

November 2008

Reviewed Work: Lincoln Revisited: New Insights from the Lincoln Forum by John Y. Simon, Harold Holzer, Dawn Vogel

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Recommended Citation

Medford, Edna Greene, "Reviewed Work: Lincoln Revisited: New Insights from the Lincoln Forum by John Y. Simon, Harold Holzer, Dawn Vogel" (2008). *History Department Faculty Publications*. Paper 57.
http://dh.howard.edu/hist_fac/57

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Lincoln Revisited: New Insights from the Lincoln Forum. Edited by John Y. Simon, Harold Holzer, and Dawn Vogel. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007. Pp. [xvi], 369. \$27.95, ISBN 978-0-8232-2736-5.)

Given the wealth of literature available on all things Lincoln, one reaches for this new volume of essays on the sixteenth president with a healthy skepticism. After all, what else could be said that is original about one who has been written about so extensively? Happily, it does not take long for the doubts to dispel; the collection not only lives up to its promise but also does so in a way that both informs and invites the reader to engage in her own reassessment of the man and his times. This newest installment from the annual meeting of the Lincoln Forum is fresh and timely and benefits from the well-honed skills of a community of scholars who know their subject best. If the ground they cover is sometimes well traveled—the president as commander in chief, the challenges of protecting civil liberties during wartime, Abraham Lincoln’s political faith and his use of biblical imagery in public addresses and writings—the treatment of these topics (in eighteen essays altogether) is such that the reader walks away satisfied that she has been permitted a clearer understanding of Lincoln’s leadership during this crisis period in American history.

As coeditor Harold Holzer suggests in his introductory remarks to the volume, the publication is intended to make Lincoln scholarship accessible for members of the forum who cannot always attend these annual meetings. But (as Holzer also points out) the collection serves an even broader purpose in that it seeks to accommodate all those who wish to remain informed of what is transpiring in the world of Lincoln and Civil War-era studies. Hence, the selections reflect scholarship that has recently been published as well as work that is still under construction.

The eclectic assortment features offerings that will appeal to both the academic and the general reader. Students of military history will find much of interest in the selections on Lincoln’s relationship with his admirals and his attempts to command an indecisive General Henry W. Halleck. Another chapter contrasts how Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln experienced and were influenced by religion (both the traditional variety and the unorthodox) throughout their lives. Other selections carry the religious angle in a different direction, focusing on the president’s political faith and his religious politics. The reader is treated to the debate between Stephen A. Douglas and Lincoln over the issue of popular sovereignty, but this time through the lens of Illinois Mormonism. Lincoln’s views on black freedom are explored, with the discussion extending to his visions for the newly emancipated in the postwar era. And Lincoln’s struggle with civil liberties is compared with similar challenges the George W. Bush administration has faced in the fight against terrorism. The remaining essays provide insight into topics that vary from Lincoln’s response to the Nathaniel Gordon affair (the president refused to pardon the slave smuggler, thus rendering Gordon the only man to be executed for such offense in the history of the nation) to Lincoln’s passing (literally, along the streets of Washington, D.C.) relationship with Walt Whitman.

Here is Lincoln the private man, the diplomat, the great orator, the shrewd politician, the wartime leader of men; we have met them all before. But in this context, they are like an old friend with a renewed vitality. There is, indeed, something for everyone here.

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A Higher Purpose: Profiles in Presidential Courage. By Thomas J. Whalen. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007. Pp. xvi, 254. \$26.00, ISBN 978-1-56663-630-8.)

Frequently, presidents of the United States are called on to make tough decisions, ones for which they could pay a political price. In Thomas J. Whalen's *A Higher Purpose: Profiles in Presidential Courage*, nine such presidential decisions are examined and evaluated. In several of these cases the presidents did pay a political price. Whalen was inspired by John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Profiles in Courage* (New York, 1956), and it is no surprise that Kennedy is the subject of one chapter. The author defines courage along "moral lines" and writes that he "intend[s] to show that political courage and the institution of the presidency need not be regarded as mutually exclusive" (pp. xiii, xi).

Of the nine controversial presidential decisions Whalen has selected for examination, many are well known. Among these are Abraham Lincoln and emancipation, Harry Truman and the firing of General Douglas MacArthur, and Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon. A couple of Whalen's choices are less familiar, such as Chester A. Arthur and civil service reform and Grover Cleveland and the annexation of Hawaii. The author provides a general background for each president and then analyzes the decision and its political ramifications.

Perhaps the biggest turnaround in presidential politics was the change in President Arthur. In the 1860s and 1870s Arthur was closely identified with the Stalwart wing of the Republican Party, which was led by Senator Roscoe Conkling of New York. The Republican Party tapped Arthur to be James A. Garfield's running mate in the 1880 presidential election. When Garfield was assassinated in 1881, many were alarmed at the thought of Stalwart Arthur as president. Their fears were not well placed, as President Arthur established a record of supporting reform, particularly civil service reform. Arthur emerged from Conkling's shadow and demonstrated vast political courage as Whalen has defined it.

President Cleveland demonstrated another example of political courage when he refused to annex Hawaii. The annexation of Hawaii was perhaps the most significant issue when Cleveland took office, for the second time, in 1893. By that time a treaty to annex the island had been submitted to the Senate by the Benjamin Harrison administration. This was the advent of American overseas imperialism, and most Americans favored the treaty, as did the U.S. Senate. The treaty was headed for easy ratification until Cleveland withdrew it shortly after taking office. Expansionists vilified Cleveland, and one, Theodore Roosevelt, called the president's decision