lincoln hated Thomas Jefferson as a man” and “as a politician” stands behind Guelzo’s confidence in the Macomb *Eagle*’s objectivity in 1844.

As it happens we now know, thanks to research published in 1999, the same year as Guelzo’s biography, that the Macomb *Eagle* report was an outright forgery; the exact language attributed to Lincoln in 1844 had already appeared in 1833 in Thomas Hamilton’s *Men and Manners in America*, with of course no reference to Lincoln, then a 24-year-old provincial just beginning his career in state politics. Guelzo cannot be expected to have known the *Eagle* piece was fraudulent, but his reliance upon it nicely illustrates the dangers facing the intellectual biographer who must necessarily depend on non-Lincoln sources to document what Lincoln believed.

Whatever Lincoln may have thought about Jefferson “as a man” or “politician,” he said repeatedly after 1854 that he loved both him and the Declaration. At that point he appropriated Jefferson’s language to recharge what Guelzo calls Lincoln’s “Benthamite” perspective with an infusion of moral judgment. (There is no evidence that Lincoln read Bentham, but Guelzo believes Lincoln’s commitment to what he termed “the doctrine of necessity” closely resembled a Benthamite position on self and society.) Bentham’s belief that people were driven by self-interest fueled Lincoln’s thinking, says Guelzo, until he realized that Stephen Douglas was applying the principle of self-interest more consistently to the slavery question than he was. Douglas’s “Popular Sovereignty” called upon white settlers in any new state to decide for themselves whether to permit slavery. The scales fell from Lincoln’s eyes. “It was as though Douglas had exposed the dark side of Lincoln’s liberalism,” Guelzo concludes, impelling Lincoln toward a Jefferson-style “natural theology” so that he could “find some kind of moral containment to rights run amuck” (p. 188).

Lincoln's reliance on Jefferson after 1854 should not blind us, says Guelzo, to the continuing rift between their Whig and Democratic positions. A war of ideas raged in nineteenth-century America, he insists, and it split not just north from South, but northern Jeffersonians like Douglas from northern anti-Jeffersonians like Lincoln. Democrats and Whigs tangled over tariffs, banks, and internal improvements, but ultimately they wrestled over divergent conceptions of the good life. We remember Whigs today for their high-minded moralism, and Democrats for their live-and-let-live moral pluralism (whether it concerned alcohol consumption or slave-holding), but Guelzo argues effectively for a more basic difference. Whigs such as Lincoln stood for a system of open-ended opportunity that tied individual upward mobility to the development of a strong national society. Such a nation-building strategy, in his Whig view, did not weaken states and localities (as Democrats, who explicitly touted a state-preserving "union" over a state-weakening "nation," feared) but indirectly strengthened them by empowering the individuals who gave vigor to communities and nation alike.

Lincoln thus pursued a covert rebellion against Jefferson even after 1854, according to Guelzo, by transmuted the Declaration of Independence from an assertion of self-evident equality (naturally grounded because supernaturally derived) into an implicit endorsement of large-scale, government-driven, commercial expansion linked to "free" (often wage) labor. While the Gettysburg Address in 1863 might imply that communal, national bonds among citizens supplied an essential foundation for a society of newly freeborn individuals, Lincoln's Wisconsin Agricultural Society speech in 1859 delivered the true Lincoln mantra of freedom for all through the erection of individual ladders of economic opportunity. Lincoln revealed his distinctive genius, in Guelzo's account, when he proved such a single-minded and logically consistent proponent of government-backed individual striving that he insisted on making the free-enterprise system universal in its reach. For the system to work its magic—allowing diligent young farmers' boys like himself to rise in the world with no arbitrary constraints blocking their way—every man of whatever color, creed, or previous condition of servitude had to be welcomed to the wage-earning, bottom rung of his ladder.

