Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America

In Boston's museum of fine arts, not far from the place where English Puritans splashed ashore in 1630, there is a decidedly unpuritanical painting of bare-breasted Polynesian women by Paul Gauguin. The painting is set on a wooded riverbank. In the background is the ocean, and the shadowy outline of a distant land. The canvas is crowded with brooding figures in every condition of life—old and young, dark and fair. They are seen in a forest of symbols, as if part of a dream. In the corner, the artist has added an inscription: "D'où venons nous? Qui sommes nous? Ou allons nous?"

That painting haunts the mind of this historian. He wonders how a Polynesian allegory found its way to a Puritan town which itself was set on a wooded riverbank. In the background is the ocean and the shadow of another land in the far distance. He observes the crowd of museumgoers who gather before the painting. They are Americans in every condition of life, young and old, dark and fair. They are seen in a forest of symbols, as if part of a dream. In the corner, the artist has added an inscription: "D'où venons nous? Qui sommes nous? Ou allons nous?"

The answers to these questions grow more puzzling the more one thinks about them. We Americans are a bundle of paradoxes. We are mixed in our origins, yet we are one people. Nearly all of us support our republican system, but we argue passionately (sometimes violently), among ourselves about its meaning. Most of us subscribe to what Gunnar Myrdal called the American Creed, but that idea is a paradox in political theory. As Myrdal observed in 1942, America is “conservative in fundamental principles ... but the principles conserved are liberal and some, indeed, are radical.”

We live in an open society which is organized on the principle of voluntary action, but the determinants of that system are exceptionally constraining. Our society is dynamic, changing profoundly in every period of American history; but it is also remarkably stable. The search for the origins of this system is the central problem in American history. . . .

The organizing question here is about what might be called the determinants of a voluntary society. The problem is to explain the origins and stability of a social system which for two centuries has remained stubbornly democratic in its politics, capitalist in its economy, libertarian in its law, individualist in its society and pluralistic in its culture.

Much has been written on this subject—more than anyone can possibly read. But a very large outpouring of books and articles contains a remarkably small number of seminal ideas. Most historians have tried to explain the determinants of a voluntary society in one of three ways: by reference to the European culture that was transmitted to America, or to the American environment itself, or to something in the process of transmission.

During the nineteenth century the first of these explanations was very much in fashion. Historians believed that the American system had evolved from what one scholar called “Teutonic germs” of free institutions, which were supposedly carried from the forests of Germany to Britain and then to America. This idea was taken up by a generation of historians who tended to be Anglo-Saxon in their origins, Atlantic in their attitudes and Whiggish in their politics. Most had been trained in the idealist and institutional traditions of the German historical school.

For a time this Teutonic thesis became very popular—in Boston and Baltimore. But in Kansas and Wisconsin it was unkindly called the “germ theory” of American history and laughed into oblivion. In the early twentieth century it yielded to the Turner thesis, which looked to the American environment and especially to the western frontier as a way of explaining the growth of free institutions in America. This idea appealed to scholars who were middle western in their origins progressive in their politics, and materialist in their philosophy.

In the mid-twentieth century the Turner thesis also passed out of fashion. Yet another generation of American historians became deeply interested in processes of immigration and ethnic pluralism as determinants of a voluntary society. This third approach was specially attractive to scholars who were not themselves of Anglo-Saxon stock. Many were central European in their origin, urban in their residence, and Jewish in their religion. This pluralistic “migration model” is presently the conventional interpretation.

Other explanations have also been put forward from time to time, but three ideas have held the field: the germ theory, the frontier thesis, and the migration model.

This [essay] returns to the first of those explanations, within the framework of the second and third. It argues a modified “germ theory” about the importance for the United States of having been British in its cultural origins. The argument is complex, and for the sake of clarity might be summarized in advance. It runs more or less as follows.

During the very long period from 1629 to 1775, the present area of the United States was settled by at least four large waves of English-speaking immigrants. The first was an exodus of Puritans from the east of England to Massachusetts during a period of eleven years from 1629 to 1640. The second was the migration of a small Royalist elite and large numbers of indentured servants from the south of England to Virginia (ca. 1642–75). The third was a movement from the North Midlands of England and Wales to the Delaware Valley (ca. 1675–1725). The fourth was a flow of English-speaking people from the borders of North Britain and northern Ireland to the Appalachian back-country mostly during the half-century from 1718 to 1775.

