FREEDOM, UNION and POWER

The mind of the Republican Party during the Civil War

Michael Green

Freedom, Union, and Power

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Lincoln and His Party during the Civil War

by

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To Mom
For Dad

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES

CG	*Congressional Globe*
CR	Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Cornell University Libraries, Cornell University
CU	Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Butler Library, Columbia University
CW	Roy P. Basler, Marion Dolores Platt, and Lloyd A. Dunlap, eds., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953–55.
HL	The Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California
HSP	Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
HU	Houghton Library, Harvard University
IU	Lilly Library, Indiana University
LC	Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
MHS	Massachusetts Historical Society
NHHS	New Hampshire Historical Society
NJHS	New Jersey Historical Society
NYHS	New York Historical Society
NYPL	Manuscript Division, New York Public Library
OR	*Official Record of the War between the States*
SP	The Papers of Charles Sumner, Microfilm Edition
UR	Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Rush Rhees Library, University of Rochester

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book began as a dissertation proposal to examine the ideology of the Republican party during the Civil War: what its leaders believed and how those beliefs manifested themselves in word and deed. Several years, many computer disks, and a couple of file cabinets later, I have found a great deal of agreement between the diverse members of this organization. I also found much disagreement, but less over the ends to be pursued than over the means of pursuing them. No one who has studied the politics of the Civil War era would be likely to deny that Republicans sometimes fought one another with what strikes us today as a surprising amount of vitriol. After all, not only did they belong to the same political party, but they were waging a war for the nation's survival; they might have been expected to sublimate petty political hatreds for the sake of a higher cause. However, they spilled most of this venom over how to fight and win the war, or elections, or appointments—not over whether even to try to win them, or what winning them might mean.

Consequently, what follows is an attempt to offer insight into the Republican party's mind, from its victory in the election of 1860 until the death of Abraham Lincoln. It is not a history of the Republican party during the Civil War, although much of that history is necessarily discussed here. It is not a history of the Cabinet, Congress, or Lincoln or any other individual, although elements of that creep into the text and certain prominent Republicans receive more attention than others. Nor is it a statistical study of the peaks and valleys of the party, citing an array of quantification and regression analysis to prove its point. I have benefited greatly from such works, and they underpin some of the conclusions that follow, but the appearance of any statistics in the pages that follow is purely accidental.

Lincoln emerges here as the central figure in his party, and I mean that in two ways. As president he was the only Republican answerable

to a national constituency—or, given the circumstances, it might be more accurate to say that he was answerable to a sectional or regional constituency. He had to balance the views and personalities of radicals, moderates, and conservatives. However, as one whose views were evolving, Lincoln provides us with a useful yardstick by which to measure his fellow Republicans. That Lincoln disliked slavery should be beyond argument. Whether he opposed it enough to eliminate it is harder to determine—he made no such noises as he became president, but ultimately he sought its abolition through a constitutional amendment.

Other Republicans tended to be more set in their ways, on all sides of the spectrum. The masterful way in which Lincoln managed to weave between radicals and conservatives, and cleave them, is at the heart of this work. Even as brilliant a politician as Lincoln never could have managed this feat without a set of beliefs that he shared with others and that they, in turn, shared among themselves. Many may argue that he did not achieve this nearly as well as I think he did, but even they must agree that Republicans managed to hang together during the war. This point merely underscores the importance of this ideology, and hence the need to study it. I hope that this book fulfills that need.

The limitations of space and sanity have circumscribed this study in some ways and expanded it in others. I have tried to avoid historiographic debates, except in some footnotes and in occasional textual references. I have not delved into foreign policy or dealt in great detail with the give-and-take of legislation and certain other aspects of Republican activity. To a small degree I wanted to avoid replicating, in too great detail, several recent studies that have considered such matters. When I have dealt with these issues, I have tried to do so in the context of the party's ideology.

What follows may strike some as fitting the mold of traditional history, and some may believe that *mold* is an appropriate word to describe traditional history. I disagree. The study of political and intellectual history remains important to understanding our past, present, and future. Whatever criticisms of government have crept into our discourse in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, leaders are still expected to lead, or at least to reflect the ideas of the public they have been elected or chosen to represent. What Republicans did during the Civil War was undeniably an outgrowth of what they heard from their constituents, friends, and colleagues. Ultimately, though, the party's

elected officials were the ones who took action and elaborated on their action. Their words and related deeds form the core of this book.

Many readers turn to the acknowledgments to see who is mentioned, how sappy an author may be, and whether the list is as long as the Manhattan telephone directory. I plead guilty to all of these charges.

Completing this book affords me an opportunity to thank friends and family who have tolerated, encouraged, and supported me throughout this long—overlong—process. For the length of the process and any errors that follow, I am to blame; after all, had I listened to them, there would have been no errors.

I was wise enough to listen to librarians. I am especially indebted to those at Columbia University; the Huntington Library; the Lilly Library at Indiana University; the Library of Congress; the New York Public Library; the New York Historical Society; the University of Rochester; Cornell University; Yale University; the New Hampshire Historical Society; the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Harvard University; the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; and the Community College of Southern Nevada.

The staff at Fordham University Press has been unfailingly helpful. I would like especially to thank Paul A. Cimbala, a professor of history at Fordham and the editor of the series in which this volume appears. He took me in hand while I was still a graduate student and has been a constant source of encouragement, prodding, and ideas. The staff at Fordham University Press has been a joy to work with.

Several groups provided much-needed and much-appreciated financial support. Thanks to the Fletcher Jones and Michael J. Connell Foundations, I was able to spend three glorious months at the Huntington Library. The Ball Brothers Foundation made it possible for me to mine the holdings of the Lilly Library at Indiana University. The Dunning Fund for travel in the Columbia University history department enabled me to travel to conferences to present some of my findings, and fellowships from that institution made it possible for me to go there in the first place.

My fellow Columbia graduate students, in history and other areas, provided friendship and sustenance. For true friendship—and lodging—I am exceptionally indebted to Yanek Mieczkowski and his parents, Bogdan and Seiko; Bob Dobie and his parents, Bob and Marge; and Ted

and Pamela Stanford. In and out of the classroom, I have profited from knowing and working with Leah Arroyo, Jon Birnbaum, Alana Erickson Coble, Walter Friedman, Kevin Kenny, Ed O'Donnell, and Craig Wilder.

The time I spent at the Huntington was among the most intellectually and spiritually rewarding I have ever spent. That was due to the efforts of Martin Ridge and his successor in charge of research, Robert Ritchie, and to the friends I made there: Thomas Cox, Karen Lystra, Wilbur Miller, Andrew Rolle, and Paul Zall. Discussions with Daniel Walker Howe and Mark Summers greatly affected my work. I developed a friendship there with Stanley, Janet, and Scott Hirshson, and am glad I did.

I never would have been a history major if a high school teacher named Phil Cook had not demanded that I participate in a speech contest. It led to my hiring at the *Valley Times,* a newspaper that was an educational institution in its own right. Bruce Hasley and Sue Volek, Bob and Linda Faiss, Ken and Kerrie White, Lew and Shirley Shupe, Marilee Joyce, Mark Brown, and Terry and Jenny Care became friends through that experience, and better friends through other experiences.

While earning my bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), I studied with a fine group of professors. Andy Fry and Gene Moehring taught me a great deal about writing and historical thought. Going to UNLV introduced me to Charles and Joan Adams, Felicia Campbell, and Tom Wright and Dina Titus. Through Professor Moehring, I was able to meet Hans Trefousse, whose advice meant a lot.

The experience of going to graduate school at Columbia was enormously rewarding in so many ways, not the least of which was my exposure to scholars who built upon what I learned at UNLV and made me much better for it. John Garraty and David Cannadine set wonderful examples of scholarship and kindness. James Shenton and Josh Freeman opened my eyes to previously shadowy areas of historiography. Alden Vaughan introduced me to new ways of thinking about race, and his good nature as a mentor and a member of my orals committee will be with me always. Eric McKitrick oversaw my master's essay and my work as a teaching assistant, talked to me at length about both, was exceptionally kind to a young practitioner, and—to the surprise of no one who has read his work or knew him—constantly gave me so much to think about.