Guelzo does moderate this stark separation of Lincoln and Jefferson—in which the morally diligent, modernizing Lincoln scoffs at the settled, aristocratic, and hedonistic Jefferson—when he treats them as common proponents of Enlightenment. They both embraced individual rights in the face of arbitrarily imposed communal or government mandates. Both of them restricted individualism to socially useful striving and looked askance at the self-expanding reveries of the romantics or the explosive enthusiasms of evangelicals. (Lincoln, like many mid-nineteenth-century Americans, did adore the mournful *tempus*

fugit side of romanticism, as in his favorite poem “Mortality,” by William Knox.) Both men loved science in its practical applications, and both men excelled at enunciating the fine classificatory distinctions that we still often associate with reasoned discourse. Neither Jefferson nor Lincoln evinced any interest in fiction. Neither man followed Rousseau into the vertiginous mysteries of selfhood as such, although the introspective Lincoln certainly swam upstream in his young adulthood against almost terminal morbidity and was dazzled by Shakespeare’s depictions of powerful men in states of torment. “Macbeth” ranked as his favorite play, and in “Hamlet” he preferred Claudius’s “Oh, my offense is rank” to Hamlet’s existential soliloquy.

But Guelzo reintroduces the split between the two presidents by telling us that there were two Enlightenments, the negative-liberal one of Lincoln (and Locke) and the positive-liberal one of Jefferson (and Rousseau). Conceding that Jefferson “never once cited Rousseau in his vast assemblage of writings,” he nevertheless holds that Jefferson, like Rousseau, expressed

contempt for economic rationalism as a kind of disease. The ideal society was an exercise in unity and stability, the free play of the passions, the glorification of culture rather than commerce as a form of community (a glorification which for the Jeffersonians only further underscored the impossibility of considering whites and blacks as political or economic equals). (p. 14–15)

There is certainly some truth in this broad-stroke dichotomizing, but playing up the divergence between Lincoln’s strait-laced, socially fragmenting, commercial zeal and Jefferson’s land-based, hedonistic passions diverts us unduly from their shared knowledge that individual rights promoted individual growth only when supported by a web of social networks and institutions, including the law itself. Another indication of how much they had in common was their joint commitment to representative government, a limitation upon individual powers that would have struck the (sometimes) radically democratic Rousseau as a fatal concession to “society,” the malevolent entity that prevented men from pursuing the virtuous path of representing only themselves.

Guelzo rightly asserts that as a Whig Lincoln disparaged the unruly “passions” that he associated with the Democrats in general, if not quite so explicitly with Jefferson as Guelzo contends. Individualism had to be ordered and disciplined by law, religion, and custom. Yet Guelzo’s Lincoln is nevertheless so devoted to individual mobility that he seems atypical of Whigs in general, who as a group may well have emphasized social stability as much as the Democrats did. They may have emphasized it even more than the Democrats did, in order to offset the destabilizing nationalization of commerce and culture to which they were also wedded.

But whether or not Lincoln was typical of Whigs in his ringing endorsement of individualism, there is no doubt that he diverged from most Whigs in remaining cool to Protestant piety and practice. Lincoln's persistent avoidance of the churches presents a problem for Guelzo's analysis, since he asserts a tight link between the Whigs' ordered yet expansive individualism and the evangelical religion that in Guelzo's view shared the same commitment to "self-transformation." But positing a "cultural congruence" in which "evangelical conversion" meshes nicely with the "energies of the market"—putting individualism in the saddle religiously as well as economically—overlooks the evidence that evangelical religion could thwart as much as propel the kind of self-transformation on which Lincoln staked his career and his life.

Linking evangelicalism and Whiggery as "harmonizing" individualisms makes the Lincoln biographer's challenge harder than it needs to be. Rather than seeing Lincoln's abstention from churchgoing as a problem (why would such a main-chance individualist turn away from such a thoroughly individualist religion?) it makes more sense to take evangelicalism as a faith preaching limited rather than unbounded self-transformation. Limits were imposed upon individuals by the church fellowship and by the Gospel itself. Perhaps Lincoln avoided church because he had become a more determined individualist than evangelical Christianity could abide. Perhaps he stayed home on Sunday because he had actually listened to what Jesus preached and considered it binding on Christians—the denial of self, putting others first. Perpetual self-sacrifice would have made little sense to a young man who had entered New Salem possessing nothing but his calculation that the disciplined assertion of self might allow him to make his mark in the world.