These four groups shared many qualities in common. All of them spoke the English language. Nearly all were British Protestants. Most lived under British laws and took pride in possessing British liberties. At the same time, they also differed from one another in many other ways: in their religious denominations, social ranks, historical generations, and also in the British regions from whence they came. They carried across the Atlantic four different sets of British folkways which became the basis of regional cultures in the New World.

By the year 1775 these four cultures were fully established in British America. They spoke distinctive dialects of English, built their houses in diverse ways, and had different methods of doing much of the ordinary business of life. Most important for the political history of the United States, they also had four different conceptions of order, power and freedom which became the cornerstones of a voluntary society in British America.

Today less than 20 percent of the American population have any British ancestors at all. But in a cultural sense most Americans are Albion's seed, no matter who their own forebears may have been. Strong echoes of four British folkways may still be heard in the major dialects of American speech, in the regional patterns of American life, in the complex dynamics of American politics, and in the continuing conflict between four different ideas of freedom in the United States. The interplay of four "freedom ways" has created an expansive pluralism which is more libertarian than any unitary culture alone could be. That is the central thesis of this essay: the legacy of four British folkways in the United States today.

The public life of New England was shaped by an idea of liberty which was peculiar to the Puritan colonies. To understand its nature, one might begin with the word itself. From the generation of John Winthrop (1558-1649) to that of Samuel Adams (1722-1803), the noun "liberty" was used throughout New England in at least four ways which ring strangely in a modern ear.

First, "liberty" often described something which belonged not to an individual but to an entire community. For two centuries, the founders and leaders of Massachusetts wrote of the "liberty of New England," or the "liberty of Boston" or the "liberty of the Town." This usage continued from the great migration to the War of Independence and even beyond. Samuel Adams, for example, wrote more often about the "liberty of America" than about the liberty of individual Americans.

This idea of collective liberty, or "publick liberty" as it was sometimes called, was thought to be consistent with close restraints upon individuals. In Massachusetts these individual restrictions were numerous, and often very confining. During the first generation, nobody could live in the colony without approval of the General Court. Settlers even of the highest rank were sent prisoners to England for expressing "divers dangerous opinion," or merely because the Court judged them to be "persons unmeet to inhabit here." Others were not allowed to move within the colony except by special permission of the General Court. For a time, the inhabitants of Dedham, Sudbury and Concord were forbidden to move out of their towns, because the General Court believed that those frontier settlements were dangerously under-populated.

New Englanders also used the word "liberty" in a second way which is foreign to our own time. When it referred to individuals, it often became a plural noun—"liberties" rather than "liberty." These plural liberties were understood as specific exemptions from a condition of prior restraint—an idea which had long existed in East Anglia and in many other parts of the western world. In the manor of Hengrave (Suffolk), for example, tenants were granted a specific "liberty" of fishing in the river Lark. Such a liberty was not universal or absolute; the river was closed to all other people. There were a great many of these liberties in East Anglian communities during the early seventeenth century. A person's status was defined by the number and nature of liberties to which he was admitted.

The idea of plural liberties as specific exemptions from a condition of prior constraint was carried to Massachusetts. The General Court, for example, enacted laws which extended "liberties and privileges of fishing and fowling" to certain inhabitants, and thereby denied them to everyone else. One person's "liberty" in this sense became another's restraint. In Massachusetts, as in England, a person's rank was defined by the liberties that he possessed, and vice versa.

The laws of the Bay Colony granted some liberties to all men, others to all free men, and a few only to gentlemen. For example, a "true gentleman" and "any man equal to a gentleman," was granted the liberty not to be punished by whipping "unless his crime be very shameful, and his course of life vicious and profligate." Other men had a lesser liberty, not to be whipped more than forty stripes. Other liberties were assigned not to individuals at all, but to churches and towns and other social groups.

New England Puritans also used the word "liberty" in a third meaning, which became urgently important to the founders of Massachusetts. This was the idea of "soul liberty," or "Christian liberty," an idea of high complexity. Soul liberty was freedom to serve God in the world. It was freedom to order one's own acts in a godly way—but not in any other. It made Christian freedom into a form of obligation.