The members of the dissertation committee, Daryl Scott, Jim Caraley, and Robert Erikson, were exceedingly kind in helping me to steer this work to completion. I would like especially to thank Elizabeth Blackmar, for whom I was a teaching assistant and who served on my prospectus committee and as chair of the dissertation committee. Her kindness and rigorous analysis were wonderful, and wonderful examples.

I was hired and became a tenured professor of history at the Community College of Southern Nevada (CCSN) while pursuing this doctorate. I am blessed to have a wonderful group of colleagues who make my place of work both pleasant and intellectually exciting. In particular, two historians there, DeAnna Beachley and John Hollitz, read parts of this dissertation; if that did not demonstrate their friendship and talent, nothing could, and their criticisms went above and beyond the call.

My students deserve thanks. From the time I was a teaching assistant at UNLV and then at Columbia, and throughout my years as an instructor at UNLV and CCSN, they insisted on being able to understand what I was saying. This forced me to say it better. Also, Andy Fry gave me the chance to offer a junior-level class on Abraham Lincoln. In there and in my constitutional history survey at CCSN, students heard some of the ideas presented here and, with fangs bared and malevolent delight, critiqued several chapters.

I am grateful that while I teach at a community college, my colleagues at the university appreciate that we not only prepare students for them but also remain active scholars. In addition to those already mentioned, I am indebted to David Tanenhaus of the UNLV history department for his comments on Chapter 6. This chapter also benefited from my work preparing the history of the law firm of Lionel Sawyer and Collins, whose attorneys and staff were and remain friends and guides to the world of law.

I presented some of my findings before the Organization of American Historians. I would like to thank Paul Finkelman, Donald Nieman, and James Rawley for offering their thoughts on my work. Eugene Berwanger and Harold Hyman have provided important encouragement.

Two others who read this were Wang Xi, a Columbia friend who is now an associate professor of history at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and Michael Vorenberg, another Huntington fellow who

is now an assistant professor of history at Brown University. They saved me from many an imprecision, their sharing of their research for their own important and superb works saved me much time, and their friendship has saved me from much more; I also am grateful to Jin Pang, Dan Wang, and Katie and Emma Vorenberg for letting their guys devote so much more time to me than I deserved, and for giving me space to sleep.

Many friends and family members sustained and nagged me to finish. They know, I hope, how important they are. To list any would be to insult anyone I leave off the list, but a few deserve special notice, and the others would agree: Sara and Ralph Denton and their family, and Michael Epling and Mary Lou Foley, who made possible a most important acknowledgment below. My aunt and uncle Irene and Joseph Calca always lifted my spirits.

Several people who contributed greatly to my life and this dissertation did not live to see it completed. I am honored to have known them and to pay tribute to them here. My aunt and uncle Dora and Leo Robbins provided me with warmth and a family to visit in New York. Their (and my) family—Donna and Morton Gettenberg, Diane and Bruce Robbins, Ellen and Todd Gettenberg, and Sandy and Evan Gettenberg—carry on their tradition, and I am grateful to and for them all.

Bob Brown hired me to work at his newspaper when I was a teenager; had he not done so, I might never have become a historian. He and Adam Yacenda, his predecessor at the *Valley Times,* taught me much about politics and ideology, without my or their knowing it.

Ralph Roske made me a history major, then a historian. He showed me that historians should take their craft seriously, but not themselves. He taught me by his example as a caring adviser, and it is a pleasure not only to acknowledge that but also to try to follow his example. His family, especially Rosemary Roske, has done much to ensure that I do.

Gary Elliott was a better friend than anyone is entitled to have. As students at UNLV, then as colleagues at CCSN, we shared more ideas and conspiracies than I thought possible. If he had been here to read this, it would have been a much better work, and Debbie Elliott and Kim Hooper, his wife and daughter, would have tolerated his taking the time to read it.

Four special people deserve special attention:

Those familiar with Eric Foner and his work know that he is brilliant and sets an example for his students that we can only hope to emulate. However, I owe him more. When I arrived in New York the first time I had lived away from home, I was scared to death. He showed me more kindness than I suspect he realized. I went to New York to learn from him; I learned more than I thought possible. He has been encouraging or tough when necessary, and a model and exemplar at all times.

This dissertation was almost completed when Deborah Young entered my life. I discovered the pleasure of sharing her with a dynamic and fun group of family and friends who have enriched my existence. She discovered that she had to share me not only with a similar group, but with stacks of paper and piles of disks. Not only did she not complain; she encouraged—perhaps a better word is prodded—me to finish. She even agreed to share the rest of our lives together. Her good cheer, caring, sensitivity, and love have inspired me in countless ways, not just to finish this work. I can no more express my appreciation for her contribution to my writing, my sanity, and my life than I can express my love.

The dedication of this dissertation reflects gratitude and guilt. Robert and Marsha Green dedicated their lives to me and tolerated my work and the expenses it caused, financially and psychically, beyond any reasonable expectation. Her proofreading of the early drafts, and his proofreading of the later ones, saved me from many a typographical error and considerable fuzziness of writing. They gave me what their parents, Armand and Helen Green and Louis and Florence Greene, gave to them. They had faith in me, and to say that I am proud to have rewarded that faith is an understatement. Unfortunately, my mother died before I finished. I will always regret that, but not her love and common sense, nor my father's unfailing kindness and decency. To her memory and his continued importance and influence in my life, this work is dedicated.

INTRODUCTION

No aspect of the Civil War, except for the fighting of it, has received as much attention from historians as the political developments that caused the war and shaped its effects. In the decades before and following the war, the second party system collapsed and the third party system began—and, after many controversies and convolutions, it still survives today. A sectional, minority party won the presidency, then struggled to become a national majority party and survived to enjoy great success, even as it and the nation changed. When one region elected the president, the other dissolved the Union rather than accept the result. That president's party doubted him enough to threaten his administration's survival and his renomination for a second term, even during the nation's bloodiest war. When the tide turned he won reelection, assuring freedom for about four million slaves as well as the redefinition of a nation and its mission. And with victory near, assassination made Abraham Lincoln a martyr.

These plot threads of the Civil War have prompted endless efforts to weave a coherent whole and endless explorations of those threads. A slew of publications shows the unflagging interest of both historians and the public in the Civil War. And, despite the increasing emphasis among historians on looking at the past "from the bottom up," students of the subject have heeded Eric Hobsbawm's entreaty to examine the "history of society." Recent scholarship has extended well beyond the life and times of a great man or group. Biographies have probed the lives of prominent figures and their times. Studies of public policy and the party's economic vision have explained what Republicans did to win the war and remake the nation. Examinations of Lincoln's words and deeds have demonstrated how he broadened the war into "a new birth of freedom," denied freedom to some of his foes, and refused to support full freedom for those whom the war freed from bondage. Other works on Northerners in military and political battles have analyzed why they fought and reelected the man who sent them to fight.