Lincoln's consistent avoidance of churchgoing did not entail a general rejection of social support groups, from his well-developed male coterie of friends and fellow lawyers in the 1830s to his Kentucky-bred Springfield in-laws in the 1840s. As Guelzo notes, this individual's rise to the top depended upon his facility for creating supportive networks as much as it did upon native intellectual endowment. Nor did Lincoln's avoidance of churchgoing stop him from thinking about religion or thinking religiously. Ever since his assassination commentators have disputed whether or not he had turned toward religion in response to the dilemmas and horrors of the war and to his young son Willie's death in 1862. But they have fallen into the trap of assuming that if he arrived at an increasingly firm belief in an active "Providence" governing or intervening in human affairs, then he must also have come to a deeper personal faith in "God." Guelzo slices easily through this lazy inference. He proposes that while Lincoln did come by the 1860s to conceive of Providence as a real historical force, not just an overarching moral regulator or a beginning-of-time creator, he did not for all that become a religious "believer," Christian or otherwise.

The idea of a mysterious God pursuing his own purposes in history may have emerged in the logical mind of Lincoln as a virtual necessity. How else, he may have thought, could one account for the continuation of the war's savagery? In his privately written "Meditation on God's Will" (1862)—a short but crucial document for historians since its deference to the power of Providence cannot be attributed either to a desire for political popularity or to the questionable recollections of others—Lincoln noted that if God's goals had simply mirrored those of northerners like himself, God could easily have pushed his "human instrumentalities" (like Lincoln) to accomplish the defeat of the rebellion and restoration of the union. Instead, God had plainly willed that the war "shall not end yet." His reasons for so willing necessarily escaped the minds of mere mortals, and could not be assumed to favor the positions of either North or South.

By 1863 Lincoln may have suspected (if the testimony of two cabinet members, Salmon Chase and Gideon Welles, is accurate and can be pushed as far as Guelzo takes it) that God had prolonged the agony in order to bring slavery down. At this juncture the belief that an active God possessed his own indecipherable motives may well have offered the drained president some comfort—responsibility for the war could then be shared between God and his "human instrumentalities"—but Guelzo rightly concludes that this belief did not for all that bring him into a closer personal relationship with that God (and certainly not with Jesus, about whom Lincoln had very little to say at any point in his life). Lincoln's lifelong attachment to the doctrine of necessity, his secularized updating of the old-school predestinarian orthodoxy he had imbibed as a child, apparently gave him more succor than either a Christian redemption scheme or a Judeo-Christian, personally approachable Lord could ever offer him.

Guelzo's book should be required reading for anyone who wishes to get clear on the place of religion in Lincoln's life and thought. His dozen or so pages on the meaning of "providence" in Lincoln's mind are the best reconstructions of Lincoln's religion in print. Thanks to Guelzo we can see Lincoln as both less and more attracted to religion than Jefferson: less drawn to Jesus as a teacher of priceless wisdom, more drawn to an impersonal yet active Judeo-Christian Providence shaping human history to its own liking. Like Jefferson and Franklin, Lincoln preserved a personal distance from God and Jesus while never doubting that God ruled the created order.

The doctrine of necessity, as Guelzo argues, was of course fully compatible with (and indeed supplied an urgent call to) energetic efforts to improve oneself and one's community. It also placed those efforts in a cosmic context of ordered mystery in which God kept his own counsel yet expected people to act morally according to their best lights, the doctrine to which Lincoln gave classic and poetic expression in the Second Inaugural. William Lee Miller's *Lincoln's Virtues*:

An Ethical Biography (2002) supplements Guelzo's book by taking Lincoln as a life-long man of ideas who emerged in his final decade as a prophet-politician combining "the moral clarity and elevation" of the prophet with "the responsibility of a worthy politician."