The founding generation in Massachusetts often wrote of "soul liberty," "Christian liberty" or "liberty of conscience." Many moved to the New World primarily in hopes of obtaining it. What they meant was not a world of religious freedom in the modern sense, or even of religious toleration, but rather of freedom for the true faith. In their minds, this idea of religious liberty was thought to be consistent with the persecution of Quakers, Catholics, Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans and indeed virtually everyone except those within a very narrow spectrum of Calvinist orthodoxy. Soul liberty was also thought to

Massachusetts Freedom Ways: The Puritan Idea of Ordered Liberty

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be consistent with compulsory church attendance and rigorous Sabbath laws. Even the Indians were compelled to keep the Puritan Sabbath in Massachusetts. To the founders of that colony, soul freedom meant that they were free to persecute others in their own way. . . . To others of different persuasions, the Puritans' paradoxical idea of "soul freedom" became a cruel and bloody contradiction. But to the Puritans themselves "soul liberty" was a genuinely libertarian principle which held that a Christian community should be free to serve God in the world. Here was an idea in which the people of Massachusetts deeply believed, and the reason why their colony was founded in the first place.

The words "liberty" and also "freedom" were used in yet a fourth way by the builders of the Bay Colony. Sometimes, the people of Massachusetts employed the word "freedom" to describe a collective obligation of the "body politic," to protect individual members from the tyranny of circumstance. This was conceived not in terms of collective welfare or social equality but of individual liberty. It was precisely the same idea that a descendant of the Massachusetts Puritans, Franklin Roosevelt, conceived as the Four Freedoms. That way of thinking was not his invention. It appeared in Massachusetts within a few years of its founding. The Massachusetts poor laws, however limited they may have been, recognized every individual should be guaranteed a freedom from want in the most fundamental sense. The General Court also explicitly recognized even a "freedom from fear." Its language revealed a libertarian conception of social problems (and solutions) that was characteristic of English-speaking people as early as the seventeenth century.

These four libertarian ideas—collective liberty, individual liberties, soul liberty and freedom from the tyranny of circumstance—all had a common denominator. They were aspects of a larger conception which might be called ordered liberty. This principle was deeply embedded in Puritan ideas and also in East Anglian realities. It came to be firmly established in Massachusetts even before the end of the great migration. For many years it continued to distinguish the culture of New England from other parts of British America. Even today, in much modified forms, it is still a living tradition in parts of the United States. But this principle of "ordered liberty" is also opposed by other libertarian ideas, which were planted in different parts of British America. . . .

Virginia Freedom Ways: The Anglican Idea of Hegemonic Liberty

"How is it," Dr. Samuel Johnson asked, "that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?" That famous question captured a striking paradox in the history of Virginia. Like most other colonists in British America, the first gentlemen of Virginia possessed an exceptionally strong consciousness of their English liberties, even as they took away the liberty of others. Governor William Berkeley himself, notwithstanding his reputation for tyranny, wrote repeatedly of "prized liberty" as the birthright of an Englishman.

The first William Fitzhugh often wrote of Magna Carta and the "fundamental laws of England," with no sense of contradiction between his Royalist politics and libertarian principles. Fitzhugh argued that Virginians were both "natural subjects to the king" and inheritors of the "laws of England," and when they ceased to be these things, "then we are no longer freemen but slaves."

Similar language was used by many English-speaking people in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The fine-spin treaties on liberty which flowed so abundantly from English pens in this era were rationales for political folkways deeply embedded in the cultural condition of Englishmen.

These English political folkways did not comprise a single libertarian tradition. They embraced many different and even contradictory conceptions of freedom. The libertarian ideas that took root in Virginia were very far removed from those that went to Massachusetts. In place of New England's distinctive idea of ordered liberty, the Virginians thought of liberty as a hegemonic condition of dominion over others and—equally important—dominion over oneself. . . .

Virginia ideas of hegemonic liberty conceived of freedom manly as the power to rule, and not to be overruled by others. Its opposite was "slavery," a degradation into which true-born Butons descended when they lost their power to rule. . . .

It never occurred to most Virginia gentlemen that liberty belonged to everyone. It was thought to be the special birthright of free-born Englishmen—a property which set this "happy breed" apart from other mortals, and gave them a right to rule less fortunate people in the world. Even within their own society, hegemonic liberty was a hierarchical idea. One's status in Virginia was defined by the liberties that one possessed. Men of high estate were thought to have more liberties than others of lesser rank. Servants possessed few liberties, and slaves none at all. This libertarian idea had nothing to do with equality. Many years later, John Randolph of Roanoke summarized his ancestral creed in a sentence: "I am an aristocrat," he declared, "I love liberty; I hate equality."