One scholar has even called one year of the war, 1863, the turning point in the nation's history.[1]

These and many other studies have examined the war as a whole or the roles played by its participants—individual or collective actions and events. While previous works about the Civil War have acknowledged the importance of ideology in general, they have failed to examine the party's ideology fully or demonstrate how it affected Republican actions. This study is meant to fill that void. What follows, then, is an examination of what Richard Hofstadter described in *The American Political Tradition* as a "central faith" that unites a group or an organization—an analysis of how the party's core beliefs shaped the conduct of the Civil War and the nation that fought it. Those beliefs are captured in three words that stand both separately and together: freedom, union, and power.[2]

When Republicans debated emancipation, criticized generals, shaped legislation, and sniped at one another or their opponents, they acted on what they believed—an ideology. This term requires elaboration. In his study of the party's antebellum thought, Eric Foner defined ideology as a "system of beliefs, values, fears, prejudices, reflexes, and commitments—in sum, [a] social consciousness." Many scholars have used different and invariably more complex, elaborate, or sociological definitions, and these have much to recommend them. However, it is possible to become too bogged down in semantics, and unwittingly impose present-day standards. Ideology, beliefs, viewpoint, and mindset are, at bottom, similar terms to reflect what people think. To suggest that a group united under a party banner may seem anachronistic when modern political parties appear to be nonideological. If anything, the willingness of two regions to go to war, and the partisan and personal arguments that continued in both regions after they went to war, demonstrate the existence of a unifying process of thought—in the case of the Northern Republicans, who often battled over preferment and place, an ideology of freedom, union, and power.[3]

This begs the question of where this ideology came from. The issue is not whether it was based on the party's antebellum attitudes, mixed with the necessities the war created; that should be obvious enough. Rather, was this an ideology the party shared and its members accepted, or did the members create it? Of course, since neither a political party nor an ideology is an independent entity capable of existing on

its own, freedom, union, and power are ideas that Republicans, voicing them independently, grew to understand as a common cause. Naturally, some placed a greater premium on preserving freedom, or saving the Union, or retaining power, than did others, and those differences will become apparent in the pages that follow. But to try to quantify these individuals and their views seems frivolous. Whatever their disagreements and failings, they survived the war's duration as a party, and that party had a core system of beliefs.

Some of those beliefs have received attention in the recent or distant past from students of the antebellum era and the war. Almost any study of the Civil War addresses race and emancipation, but few tie them to how the Republican free labor ideology changed during the war. In their superb works on secession, David Potter and Kenneth Stampp drew no connection to the party's adjustment to responsibility and its relationship to the beliefs of its members, nor have biographers of the key players linked their actions to a shared ideology. Military historians have turned their attention from generals to foot soldiers and African Americans hoping to be soldiers, but not to how Republicans saw the leaders, battles, and battlers. Potter, Eric McKitrick, Michael Holt, and Mark Neely addressed the role of political parties in the Union, but not how Republican views of those parties fit into their ideas about the Union and the Constitution. Studies of the national quest for law and order, and the Supreme Court's role in it, have never stressed how the party's mind-set affected the court's reshaping. What little has been written about the war in the West has focused on the few battles fought there or on certain individuals, but not on Republican views of that region and its future. Republican policies toward the South and Reconstruction have won ample notice, but the same cannot be said for what motivated those policies.

None of these subjects can be properly understood without an appreciation of the ideology that affected them. And what makes this study all the more important is that many of the works that have described and analyzed an ideological slant remain useful for the wealth of information they provide, but their explanations—the irrational hatred that radicals allegedly felt toward the South, for example—have often been consigned to the interpretive scrap heap.[4]

One problem is that these subjects have been examined through one of two prisms: the party's antebellum ideology and development, or the

war. As writers ranging from historians to novelists have been fond of pointing out, the war undeniably was a turning point, central to the American experience—an effect of one part of the nation's history and a cause of the other. Thus, while the Civil War is inseparable from the rest of American history, it is also a separate event, unlike anything before or since. Its uniqueness adds to its attractiveness as a subject for inquiry, but that inquiry has yet to extend sufficiently to the political mind. What and how Republicans thought about those subjects merits examination and analysis—not through separate prisms, but through the party's wartime ideology, the combined result of what Republicans believed and did before the war, and what the war itself forced them to believe and to do.[5]

The works of Foner, a Hofstadter student, have done much to reveal the Republican mind-set. Indeed, two of Foner's books might be called intellectual bookends to this study. The first, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men,* depicted an activist party struggling with the failings of society and itself. Concluding with the party rising to power late in 1860 and early in 1861, Foner wrote that "its identification with the aspirations of the farmers, small entrepreneurs, and craftsmen of northern society . . . gave the Republican ideology much of its dynamic, progressive, and optimistic quality. Yet paradoxically, at the time of its greatest success, the seeds of the later failure of that ideology were already present." How those seeds sprouted is central to the other book, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution,* which began by examining the Emancipation Proclamation of 1 January 1863 but placed far more emphasis on the rise and fall of Reconstruction in the late 1860s and 1870s. Near the end of this work, Foner noted "how closely the Civil War era had tied the new industrial bourgeoisie to the Republican party and national state," and how the immediate failure of Reconstruction could be linked to "the weakening of Northern resolve, itself a consequence of social and political changes that undermined the free labor and egalitarian precepts at the heart of Reconstruction policy."[6]

Even the most cursory reading of these two books makes clear that the party that went into the war and the party that came out of it differed in important ways. Other studies have explained the activities of political parties during the Republican ascent of the 1850s, Northern opposition to the "slave power" in the same period and fears of its revival, and how the party and the government evolved, for better or

for worse, in the decade after the war. Yet none of that changes Foner's fundamental point, which is inseparable from that of the first book and crucial to the second one: during the Civil War years, the free labor ideology was a critical part of the Republican ethos.[7]

However, crucial questions about that ethos remain. Perhaps the most tantalizing are those that ask how and why that ethos changed, and why any such changes mattered. A simple answer is that Republicans were the prewar party of reform and the postwar party of laissez-faire. But the constitutional amendments and laws that they passed were revolutionary, changing the nation forever. Thus, the answer must be more complex. Their belief in the free labor ideology before the war is apparent; that they achieved their goals during and after the war is more problematic. Even if it had done no more than free four million slaves, the Civil War would have been the largest, if bloodiest, reform movement in the nation's history, culminating an era in which many reform movements began and some prospered. It also recast the role of government in American society and led to the creation of a new nation and a new West, with railroads and homesteaders. By changing the Supreme Court's composition, the Civil War altered the third federal branch, the judiciary. It shaped political discourse and the relationship between the political parties for decades to come. While these changes affected and reflected Republican thinking, they also flowed from the circumstances of the time. That time was unique to American history, and the views of the party in power must be examined from that perspective.[8]

Inevitably, Foner and his work greatly influenced this study. Not only are the ideological ties evident, but many of the same politicians and thinkers were important to the party before and during the war as well as after. Indeed, these Republicans and their actions have received so much more attention from historians than their common mind-set in part because the cast of characters is almost Shakespearean in scope: the foppish and intellectual Charles Sumner; the Rabelaisian and cunning William Seward; the ominous and unwavering Thaddeus Stevens; the sincere and ambitious Salmon Chase; and, underestimated at first yet eventually towering above them all, the brooding, methodical, poetic, and shrewd Abraham Lincoln. Each has been the subject of much study. Together they seem even more than the sum of their parts: their party, what it believed, and what they accomplished.

Their actions and their motivations are inseparable, just as political ideology, political culture, and public policy are inseparable.

Thus, while this work examines how their beliefs and accomplishments were inextricably linked, it must also study their personalities and rivalries. Their ambition for power, and sometimes their desire to achieve it at another's expense, prompted pitched battles over office and policy. Their political activities could have torn them asunder—and, it may be argued, eventually did. But that happened after the war, thanks both to new issues and to new circumstances that affected older issues. During the war, even when they were at loggerheads—and that was surprisingly often—Republicans held together, however tenuously.