That combination may strike us as unexceptional or wholly abstract, yet Miller makes the telling point that Lincoln developed an unusually rich understanding of the relation between ideal principles and practical politics. Against the radical abolitionists who preached a doctrine of "duty is ours, consequences are God's," Lincoln held that duty itself required tempering moral purity with a prospective assessment of results. Duty meant calculating consequences as much as articulating ideals. Miller's Lincoln offers a Niebuhrian critique of social idealism and an Aristotelian defense of prudence. This Lincoln resembles Pericles as a model of *phronesis* (practical wisdom). He embraces norms as provocations for conscience but not as blueprints for action.

Though not a professional historian, Miller brings long experience in American politics, religion, and journalism to this well-conceived study. Any intellectual biography of Lincoln will take its basic structure from his succession of speeches, since they represent his thinking in its most elaborately argued and verbally polished form. Miller usefully examines orations frequently neglected in other accounts. Speeches such as Lincoln's address on temperance to the Washington Society of Springfield in 1842 become vital to Miller. This speech serves Miller's purpose of plotting the course of Lincoln's development as a moralist (i.e. a moral thinker). Already as a 33-year-old state legislator, the non-drinker Lincoln cautioned his audience of temperance reformers against assuming an attitude of moral superiority over the "drunkards." He offered that opinion not as a moral relativist, but as a humanist convinced that some people (like himself) had benefited from a personal temperament unaffected by the lure of alcohol. Reformers needed to acknowledge this luck of the draw, and to affirm how close they still came to resembling those who had surrendered their freedom to self-destructive behavior.

A decade later, Miller notes, Lincoln would extend the point by observing that southern slave-holders "are just what we would be in their situation"—i.e. all of us are morally shaped in part by our social group's circumstances, expectations, and conventions. The same Lincoln who always trumpeted the upward mobility of individuals took the trouble to state in this speech that at least some people developed characters pitched toward success only when guided by vigorously promulgated group norms. Therefore everyone in the community, not just former drinkers, should sign the Washingtonians' temperance pledge. Public opinion, which we know Lincoln often depreciated as a standard of truth or propriety, emerged here as the essential collective framework undergirding at least some individuals' moral performance. Miller's account reminds us that the

individualist Lincoln took for granted a web of social foundations ranging from the law and religion to local organizations such as the Washington Society.

For all his reliance upon religiously derived moral practices to discipline and shape individual striving, Miller's Lincoln, like Guelzo's, remains emphatically a non-evangelical Whig. Instead of turning to denominational Christianity as a supportive terrain for self-improvement, he placed his chips on the law and on reason, both of which could check the "passions" that led individuals astray and tipped the community toward ruin. Lincoln's high-minded adherence to law and morality was so intense and quasi-religious that it prompts Miller to describe Lincoln occasionally and loosely as a "romantic." But the term "romantic" seems inadvisable in Lincoln's case whether it implies a personal quest for transcendence, as in Emerson's cultivation of wider "circles" of experience, or (as Miller takes it) a social faith in some "larger entity" (class, nation, folk) within which individuals can lose, identify, or empower themselves. Of course the "nation" mattered to Lincoln a great deal, but as Miller and Guelzo would surely agree, it deserved praise in his eyes only when it protected and promoted the freedom of individuals.

Stewart Winger picks up Miller's usage and dedicates his *Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics* to justifying the use of the term "romantic" to describe Lincoln's thought. In Winger's estimation historians have misconstrued both Lincoln and the entire antebellum era, seeing them as governed by Enlightenment (and common-sense) rationalism, Jeffersonian (i.e. classical) republicanism, and utilitarian liberalism. Romantics such as Lincoln, dissatisfied with the allegedly mechanistic assumptions of the Enlightenment, have been fundamentally misunderstood. According to Winger, once we take account of Lincoln's powerful religious insights, and yet of his distance from evangelical religion, the romantic label becomes essential: it is the only way to keep his religious character plainly in view. Grasping his romanticism (along with the romanticism of many of his contemporaries, from Theodore Parker and Horace Bushnell to Stephen Douglas and George Bancroft) permits us, once and for all, to understand how romantic—not just republican or evangelical—the entire age had become in opposition to abstract, lifeless Enlightenment pieties.

