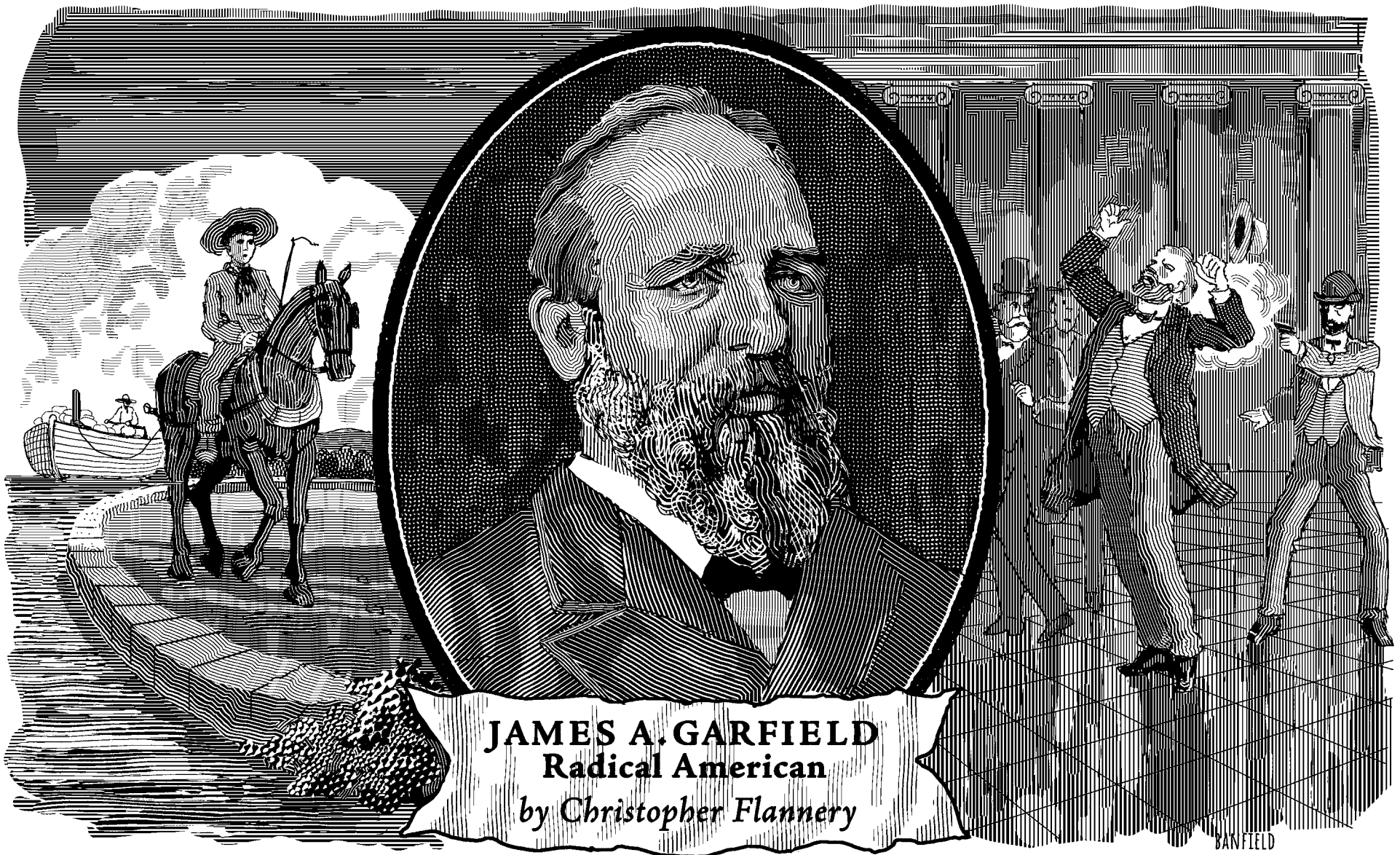


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PARTHIAN SHOT

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## An Immodest Proposal

AS AMERICA FATTENS WITH MATERIAL SUCCESSES AND WEAKENS with self-serving and delusional resentments, it is removed from many of the challenges and tests that build strength, obsessed with matters of sex, enchanted by superficial entertainments, and infected with nonsensical ideas. For the latter see, *inter alia*, Marx, Dewey, Derrida, Sartre, Marcuse, and, though only a philosophical Minnie Mouse, Ibram X. Kendi.