A recent study by Mark Neely illuminated the need for this work. In lamenting the absence of a sequel to Foner's analysis of antebellum party ideology, Neely deemed it "not possible simply to extend Foner's scheme for understanding the antebellum Republicans forward into Lincoln's presidency because the Civil War made much of the original Republican outlook, like its platform, irrelevant." But Republicans believed in a whiggish form of activist government; if anything, the Civil War forced them to go beyond their original goals but certainly not to dismiss them. Their belief in free labor and the connotations of freedom that went with it—the slogan "free soil, free labor, free men" is evidence of that—surely remained critical as they writhed over the question of what to do about slavery and when to do it, and as they celebrated the soldiers who won the physical battle for what they had fought for politically and intellectually.[9]

Clearly, the Civil War required Republicans to understand that "[t]he dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. . . . As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew," as Lincoln wrote. But that hardly implied a state of ideological tabula rasa, for Lincoln or for anyone else, when the guns started firing at Fort Sumter. How Republicans reacted to these events was rooted in what had happened before the war and in what they thought of it.[10]

It is important to understand what united them in their cause: it was a common ideology. In many ways, their differences revealed their similarities: despite their ambitions and hatreds they stayed united, and that unity flowed from shared beliefs. What Republicans believed in the period between when they won the presidency in 1860 and when the first Republican president died in 1865—the years of the Civil War—

is crucial to understanding the war and the nation that the war made. Yet historical knowledge of this ideology is akin to Lincoln's description of General William Tecumseh Sherman's march to the sea. While Sherman was cut off from his communications, Lincoln responded to a serenade at the White House and told the crowd, "We all know where he went in at, but I can't tell where he will come out at." We know where Republicans went into the war. Hindsight tells us where they came out. What they did in between is the focus of this study.[11]

NOTES

1. The Hobsbawm quotation is in Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 6. Recent biographies include David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995); James A. Rawley, *Abraham Lincoln and a Nation Worth Fighting For* (Chicago: Harlan Davidson, 1996); Allen C. Guelzo, *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999); William E. Gienapp, *Abraham Lincoln and Civil War America: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Hans L. Trefousse, *Thaddeus Stevens: Nineteenth-Century Egalitarian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). On wartime policies, see Phillip S. Paludan, *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994); Heather Cox Richardson, *The Greatest Nation of the Earth: Republican Economic Policies during the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, eds., *An Uncommon Time: The Civil War and the Northern Home Front* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002); Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002). On Lincoln, freedom, and law, see Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998); Xi Wang, *The Trial of Democracy: Black Suffrage and Northern Republicans, 1860–1910* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997); George Anastaplo, *Abraham Lincoln: A Constitutional Biography* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999); William C. Harris, *With Charity for All: Lincoln and the Restoration of the Union* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999); Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); and Mark E. Neely Jr., *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). On the military and politics, see Earl Hess, *Liberty, Virtue, and Progress: Northerners and*

Their War for the Union, 2d. ed (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997); James M. McPherson, *What They Fought For: 1861–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994); McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); David E. Long, *The Jewel of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln's Reelection and the End of Slavery* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1994); John C. Waugh, *Reelecting Lincoln: The Battle for the 1864 Presidency* (New York: Crown Books, 1997); Lerone Bennett Jr., *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (Chicago: Johnson, 1999); James M. McPherson, ed., *"We Cannot Escape History": Lincoln and the Last Best Hope of Earth* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); and Mark E. Neely Jr., *The Union Divided: Party Conflict in the Civil War North* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002). See also Joseph E. Stevens, *1863: The Rebirth of a Nation* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999). The war's continuing popularity is easily borne out by the presence on the *New York Times* best-seller list of Donald, *Lincoln;* and Geoffrey C. Ward, Ric Burns, and Ken Burns, *The Civil War: An Illustrated History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), based on the popular Public Broadcasting System documentary, which was repeated in the fall of 2002.

2. Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), ix, viii.

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6. Foner, *Free Soil,* 316; Foner, *Reconstruction,* 584, 603.

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9. Neely, *The Union Divided,* especially 143.

10. "Annual Message to Congress," 1 December 1862, in Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln,* 9 vols. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953–55), vol. 5, 537. Hereafter *CW.*

11. "Response to a Serenade," 6 December 1864, *New York Tribune,* 8 December 1864, in *CW,* vol. 8, 154.

1

Freedom, Union, and Power: The Civil War Republican Party

NO TWO MEN could have been more alike and more different than Charles Sumner and William Pitt Fessenden. Both were Republican senators from New England. Both rebelled against their previous parties and joined the Republicans. Both chaired key committees where their talents shone—Sumner headed Foreign Relations, with his knowledge of and connections to Europe; Fessenden led Finance, with his cautious and analytical mind. Both could be difficult to deal with: Sumner reveled in his intellectual superiority, and his idealism and self-absorption only grew worse after his caning by Preston Brooks in 1856; Fessenden turned dyspeptic when egos and debate detracted from completing the job at hand. And each captured his party's competing views. Fessenden said, "I have been taught since I have been in public life to consider it a matter of proper statesmanship, when we aim at an object which we think is valuable and important, if that object . . . is unattainable, to get as much of it and come as near it as we may be able to do." Sumner said, "A moral principle cannot be compromised."[1]

The differences between Sumner and Fessenden, between principle and pragmatism, represent and reflect the Republican party's ideological transformation during the Civil War. The party of "free soil, free labor, free men" retained its antebellum commitment to freedom, but events prompted a redefinition, in some cases a reordering, of its beliefs. Victory in the 1860 presidential election, the South's subsequent secession, and the accompanying Republican takeover of Congress made Republicans the ruling party, responsible for restoring a Union that some of them occasionally had considered unworthy of salvation. The depth of the party's commitment to the Union varied, although its members almost unanimously agreed that it should be preserved, if only to end the South's reliance upon slavery. To radicals like Sumner, the Union mattered as a means to freedom, the broadly

defined end they sought during the party's brief antebellum life; believers in abolitionism, or verging on it, they hoped for the yoke of slavery to be removed from African Americans—and thus from all Americans.

To moderates and conservatives like Fessenden and most of the party's leaders, freedom was important, but preserving the Union came first. If preservation required freedom, that was an added benefit. But if ending slavery would hurt the Union cause more than it would help it, freedom would have to wait. From what they considered their pragmatic perspective, the eventual destruction of slavery was possible only if the country remained together; a separate Southern republic would protect the institution. This required them to think and talk about freedom, union, and power; not only did they vary in their degree of commitment to one or another of these, but circumstances often required them to reexamine their priorities and preferences. During the war, "free soil" and "free labor" remained articulated Republican goals, but achieving them would take much more than waving a wand or passing a law. If this had been unclear to Republicans when they had been in opposition, it became apparent when they assumed power.[2]

Thus, responsibility or governance is crucial to understanding the party's wartime mind-set. Now that Republicans wielded power, they faced a series of questions. What was the extent of their power? Who among them should and would exercise it? Which branch of government—not only among the executive and legislative branches of the federal government, but also the states—had more of it, and when was it best to use it? At the heart of these related questions lay still more issues, many similarly connected. This newfound power could be used to grant freedom—and, paradoxically, to impose it by executive or legislative fiat. However, it also could and would enable Republicans to save the Union. Republicans had to resolve for themselves and for the country's sake what government could do and what it should do; the answers, often to their displeasure, might vary greatly. More difficult still for them, freedom, union, and power sometimes fit neatly together, but at other times one might prove more important than another, forcing them to select and reorder priorities. Freedom, union, and power were not just issues or concepts. They were the central ideology and theme, commingled, contradictory, and often combustible, of the Republican party during the Civil War.

The 1850s: Freedom from Power

Further complicating the Republican ascent to power was that before the war, their plight had been so much simpler. While they quickly gained support and success, they remained a national minority, with the freedom to object to the majority and freedom from responsibility for the policies to which they objected. The Republican party had been born in the mid-1850s in the wake of two events: the Whig party's dissolution and the introduction of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The Whigs, created in response to the rise of Andrew Jackson, could elect only two presidents, both of whom died in office and left a deeply divided party as their legacy. Those ruptures concerned many issues, including slavery. Northern and Southern Whigs split even within their regions over their stand on Pennsylvania Democrat David Wilmot's proviso against slavery in territory acquired in the Mexican-American War, and over the introduction and passage of the Compromise of 1850. And even the preeminent historian of the Whigs has argued that the force that drove them tended to be what Democrats did or might have done, not their own depth of commitment. In the early 1850s, lacking much of an ideology at its center or leaders of any magnetism to represent and unify it, the Whig party simply collapsed.[3]