In Virginia, this idea of hegemonic liberty was thought to be entirely consistent with the institution of race slavery. A planter demanded for himself the liberty to take away the liberties of others—a right of laisser asservir, freedom to enslave. The growth of race slavery in turn deepened the cultural significance of hegemonic liberty, for an Englishman's rights became his rank, and set him apart from others less fortunate than himself. The world thus became a hierarchy in which people were ranked according to many degrees of unfreedom, and they received their rank by the operation of fortune, which played so large a part in the thinking of Virginians. At the same time, hegemony over others allowed them to enlarge the sphere of their own personal liberty, and to create the conditions within which their special sort of libertarian consciousness flourished. . . .

Hegemonic liberty was a dynamic tradition which developed through at least three historical stages. In the first it was linked to Royalist cause in the English Civil War. The Virginia gentleman Robert Beverley boasted that the colony "was famous, for holding out the longest for the Royal Family, of any of the English Dominions." Virginia was the last English territory to relinquish its
allegiance to Charles I, and the first to proclaim Charles II king in 1660 even before the Restoration in England. Speeches against the Stuarts were ferociously punished by the county courts. The Assembly repeatedly expressed its loyalty to the Crown, giving abundant thanks for "his Majesty's most gracious favors towards us, and Royal Condescensions to anything requisite."

In the second stage, hegemonic liberty became associated with Whiggish politics, and with an ideology of individual independence which was widely shared throughout the English-speaking world. In Virginia, many families who had been staunch Royalists in the seventeenth century became strong Whigs in eighteenth century; by the early nineteenth century they would be Jeffersonian Republicans. Their principles throughout tended to be both elitist and libertarian—a clear expression of a cultural ethic which was capable of continuing expansion....

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the tradition of hegemonic liberty entered a third stage of development, in which it became less hierarchical and more egalitarian. Such are the conditions of modern life that this idea is no longer the exclusive property of a small elite, and the degradation of others is no longer necessary to their support. The progress of political democracy has admitted everyone to the ruling class. In America and Britain today, the idea of an independent elite, firmly in command of others, has disappeared. But the associated idea of an autonomous individual, securely in command of self, is alive and flourishing....

... Quakers believed in an idea of reciprocal liberty that embraced all humanity, and was written in the golden rule.

This Christian idea was reinforced in Quaker thinking by an exceptionally strong sense of English liberties. As early as 1687, William Penn ordered the full text of the Magna Carta to be reprinted in Philadelphia, together with a broad selection of other constitutional documents. His purpose was to remind the freeholders of Pennsylvania to remember their British birthright....

On the subject of liberty, the people of Pennsylvania needed no lessons from their Lord Proprietor. Few public questions were introduced among the colonists without being discussed in terms of rights and liberties. On its surface, this libertarian rhetoric seemed superficially similar to that of Massachusetts and Virginia. But the founders of Pennsylvania were a different group of Englishmen—a later generation, from another English region, with a special kind of Christian faith. Their idea of liberty was not the same as that which came to other parts or British America.

The most important of these differences had to do with religious freedom—"liberty of conscience." William Penn called it. This was not the conventional Protestant idea of liberty to do only that which is right. The Quakers believed that liberty of conscience extended even to ideas that they believed to be wrong. Their idea of "soul freedom" protected every Christian conscience.

The most articulate spokesman for this idea was William Penn himself. Of nearly sixty books and pamphlets that Penn wrote before coming to America, half were defenses of liberty of conscience. Some of these works were among the most powerful statements ever written on this subject. One ended with a revealing personal remark: "... tis a matter of great satisfaction to the author that he has so plainly cleared his conscience in pleading for the liberty of other men's."...

William Penn's personal experience of religious persecution gave him other reasons for believing in religious liberty. His own sufferings convinced him that the coercion of conscience was not merely evil but futile, and deeply dangerous to true faith. "They subvert all true religion," Penn wrote, "... where men believe not because 'tis false, but so commanded by their superiors."