The path to destruction is as brilliantly lit as in post-republican Rome, and is not due to imperial overstretch, which is neither what brought down Rome nor what ails us now. Rather, the cause was and is the rot in a civilization that turns against the principles that enabled it after faithful adherence to find peace, tranquility, and honor. For us, such adherence is vanishing as rapidly as are civilizing traditions.

Despite the truth, beauty, and genius of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, America's foundational principles have never enjoyed a guarantee of allegiance. To preserve them and refresh their vitality, the Claremont Institute was founded. Like the *Claremont Review of Books*, its attentions have been directed at scholars, policymakers, incipient policymakers, and—catch-as-catch-can—the general public.

But not at the general population of students, late high school through college, even though for half a century or more these generations have been made purposefully ignorant of the founding's documents and principles. They are openly led into hostility toward them. Starting in nursery school they are fed a numbingly repetitive diet of hatred of self, hatred of others, and hatred of country; of supposedly therapeutic racism, strange sexual indoctrinations, contempt for the past, and assurance that in the immediate future they will drown, burn, or starve.

Absent the more plausible and realistic catastrophes (such as war or economic depression) that can reignite the instincts of survival, there is no better righting mechanism for an America off track, and no better implicit answer to historical distortions such as the 1619 Project, than the unasailable 18th-century prose that in our (in the literal sense) original documents and debates is perhaps mankind's greatest political accomplishment.

An electronic exposition of this accomplishment could not in present conditions compete with the low and addictive lures of the internet. Though a textbook might be too "heavy," demanding, and perceived as a slog, and a pamphlet too flimsy and discardable, nonetheless an introductory explication of our essential principles, like the documents themselves, should rely on the solidity and magic of paper and ink. Though it may be neglected and disdained, that magic remains and can be reinvigorated even in those educated away from it.

Thus, the ideal format would be that of—assuming you are not reading this online—what you are holding in your hands: the *CRB*. It is neither ponderous, nor flimsy. More economically than a book, it can be lavishly illustrated with paintings, photographs, maps, facsimiles, diagrams, and drawings. Following its habitual structure, it can be attractively divided into short, assimilable chapters, with those on the Declaration and the Constitution longer and subdivided, and each centered

upon the principles with which it is associated and that have, or should have, endured through time.

WHEREAS THE FINAL FORM WOULD REQUIRE MUCH THOUGHT and deliberation, a tentative table of contents leaps to mind. 1) A God's-eye view of the world in the late 18th century—the way people lived, their governance, their wars, their rivalries, et. al. 2) A focus on the British Empire and the North American colonies, their economies, cultural differences, and disputes. 3) Differences in the natural environments, geographies, and economies of Britain and the North American colonies that provided fertile ground in which philosophical divergences could take root. 4) A summary of the major currents of political philosophy—then current or purposefully retrieved from classical antiquity—which both informed and stimulated the break. 5) The Revolutionary War. 6) Thomas Jefferson. 7) The Declaration of Independence. 8) James Madison. 9) The U.S. Constitution. 10) The Amendments. 11) A New Birth of Freedom: the Civil War as a struggle to define and reaffirm the Declaration and the Constitution. 12) *Plessy v. Ferguson*: a renewed assault on the foundational documents. 13) Progressivism then and now: the once-open assault that now hides. 14) Constitutionalism, principle, and tradition: the necessity of benchmarks and lodestars for the survival of the nation.

Apart from the obvious difficulties of organization and choosing among the subject matter's embarrassment of riches, the chief obstacle and challenge—as Jefferson would no doubt agree—cannot but lie in conveying the substance of what is encompassed above in compelling, inspiring, fluent prose, without which the founders and framers would have failed in their great endeavor. Granted, our educational system is almost hopelessly debased. But still, something there is ineradicable in the human heart and mind that responds to truth and beauty, and most especially when they combine as substance and style run together indistinguishably.

The *CRB*'s staff and contributors are extraordinarily well suited to realize this proposal. Due to its format and the efficiency with which the *CRB* is produced quarterly, the ensuing product, a one and done, would be affordable for even the poorest of schools—particularly, with distribution and adoption in mind, were the project subsidized (something not unprecedented) as a body within the Claremont Institute. If what is here envisioned were to materialize, a high school year or college semester course could be built around it, and even, with supplemental readings, a graduate course.

Though America's spark and tinder still exist, a suffocating miasma of destructive beliefs prevents them from taking fire. One need not search for new principles to sweep in like a fresh wind and clear the air, for we have and have always had them, and if and when their time comes again they should prove readily adoptable and wonderfully familiar, because they still remain strongly within us. For, once apprehended and almost as a gift of providence, the appealing grace and balance of our foundational principles are able to live in the soul forever.



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