Hastening the Whigs' death was the increasing tendency of the North and South to entrench over slavery. By passing a bill to allow Kansas and Nebraska to vote on whether to allow slavery in those territories, Senator Stephen Douglas effectively sought to repeal the Missouri Compromise. In removing that line, Democratic leaders drew another—in the sand. By making the Kansas-Nebraska Act a party issue, they almost guaranteed that their Northern anti-slavery followers would abandon them, and they did, joining with politically homeless Northern Whigs and the staunch but small Free-Soil party to form a new organization, the Republicans. The new party sought to stop the spread of slavery into new territories and to secure both the ultimate triumph of free labor over slave labor and the political power that represented slavery and sought to perpetuate it. They did so on principle, believing in the rightness of their cause and that their views would appeal to the electorate, and on the political ground that Democrats were in thrall to the slave power.[4]

However, Republicans remained in the opposition, and seemed unlikely to escape the opposition anytime soon. Their first presidential nominee, John C. Frémont, won fame and popularity for his exploits as an explorer, but he was too radically anti-slavery to appeal to Northern Democrats who might have been enticed into leaving their party to vote for the son-in-law of Democratic anti-slavery legend Thomas Hart Benton. Nor did Frémont attract conservative Whigs, who tended to prefer the nativist American or Know-Nothing party and its unwillingness to take a stand against slavery. Democrat James Buchanan won the presidency in 1856, and his party solidified its majorities in the House and Senate. With an almost completely supportive Supreme Court added to the mix, it made for the kind of Democratic supermajority, sympathetic or at least neutral toward pro-slavery interests, to which the South had grown accustomed. But Frémont ran strongly enough to make Republicans optimistic about the future, provided that they found an appealingly moderate candidate. In the meantime, their minority status enabled them to plan ahead, attack their opponents, and refine and repeat their message.[5]

That Republican message had been evolving from the beginnings of the second party system in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Even before they became Republicans, the party's early leaders insisted that the North's political economy and social culture of free labor were far superior to the South's dependence and insistence upon slave labor. They reminded the Northern majority of the Southern disdain for free labor and determination to spread slave power, no matter what the cost. And that message gained in resonance as the Democratic majority divided and the South overplayed its hand. Aghast at the corruption of his concept of "popular sovereignty" in Kansas and at the weak reed in the White House who was ready to accept that territory's pro-slavery constitution, Douglas broke with Buchanan. While the chasm between Northern and Southern Democrats widened, Republicans maintained a drumbeat against them and the Supreme Court over *Dred Scott v. Sandford.* Never before had the slave power conspiracy that Republicans decried seemed greater or more powerful; never before had its hostility toward free labor seemed more obvious; and rarely did they miss an opportunity to argue that Democrats were in its grasp. With gains in the 1858 midterm voting, Republican chances improved in the 1860 presidential election.

But with success came a price: after attacking the leadership of Buchanan and other Democrats—or the lack of it—Republicans would have to do more than just trumpet an ideology of freedom. They would have to act on it, governing a country in which the residents of its Southern half and a substantial minority of its Northern half were openly hostile to Republican beliefs. Spreading free soil would require holding the Union together and exercising just enough power just wisely enough; the issue for Republicans would be not whether to do this, but how best to do this.[6]

The combination of Democratic divisions and Republican gains rightly convinced the newer party of its chances of electing a president in 1860. This prompted yet another bow to political reality, but not at the expense of ideological purity. In 1856, Republicans chose Frémont over William Seward and Salmon Chase, both more experienced politically and more important in defining the party and its ethos. In 1858, they flirted with backing Douglas against Abraham Lincoln in the Senate race in Illinois—not because they accepted popular sovereignty as a solution to the issue of slavery in the territories, but because the "Little Giant" had split with Buchanan and they thought that perhaps the enemy of their enemy could be their friend. In those cases, they implicitly admitted that they might sacrifice at least some of their beliefs for the sake of victory—that a commitment to union and the possibilities of power compensated for a lesser commitment to freedom.

That was unnecessary in 1860, but again Republicans looked past their more prominent founding fathers. They turned instead to Lincoln, not because they saw his greatness but because it was the politically smart thing to do. Whether radically, moderately, or conservatively anti-slavery, all Republicans could claim him as their own—partly because he was less known than other candidates whose names were bandied about, partly because his record offered something for each wing of the party. He believed in the party's commitment to free labor, but he admired Henry Clay and his brand of nationalistic Whiggery enough to put the Union above all else. Lincoln's views might reassure the wavering Northern voters whom Republicans hoped to gain and, if he took office, prove less threatening to the hostile South. In either case he offered the potential for broader appeal than Seward and Chase, whom even some Republicans considered too radical on slavery. And since Republicans had assailed Democrats as

unethical, a candidate they could call "Honest Abe" seemed less corruptible than Seward and less ambitious than Chase. Perhaps Lincoln would exercise power more prudently and deferentially than leaders who were more successful and possibly more self-centered. His more moderate appeal, a majority of population in the North, and divisions in the Democratic party assured that Americans would have the opportunity to find out whether that would be the case.[7]

The Politics of Responsibility

Obviously, Lincoln and his presidency turned out differently than his party expected, and both the country and Republicans changed accordingly. While free labor remained at the party's core, the evolving ideology linking freedom, union, and power absorbed what had been at the center of the antebellum party. This wartime ideology might be likened to a flow chart. Guaranteeing freedom, preserving union, and wielding power all proved important—indeed, inseparable. However, Republicans varied as to which one mattered more. And each of these categories flowed into one another, with subtle and not-so-subtle gradations.

For all Americans, North and South, freedom was fraught with complex meanings. While defining freedom has always been problematic, the problem was compounded for Republicans. Eric Foner wrote, "With the Union's triumph, freedom truly defined the nation's existence." When Representative James Garfield of Ohio asked in 1865, "What is freedom?" his answer concerned how much freedom former slaves should enjoy. This suggested that the abolitionists whom Republicans had once scored for going too far had actually been right: freedom could be defined only by resorting to slavery as its antithesis. But Republicans were in a struggle to save the Union and expand their party, both of which might be in danger if they seemed interested only in the plight of the slave. Thus, they attacked slavery on economic, political, and social grounds rather than for moral reasons. At the same time, empowerment forced Republicans to devote less attention to thought and more to action. Before the war, they had little opportunity to turn their plans into reality. The war gave them that chance but deprived them of the time to articulate their ideas as fully as they once had—perhaps to the detriment of historians analyzing them, but to the benefit of themselves and the society they sought to change.[8]

While Republicans believed in freedom, any analysis of their thought makes clear that they had in mind a white man's freedom. As usual, Lincoln captured the essence of his party's views. In his annual message late in 1862, he suggested a constitutional amendment for the gradual abolition of slavery. It was a striking, contradictory moment: the first president elected on the grounds that he opposed slavery proposed to end it, but only over the course of several decades. He concluded, "In *giving* freedom to the *slave,* we *assure* freedom to the free." To Republicans, slavery had grown from a regionally confined wrong, a blot on the national escutcheon, to a disease that threatened to kill the republic; the way to cure the disease was to get rid of it. Whether Lincoln divulged his real feelings or engaged in salesmanship—probably both—his motivation had more to do with freeing whites from the threat of disunion than with freeing blacks from oppression. That was understandable, even commendable to many, and no doubt necessary. But Republicans had long since made clear that their devotion to free labor had far more to do with how slavery affected white workers than with how it affected the black slaves themselves. By reducing slaves beyond their already secondary level to a tertiary one, Republicans assigned additional tiers and meanings to freedom. For them to differ over this issue, then, was natural; they had created the differences.[9]

Within the party, each wing fought for what it believed each tier of freedom to mean. Radicals, or what would now be described as the party's left, often advocated equal rights for blacks, including suffrage. Theodore Tilton, whose abolitionism grew more fashionable as bodies and expenses piled up, called the war "a struggle for social equality, for rights, for justice, for freedom." More mainstream Republicans agreed. The *Chicago Tribune,* whose editors were more radical than Lincoln yet still saw their paper as his organ, said, "Liberty or slavery must rule in this Republic." William Evarts, a New York lawyer with conservative leanings, expected the war and the party to "secure this continent to liberty." Republicans used liberty and freedom interchangeably, but what the radical Tilton, the moderately radical *Tribune* editors, and the moderately conservative Evarts meant by those words differed. Generalizations are dangerous, but the desire for emancipation and black civil rights clearly narrowed from the radical to the conservative ends of the party spectrum.[10]

On the issue of union, the party reversed course: the more conservative the Republican, the stronger the unionism. Abolitionist John

Jay, linked to the nation's heritage through his grandfather and to the party through the radicals with whom he plotted strategy, said, "If we cannot have liberty and union in any new readjustment, I go for liberty in that union. The Union is a great blessing—but it is not the greatest of blessings." These sentiments were private, but he wrote them to the unswervingly radical Sumner, an abolitionist who said, "Freedom national—slavery sectional." Once the bane of conservative Whigs, who considered him too anti-slavery for their and the nation's good, *Albany Evening Journal* editor and New York political boss Thurlow Weed revealed his conservative stripes during the war. The day after Lincoln's election, he told his readers, "Fidelity to the Union is a practical, present, live question. It means something." During the war, he objected as radicals and moderates seemed to frame it as a fight for freedom rather than, or ahead of, union.

