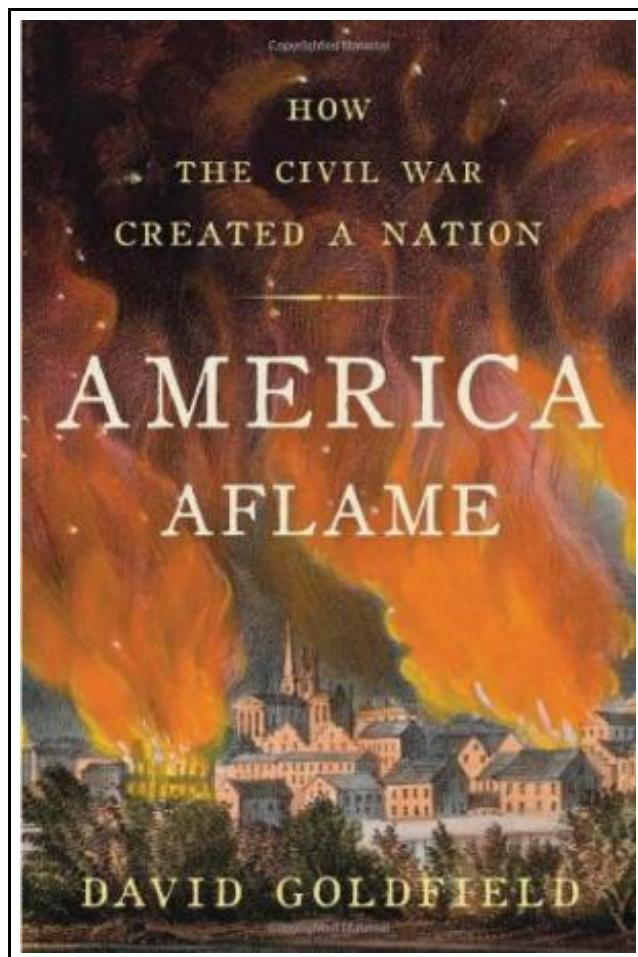


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Reviews

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Bloomsbury. 1 Cloth(s), 2011. hard. Book Condition: New. The author of *Still Fighting the Civil War and Black, White, and Southern*, historian David Goldfield here explores what he argues is a hugely significant yet overlooked force driving the Civil War: the infusion of evangelical religion into the public sphere. As the Second Great Awakening surged through America in the mid-19th century, the Bible was used both to justify and condemn slavery, and political questions became matters of good and evil, to be fought to the death. Goldfield's sweeping narrative takes us from the 1840s to the end of Reconstruction, and is filled with memorable details and portraits of such figures as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Frederick Douglass, and Walt Whitman. "This provocative new look at the era of Civil War and Reconstruction places evangelical religion at center stage. Northern evangelicals branded slavery a sin; southern theologians portrayed it as a positive good ordained by God. Political questions became a moral battle between good and evil. The author argues that postwar economic growth in the victorious North and grinding poverty in the South transformed the cultural force of religion into a conservation rationalization of the status quo, rather than its former role as an instrument of change." James M. McPherson "Riveting, often heartbreakingly . [a] masterly synthesis of political, social, economic and religious history. Goldfield's thought experiment in alternative history is provocative in the best sense. Most history books try to explain the past. The exceptional ones, of which *America Aflame* is a distinguished example, remind us that the past is ultimately as inscrutable as the future." NYTBR 632.

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