These memories and experiences were not Penn's alone. In the period from 1661 to 1685, historians estimate that at least 15,000 Quakers were imprisoned in England, and 450 died for their beliefs. As late as the year 1685, more than 1,400 Quakers were still languishing in English jails. Most "books of sufferings" recorded punishments that continued well into the eighteenth century—mostly fines and seizures for nonpayment of tithes....

Many Quaker immigrants to Pennsylvania had experienced this religious persecution; they shared a determination to prevent its growth in their own province. The first fundamental law passed in Pennsylvania guaranteed liberty of conscience for all who believed in "one Almighty God," and established complete freedom of worship. It also provided penalties for those who "derided the religion of others." The Quaker founders of Pennsylvania were not content merely to restrain government from interfering with rights of conscience. They also made it an instrument of positive protection. Here was a reciprocal idea of religious liberty which they actively extended to others as well as themselves.

Liberty of conscience was one of a large family of personal freedoms which Quakers extended equally to others. William Penn recognized three secular "rights of an Englishman": first, a "right and title to your own lives, liberties and estates: second, representative government; third, trial by jury." In Pennsylvania, these liberties went far beyond those of Massachusetts, Virginia and old England itself....

The Quakers of the Delaware Valley also differed from other English-speaking people in regard to race slavery. The question was a difficult one for them. The first generation of Quakers had been deeply troubled by slavery, but many were not opposed outright. The problem was compounded in the Delaware Valley by the fact that slavery worked well as an economic institution in this region. Many Quakers bought slaves. Even William Penn did so. Of the leaders of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for whom evidence survives, 70 percent owned slaves in the period from 1681 to 1705.

But within the first decade of settlement a powerful antislavery movement began to develop in the Delaware Valley. As early as 1688, the Quakers of Germantown issued a testimony against slavery on the ground that it violated the golden rule. In 1696, two leading Quakers, Cadwalader Morgan and William Southeby, urged the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to forbid slavery and slave trading. The meeting refused to go that far, but agreed to advise Quakers "not to encourage the bringing in of any more Negroes." As antislavery feeling expanded steadily among Friends, slaveowning declined among...
leaders of the Philadelphia yearly meeting—falling steadily from 70 percent before 1705, to only 10 percent after 1756.

The Pennsylvania legislature took action in 1712, passing a prohibitive duty on the importation of slaves. This measure was disallowed by the English Crown, which had a heavy stake in the slave trade. In 1730 the Pennsylvania yearly meeting cautioned its members, but still a few Friends continued to buy slaves. Other Quaker antislavery petitions and papers followed in increasing number. The argument came down to the reciprocal principle of the golden rule. Quakers argued that if they did not wish to be slaves themselves, they had no right to enslave others.

The Quakers radically redefined the “rights of Englishmen” in terms of their Christian beliefs. But they never imagined that they were creating something new. Penn and others in the colony wrote always of their rights as “ancient” and “fundamental” principles which were rooted in the immemorial customs of the English-speaking people and in the practices of the primitive church.

In the conservative cast of their libertarian thinking, the Quakers were much the same as Puritans and Anglicans. But in the substance of their libertarian thought they were very different. In respect to liberty of conscience, trial by jury, the rights of property, the rule of representation, and race slavery, Quakers genuinely believed that every liberty demanded for oneself should also be extended to others.

Backcountry Freedom Ways:
The Border Idea of Natural Liberty

The backsettlers, no less than other colonists in every part of British America, brought with them a special way of thinking about power and freedom, and a strong attachment to their liberties. As early as the middle decades of the eighteenth century their political documents contained many references to liberty as their British birthright. In 1768, the people of Mecklenberg County, North Carolina, declared, “We shall ever be more ready to support the government under which we find the most liberty.”

No matter whether they came from... England or Scotland or Ireland, their libertarian ideas were very much alike—and profoundly different from notions of liberty that had been carried to Massachusetts, Virginia and Pennsylvania. The traveler Johann Schoepf was much interested in ideas of law and liberty which he found in the backcountry. “They shun everything which appears to demand of them law and order, and anything that preaches constraint,” Schoepf wrote of the backsettlers. “They hate the name of a justice, and yet they are not transgressors. Their object is merely wild. Altogether, natural freedom... is what pleases them.”