This divergence should be no surprise: conservative Republicans tended to be former Democrats or, especially, Whigs, and were more committed to party loyalty than were radicals, who had often been on the fringes of the second party system. Yet with divergence came convergence. Amid all of their carping and threats to leave the party, all were Republicans and remained so. Thus, as freedom and union competed in the Republican mind for primacy, they had the effect of keeping party members together out of a shared belief in both of them and out of a shared desire to win their private battle for what they preferred. Freedom-loving or union-loving—actually, both—the question was of degree; they were not mutually exclusive.[11]

Indeed, in the question of degree lies the danger of trying to place Republicans in neat categories, for they defy easy categorization. In the midst of great events they retained their fundamental beliefs, but they varied in when and how they stressed them. Horace Greeley saw himself as many historians have also seen him: as a radical reformer at heart. But he also wanted to be a political player, and he was one—thanks to the massive circulation of his daily *Tribune* in New York City and his weekly *Tribune* across the North—if often an inept one. Partly out of his own desire for power, partly out of intellectual inconsistency, he weaved between radical and conservative, and thus between differences in emphasis. Greeley called the Union "a reality . . . a vital force, and not a mere aggregation, like a Fourth of July gathering or a sleighing and supper party." That was an editorial writer's flippant way

of saying that the Union and the Constitution were more than a confederation to be tossed aside whenever some of its members disliked its provisions. Yet the same Greeley insisted in the winter of 1860–61 that the Union would be better off without the slave-holding South, and in the summer of 1862 that Lincoln must put freedom above all else by emancipating the slaves at once—and in the summer of 1861 that for the sake of the Union, the Union army must attack the rebel army. To say that Greeley was unique in countless ways, even in this way, is no exaggeration; but it is equally correct to say that other, more grounded Republicans varied in the importance they attached to freedom and union according to the circumstances of the moment.[12]

While the dialogue over freedom and union may seem like the debate over the chicken and the egg, a mere semantic issue, this much was clear: all Republicans confronted questions about the power to enforce their goals, and about which goals should take priority. Again, their views varied across the ideological spectrum, with Lincoln as a central point. To radicals he was too methodical, too willing to concede to conservatives, too easy to manipulate—or, more accurately, for others to manipulate, since their efforts failed. To conservatives he seemed too easy for radicals to manipulate, too susceptible to their entreaties. This stamped him not only as a superior politician, but as a classic moderate. And members of that group often viewed Lincoln according to how much he agreed with them on a particular issue. As radicals concluded that he sought to slow their efforts in behalf of civil rights and refused to take their advice unquestioningly on everything from his Cabinet to his generals, they insisted on legislative superiority, much as the Whigs had in battling Andrew Jackson.

While conservatives often found Lincoln perplexing, even aggravating, to them he became a bastion against the fanatical left—to use his phrase, their last best hope. This only increased their regret when he seemed to shift toward accepting radical views. The irony was that the conservatives for whom Lincoln served this purpose included old Democrats who had reveled in Jacksonian decisiveness and bemoaned the absence of it in lesser lights such as Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan, as well as old Whigs who spent much of their political lives rebuking strong executive government.[13]

Beyond the issue of which branch of the party and which branch of the government could wield more power, Republicans had to figure out

what that power meant. Lyman Trumbull, a moderate former Democrat from Illinois, told a radical fellow senator, Ohio's Benjamin Wade, "With power comes responsibility, and we must now prepare to take it." Yet at times they recoiled from power, questioning whether they even wanted it. Depressed over criticism, Seward hoped soon to "leave public life . . . to rest during what remains of life free from the suspicions and jealousies of enemies and the reproofs of friends." Across the Capitol and across the party's spectrum, Sumner, a Seward admirer turned Seward hater, lamented that job hunters filled his days now that he headed the Foreign Relations Committee. He confessed to preferring the opposition: "I am now to see the experiences of power, and I do not like them." Yet Republicans, as Trumbull suggested, took that power—and grew to like it. Asked what became of a bill he opposed, Sumner replied, "It still sleeps . . . in my committee room." Several party members agreed: simply to oppose the majority was easy; becoming the majority or ruling party, taking power, and understanding its uses were harder, but increasingly satisfying. For some Republicans, adapting from the obstructionist tendencies that an opposition often demonstrates proved difficult. In each case it was an important part of their evolving ethos.[14]

Republicans found their ability to turn their ideals into reality deeply satisfying; how closely related—indeed, intertwined—they understood those ideas to be is especially striking. Freedom, union, and power were central ideas to them, not just a historian's construct. Henry Winter Davis, an ex-Whig and Know-Nothing en route to radicalism, captured the party's essence when he called its goal "liberty guarded by power." Less prominent and less pithy Republicans agreed. Governor Austin Blair of Michigan said, "It has been demonstrated beyond cavil, that freedom is the best basis of power." William Buckingham, his Connecticut counterpart, hailed "our national emblem of liberty, union, and power." From radical to conservative, Republicans had to acclimate themselves to the problems and perks of power, and with that acclimation came an understanding: while the power to act meant the possibility of success, power itself was part of their ideology. The debate over how to use it and who would use it resembled the one over freedom and union.[15]

Yet the tenets of their ideology were so clearly inseparable that Republicans had to address the contradictions those tenets created. In

warning Wade about the meaning of responsibility, Trumbull added, "The success of Mr. Lincoln's administration depends in my judgment on his prudently but firmly carrying out the principles on which he has been elected, without pandering to cliques or factions from any quarter." Other Republicans agreed. Senator James Doolittle of Wisconsin warned Trumbull that the party had won only the presidency and would take over Congress only through running an honest, efficient administration that did all it could to turn Republican promises into reality. All three senators belonged to factions: Wade was a radical ex-Whig, Trumbull a moderate ex-Democrat with radical leanings, Doolittle a conservative ex-Democrat. While they shared the principles on which Lincoln had been elected, as Trumbull said, they disagreed over which issue mattered more at a certain time, how much to do about it, and which branch of government should do it. For them to differ over the degrees of importance attached to freedom, union, and power was neither unnatural nor unusual, then or later.[16]

However, these differences bring into sharp relief the importance of the party's ideology as a unifying force. Disputes that seemed ideological—to Republicans then and historians since—were actually rooted in pure partisan politics. Lincoln's argument in behalf of emancipation that "we cannot escape history" might just as easily have explained support for or criticism of his policies. Individually and collectively, Republicans had a history and no intention of forgetting it. In New York, Greeley and his followers were more radical than the Seward-Weed machine, but their battles also reflected how they had first united and then divided as leaders of New York's anti-slavery Whigs. In Maryland, Davis veered toward radicalism while the Blair family led the conservatives. But Davis had been a Whig, and the Blairs had been as Democratic as it was possible to be. That these men remained in the same party shows their ambition and their ability to raise pettiness and partisanship to an art form. It also demonstrates that, at least in wartime, their shared convictions outweighed their shared hatreds. They could belong to the same political organization because the stakes were so great, they and the other members of that organization constantly adjusted their views to the needs of the moment, and in the end those views were more alike than different.[17]