But this analysis reduces Enlightenment and romanticism to dichotomous stereotypes, and forces individual thinkers into the Procrustean beds suited to their supposed side of the chasm. It fails to develop the wisdom of one of Winger's own footnotes, in which he begins to break down abstract types by positing a consistent commitment to reason in both eras. The further problem, with respect to understanding Lincoln rather than big-block eras, is that Winger, who tilts freely with William Herndon and David Donald for having missed Lincoln's non-evangelical (hence "romantic") religiosity, avoids contending with Guelzo, who cannot be accused of having downplayed Lincoln's religion.

Rather than counterposing Lincoln's alleged romanticism to Jefferson's republican rationalism, and having the two presidents stand as representatives of successive and incompatible world views, it seems simpler to follow Guelzo's course: take Lincoln as a determined Whig resisting the persistent Democratic Jeffersonianism in his midst. The sectional crisis, family reverses, and reawakened religious instincts led him to modulate his doctrine of necessity and adopt a still secularized but identifiably Christian orthodox view of Providence. Guelzo's Lincoln could not possibly have raised the banner of the romantic era. He was too busy retrieving some very useful elements of his inherited Calvinism, in effect re-Calvinizing his doctrine of necessity by supplying it with an active, mysterious God.

It does no harm to call Lincoln a romantic if that helps us remember his fondness for the most lugubrious poetry of the era, his passing mention in his "Discoveries and Inventions" lecture of the power of Niagara Falls to "excite reflection and emotion" on the part of millions, or his recollected (after 1865) interest in Theodore Parker or Lord Byron. But calling Lincoln a romantic does do some harm if it misleads us into supposing that he shared Emerson's taste for self-recreating experience or Bushnell's devotion to organic entities (from the nation to the community) that might shield America from the fragmentation of individual striving. Guelzo seems to me right on target in emphasizing Lincoln's dual commitment to ordered individualist striving and to nation-building, a commitment that keeps selfhood within conventional bounds of passionless propriety and subjects the ever more developed national edifice to constant moral scrutiny.

Winger provides an excellent elaboration on Guelzo when he notes that certain northern Democrats sang encomiums to the market economy and to individual opportunity that rivaled or surpassed those of Whig loyalists like Lincoln. These Democrats influenced by Young America ideologues diverged from the Whigs not in preferring a settled Jeffersonian society of local attachments to one of churning commercialization, but in clamoring for territorial expansion. The Whigs certainly qualified as zealous *nationalizers*, realizing that individual economic opportunity depended on federally sponsored tariffs, banks, and improvements. But the Young America Democrats surpassed them as *nationalists* prone to equate the extension of American sovereignty with human progress and to identify the American nation as God's chosen instrument.

Winger's fine discussion of Bancroft's Democratic Romanticism—the "people" and the "nation" as the carriers of virtue—reminds us that, for Lincoln and other Whigs, the "people" as such possessed no special virtue. The nation owed its promise not to the people but to a "proposition" about the people—the idea that they had been created equal. Since 1776 Americans had stood under judgment: how loyally would they defend their founding proposition? Lincoln

expressed this view not only at Gettysburg but a decade earlier when he eulogized his Whig hero Henry Clay in 1852. He praised Clay's dedication not to "his country right or wrong," but to a principle of right that transcended the nation. Clay "loved his country partly because it was his own county, but mostly because it was a free country." Winger provides a much needed reminder that Lincoln—who will be feted during the bicentenary of his birth in 2009 as defender of the nation and martyr for the people—ironically proved himself the quintessential Whig thinker by praising individuals and principles far more than he did either people or nation.