This idea of “natural freedom” was widespread throughout the southern back settlements. But it was not a reflexive response to the “frontier” environment, not was it “merely wild.” as Schoepf believed. The backcountry idea of natural liberty was created by a complex interaction between the American environment and a European folk culture. It derived in large part from the British border country, where anarchic violence had long been a condition of life. The natural liberty of the borderers was an idea at once more radically libertarian, more strenuously hostile to ordering institutions than were the other cultures of British America...

A leading advocate of natural liberty in the eighteenth century was Patrick Henry, a descendant of British borderers, and also a product of the American backcountry. Throughout his political career, Patrick Henry consistently defended the principles of minimal government, light taxes, and the right of armed resistance to authority in all cases which infringed liberty...

Patrick Henry’s principles of natural liberty were drawn from the political folkways of the border culture in which he grew up. He embodied them from his mother, a lady who described the American Revolution as merely another set of “lowland troubles.” The libertarian phrases and thoughts which echoed so strongly in the backcountry had earlier been heard in the borders of North Britain. When the backcountry people celebrated the supremacy of private interests they used the same thoughts and words as William Cotesworth, an English borderer who in 1717 declared: “... you know how natural it is to pursue private interest even against that Darling principle of a more general good. ... It is the interest of the Public to be served by the man that can do it cheapest, though several private persons are injured by it.”

This idea of natural liberty was not a reciprocal idea. It did not recognize the right of dissent or disagreement. Deviance from cultural norms was rarely tolerated: opposition was suppressed by force. One of Andrew Jackson’s early biographers observed that “It appears to be more difficult for a North-of-Irlander than for other men to allow an honest difference of opinion in an opponent, so that he is apt to regard the terms opponent and enemy as synonymous.

When backcountrymen moved west in search of that condition of natural freedom which Daniel Boone called “elbow room,” they were repeating the thought of George Harrison, a North Briton who declared in the borderlands during the seventeenth century that “every man at nature’s table has a right to elbow room.” The southern frontier provided space for the realization of this ideal, but it did not create it.

This libertarian idea of natural freedom as “elbow room” was very far from the ordered freedom of New England towns, the hegemonic freedom of Virginia’s county oligarchs, and the reciprocal freedom of Pennsylvania Quakers. Here was yet another freedom way which came to be rooted in the Culture of an American region, where it flourished for many years to come.
Was Colonial Culture Uniquely American?

Although Nash and Fischer approach the issue of American exceptionalism from different perspectives, both recognize uniqueness in American society. Fischer's America is obviously a product of an Old World English cultural heritage. By emphasizing the impact on America of the distinct folkways of peoples migrating from four different geographical regions in the British Isles, however, Fischer reinforces the notion of a unique quality to American culture, one grounded in British folkways. Unfortunately, this Anglocentric argument leaves no room for cultural contributions from Native Americans and Africans, or Germans, Dutch, and Swedes. Nash, on the other hand, suggests that we examine the numerous non-English and non-European elements of American culture. His appreciation of cultural pluralism is developed in greater detail in Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America, 3d ed. (Prentice Hall, 1992).

Another significant issue in the study of our cultural origins is the question of their impact on the American character. Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," a paper read at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in 1893, reflects the views of Crevecoeur and Tocqueville by asserting that a unique national character developed out of America's frontier experience. The Turner thesis remained a hot topic of historical debate for three-quarters of a century as Turnerians and anti-Turnerians discussed the fine details of the impact of the frontier on American national character. The staunchest disciple of Turner was Ray Allen Billington, whose The Far Western Frontier, 1830-1860 (Harper & Row, 1956), The Frontier Heritage (Holt, Rinehart, 1966), and Frederick Jackson Turner (Oxford University Press, 1973) should be examined by interested students. An important extension of the Turner thesis is offered in David M. Potter, People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character (University of Chicago, 1954), which identifies another factor contributing to a distinctive American character. Michael Kammen's People of Paradox: An Inquiry Concerning the Origins of American Civilization (Knopf, 1972) argues that American distinctiveness derives from the contradiction produced by a culture created from an interaction of Old and New World patterns. Students interested in pursuing these questions of culture and character should examine Michael McGiffert, ed., The Character of Americans: A Book of Readings, rev. ed. (Dorsey Press, 1970) and David Stannard, "American Historians and the Idea of National Character," American Quarterly (May 1971).

Finally, on the topic of American exceptionalism, students should consult Seymour Martin Lipset, The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective (Basic Books, 1963) and American Exceptionalism: A