Part of that adjustment included coming to grips with a genuinely puzzling result of the interplay between freedom, union, and power:

how much power was necessary to preserve freedom and union? The question can be stated another way: how much freedom might be surrendered to save the Union and enable the government to use its power to do so? To use power to protect the Union would, Republicans thought, assure peace and with it freedom. But using power to excess would violate not only their commitment to freedom, but perhaps also the Constitution. According to *North American Review* editor Andrew Peabody, the Constitution "claims our allegiance because it is law and order—the only government possible for us, the only bond of peace and beneficent relations by which our nation can be held together," or else the result would be "disintegration and anarchy." A week after the firing on Fort Sumter, a New York union meeting's organizers invited "[a]ll good citizens who prize liberty with order, over usurpation and anarchy." George Sumner, who shared his brother Charles's radicalism, may have said it best. After telling New York conservative Hamilton Fish that he was "educated in the most rigid respect for law and good Government," he recalled a speech in which he had called conservatism "the guardian of order, of law, and of *instituted* liberty." Not only were law and order critical to liberty, but the ensuing freedom was agreed to, not imposed.[18]

The other contradictory impulses reflected in this ideology involved history—how Republicans viewed it and their place in it. Both Union and rebel leaders claimed the founding fathers as their own. To Southerners, their cause was for the Constitution: the right to be left alone to pursue their interests was, as Gordon Wood showed, crucial to the revolutionary generation. Southerners considered themselves squarely in that tradition. So did Northerners, who saw free labor as the path to the kind of freedom—financial, political, and intellectual—that Jefferson had in mind. They too claimed to fight for the government of the fathers. In his almost biblical second inaugural address, Lincoln said, "It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged." Of course, Lincoln and the North judged both the rebels and themselves; otherwise there would have been no war and could have been no government, no politics, no policy. Their judgment was for freedom and union, and was reflected in the power they used to impose it.[19]

However, Republicans worried about how they would be judged in light of those they claimed to emulate. Not only were they conscious of John Winthrop's warning two centuries earlier that they were as "a citty *[sic]* upon a hill"; they believed it. Surveying European views of the young republic, writer J. Ross Browne said, "There has never existed and never can exist again, a combination of circumstances so favorable to the practical working of a republican system of government as in the United States. If it fails there after the experience of nearly a century, . . . then truly is freedom at an end." Ambrose Burnside, a general of dubious ability but great unionism, summed up the Republican party's view in calling the war "pre-eminently a 'Providential Revulsion,' brought about for the purpose of creating a great revolution in our social system and . . . we are but instruments in the hands of God for the accomplishment of this great work." It is neither a study in mass psychology nor an allusion to mass paranoia to say that Republicans thought they were being watched—by their constituents, by others unborn, and by those who had built the country that they now sought to save.[20]

Indeed, Republicans watched themselves because they understood James Bryce's axiom even before he coined it: power tends to corrupt, and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely. Bernard Bailyn has shown how the colonists felt that power made England susceptible to corruption and insensitive to liberty. Wanting freedom and union to survive, Republicans feared the effect of their power on that survival. When Congress met in 1861, Lincoln said, "Must a government, of necessity, be too *strong* for the liberties of its own people, or too *weak* to maintain its own existence?" The answer to that question vexed the party, for personal and ideological reasons. While some Republicans thought in political terms based on which politician or branch seemed more influential at the time, many believed in the primacy of one branch, executive or legislative. Whatever their reasons for admiring or doubting others, even if they could be blind to their faults, Republicans sought purity in themselves, the government, and the people. They found it hard to come by. Rivalries and habits that had been decades in the making refused to die, even with the Union's life at stake.[21]

Republicans also had to be careful to avoid an identity crisis. While some historians have called the party a coalition united by collective hatred, others have argued, as David Herbert Donald did, that Lincoln

was really a Whig; or, as William McFeely did, that Ulysses Grant was the first true Republican president. One problem with understanding Republicans has been that during the war, their party ceased to exist. Reconstituting themselves as the Union party enabled them to woo Democrats and old Whigs, but created doubts later about just how Republican the Republicans were. Yet the party remained, for the most part, the party it had been in the 1850s. Republican ideology was another matter. During the 1860s, of necessity, it changed because the stakes were greater; circumstances demanded adaptation. The Union party may have been a political wolf in Republican sheep's clothing, a way to win broader support than the party of their name and reputation would have received. Yet the terminology was apt. Preserving the Union became at least as important as, and for some more important than, perpetuating freedom.

George Boutwell, a Massachusetts radical who had often been unhappy with the progress toward emancipation, recalled that Republicans "became the party of the Union; and . . . with Mr. Lincoln at its head, it was from first to last the only political organization in the country that consistently, persistently, and without qualification of purpose . . . met, every demand of the enemies of the government. . . . He struggled first for the Union, and then for the overthrow of slavery as the only formidable enemy of the Union."[22]

Burying the Party with Lincoln

This confluence of freedom, union, and power, with their varying degrees of emphasis, ended with the war. When John Wilkes Booth killed Lincoln, he killed the Civil War party. For all of their arguing over how to win the war and win the peace, Lincoln and the radicals disagreed over means, not ends. At heart a states-rights, racist Jacksonian Democrat, Andrew Johnson reacted accordingly when more nationalistic Republicans sought to protect freedmen's rights and remake the South; he sought different ends from the Republicans. To say the party then splintered is to misstate or overstate the case. Most who had been Republican remained Republican. Those who broke with the party tended to be the most conservative Republicans: the Blairs, whose Southern background made them loathe to accept the

radical idea that the South needed to be remade, saw the South as having a problem, a disease to be cured, not as a sick society in need of a total refurbishing; Seward, who always put unionism first, saw the party system as swinging too far in either direction as the war ended. Once more the issues changed, meaning not the end of the Republican party's reason for existence, but the need for another redefinition or refinement to suit national issues and the national temper.[23]

That adaptation had prompted the creation of the Union party during the war, but the needs of the party and the nation before and after the war were different. What worked for the party from 1854 to 1860, and then after 1865, could not be the same as what worked for the party during the war. Two Massachusetts writers crystallized the issue: Henry Adams found that daily happenings "at another time would be the event of a year, perhaps of a life," and George Ticknor saw a "great gulf between what happened before in our century and what has happened since. . . . It does not seem to me as if I were living in the country in which I was born." Before the war Republicans had been the party of freedom, seeking power; after the war they were the party in power, seeking freedom. During the war, the Union had to be preserved. Republicans accomplished that. They were committed to expanding freedom and exercising power in ways that suited each other.[24]

That those ways had to suit each other suggests that Republicans might differ in how they defined the terms they used, and they did. The party had no choice but to change during the war, but could and did choose what to believe. The ideology of freedom, union, and power was central to the theory and practice that made the victory and remade the nation. It also proved central to the tragedy that the party's wartime political problems could have foretold. The need to preserve the Union no longer existed as it had when the war ended; the dream of spreading freedom turned into a reality, but created new questions about the nature of that freedom; the acquisition of political power and the behavior of their opponents forced Republicans into a different kind of governance from what they had anticipated, and into adopting views and habits that could and would prove hard to change. Ironically, then, the ideology examined in this study, the ideology that was the Republican lodestar during the war, was in large part its eventual undoing.

NOTES

1. Michael Les Benedict, *A Compromise of Principle: Congressional Republicans and Reconstruction, 1863–1869* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), frontispiece. On these two men, see David Herbert Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960); Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970); and Charles Jellison, *Fessenden of Maine: Civil War Senator* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1962).

2. On the changes and troubles of the Republican party during the secession winter, see Potter, *Lincoln and His Party;* Stampp, *And the War Came;* Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 163–90; Paludan, *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln,* 21–68. On the importance and relationship of unionism and compromise, see Peter B. Knupfer, *The Union As It Was: Constitutional Unionism and Sectional Compromise, 1787–1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

3. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party,* makes the point in several places about the reactive nature of the Whigs, especially at xiii and 951–54. See also Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

4. On the Republicans, see Foner, *Free Soil;* Foner, *Politics and Ideology,* 15–53; and Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party.*

5. On the 1856 election's participants and meaning, see Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 3–67; David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848–1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 225–67; Andrew F. Rolle, *John Charles Frémont: Character as Destiny* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 162–77; Roy F. Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York: Free Press, 1948), 17–103; Tyler G. Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

6. Foner, *Free Soil,* 73–102; Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 3–41; David Brion Davis, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969); Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Potter, *The Impending Crisis,* 267–404; Donald, *Lincoln,* 196–229; Neely, *The Union Divided,* 57–59.

7. Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men,* 211–18; Donald, *Lincoln,* 230–56; Reinhard H. Luthin, *The First Lincoln Campaign* (Cambridge: Harvard

University Press, 1944). See also Mark W. Summers, *The Plundering Generation: Corruption and the Crisis of the Union, 1849–1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

8. Foner, *The Story of American Freedom,* 100.

9. "Annual Message to Congress," 1 December 1862, in *CW,* vol. 5, 518–37, at 537; Foner, *The Story of American Freedom;* and Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

10. *The Independent,* 25 June 1863, in Victor B. Howard, *Religion and the Radical Republican Movement, 1860–1870* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1982), 52; *Chicago Tribune,* 23 April 1861, in Jay Monaghan, *The Man Who Elected Lincoln* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), 227; *New York Herald,* 24 December 1861, in Chester L. Barrows, *William M. Evarts: Lawyer, Diplomat, Statesman* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 107. An excellent analysis of the party's commitment to civil rights in this period is Wang, *The Trial of Democracy,* especially 7–23. See also Michael Vorenberg, *Final Freedom: The Civil War, the End of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

11. John Jay to Charles Sumner, Katonah, 4 February 1861, the Papers of Charles Sumner, Microfilm Edition (henceforth SP), Reel 21; *Albany Evening Journal,* 7 November 1860, in Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *Thurlow Weed: Wizard of the Lobby* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947), 266 and *passim.* On Sumner, see Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War,* and Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man.* On the seeds of this unionism, see Foner, *Free Soil,* 103–225.

12. *The Independent,* 18 April 1861 and 16 May 1861; Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *Horace Greeley: Nineteenth-Century Crusader* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), 262–63 and *passim.* See also Harlan Horner, *Lincoln and Greeley* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953); and Jeter Allen Isely, *Horace Greeley and the Republican Party, 1853–1861* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947).

13. Foner, *Free Soil,* 103–225. On the radicals, see Hans L. Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans: Lincoln's Vanguard for Racial Justice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969). Conservatives have yet to receive a full treatment. See John Niven, *Gideon Welles: Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); and Maurice G. Baxter, *Orville H. Browning: Lincoln's Friend and Critic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957).

14. Lyman Trumbull to Benjamin F. Wade, Springfield, 9 November 1860, Benjamin F. Wade Papers, Manuscript Division (Wade ms), Reel 2, LC; Hans L. Trefousse, "The Republican Party: 1854–1864," in Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., ed., *History of U.S. Political Parties,* 4 vols. (New York: Chelsea

House, 1973), 1161; Norman B. Ferris, *The Trent Affair: A Diplomatic Crisis* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977); Sumner to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Washington, 16 March and 7 April 1861, SP, Series II, Reel 74; Sumner to Hamilton Fish, Washington, 16 March 1861, ibid.; Sumner to Francis Lieber, Washington, 13 April and 4 May 1864, ibid., Series I, Reel 64; Allen G. Bogue, *The Earnest Men: Republicans of the Civil War Senate* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), 61; Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man,* 12; Zachariah Chandler to Letitia Chandler, Washington, 22 January 1863, Zachariah Chandler Papers, Microfilm Edition, Manuscript Division (Chandler ms), LC; *Congressional Globe,* 37th Congress, 2d session (henceforth *CG*) 37, 2, 9 January 1862, 248 (Senator Jacob Collamer); Richard H. Sewell, *John P. Hale and the Politics of Abolition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 197–99.

15. Gerald S. Henig, *Henry Winter Davis: Antebellum and Civil War Congressman from Maryland* (New York: Twayne, 1973), 246; George N. Fuller, ed., *Messages of the Governors of Michigan,* 2 vols. (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1926), vol. 2, 495–96; Samuel G. Buckingham, *The Life of William A. Buckingham: The War Governor of Connecticut* (Springfield, Mass.: W. F. Adams Company, 1894), 361. See also John Austin Stevens Jr. to Chauncey Depew, New York, 15 May 1863, John Austin Stevens Papers (John Austin Stevens ms), NYHS.

16. Trumbull to Wade, Springfield, 9 November 1860, Wade ms, Reel 2, LC; James R. Doolittle to Trumbull, Racine, 10 November 1860, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Microfilm Edition, Manuscript Division (Trumbull ms), Reel 6, LC. Doolittle still awaits an in-depth biography. On his two colleagues, see Hans L. Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade: Radical Republican from Ohio* (New York: Twayne, 1963); and Ralph J. Roske, *His Own Counsel: The Life and Times of Lyman Trumbull* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1979).

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18. Phillip S. Paludan, *A Covenant with Death: The Constitution, Law and Equality in the Civil War Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 28; Margaret A. Clapp, *Forgotten First Citizen: John Bigelow* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947), 145; George Sumner to Fish, New York, 7 May 1861, Hamilton Fish Papers, Manuscript Division (Fish ms), LC. For similar views, see also *The Independent,* 18 April 1861, in Van Deusen, *Greeley,* 270; Williston H. Lofton, "Northern Labor and the Negro during the Civil War,"

Journal of Negro History 34, no. 4 (July 1949): 270–71; "A Song on Our Country and Her Flag. By Francis Lieber. Written in 1861, after the Raising of the Flag on Columbia College, New York. Printed by the Students," in Lieber to Sumner, New York, ca. 1861, SP, Series II, Reel 75.

19. Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), *passim;* "Second Inaugural Address," 4 March 1865, in *CW,* vol. 8, 332–33. On Northern views, see Foner, *Free Soil.*

20. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings,* 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1938), vol. 1, 199; Milton H. Shutes, *Lincoln and California* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1943), 56–57; Ambrose E. Burnside to L. B. Wyman, New York, 29 January 1864, "Autographs Presented to the Brooklyn and Long Island Fair by L. B. Wyman, February 22, 1864," New Jersey Historical Society (NJHS); Horatio J. Perry to William H. Seward, Madrid, 22 November 1864, No. 144, U.S. Dept. of State, *Foreign Affairs 1865,* 4 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1866), vol. 2, 467–68.

21. "Message to Congress in Special Session," 4 July 1861, in *CW,* vol. 4, 421–41, at 426. On Maryland, see Baker, *The Politics of Continuity.* See Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); Stanley Elkins and Eric L. McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism: Birth of the Republic, 1788–1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

22. Allen Thorndike Rice, ed., *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time* (New York: North American Publishing Company, 1886), 348. On the Union party, see William Frank Zornow, *Lincoln and the Party Divided* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954). On the party as coalition, see Foner, *Free Soil,* 316. On Republican presidents, see David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era,* 3d ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 133–47; William S. McFeely, *Grant: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981).

23. On political parties at the war's end, see LaWanda Cox and John H. Cox, *Politics, Principle, and Prejudice, 1865–1866: Dilemma of Reconstruction America* (New York: Macmillan, 1963). On Johnson, see Eric L. McKitrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); and Hans L. Trefousse, *Andrew Johnson: A Biography* (New York: Norton, 1989). On the Blairs, see William E. Smith, *The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics,* 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1933); and Elbert B. Smith, *Francis Preston Blair* (New York: Free Press, 1980).

24. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), vii, 861.