



# American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700-1865

*Kathleen D. McCarthy*

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## **American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700-1865** Kathleen D. McCarthy

In this bracing history, Kathleen D. McCarthy explores the impact of philanthropy—both giving and volunteerism—on America from 1700 to 1865. What results is a vital reevaluation of public life during the pivotal decades leading up to the Civil War. By exploring the relationships between the market, the state, and the voluntary sphere, McCarthy demonstrates how these elements interacted to change our government—and the course of history. Donors, volunteers, and ‘nonprofit entrepreneurs’ all left a distinctive imprint on American charities, educational patronage, struggles against slavery and racism, female campaigns for equality, and wartime imperatives. In the process, McCarthy uncovers the pivotal role of philanthropy in the story of America’s continuous pursuit to fulfill our founding ideals.

“A tour de force. . . . [Modern donors] should all read *American Creed* to be reminded of the traditional impulses and motives that inspired earlier American philanthropists, large and small, to use their money aggressively in the creation and defense of social justice.”—Mark Dowie, *Los Angeles Times*

“While her riveting history of civil society from the founding to the Civil War focuses on philanthropy and religion, it is laced with keen insights into the place of civil disorder, repression, chivalry, and feminism in the American social order. This is history at its best. A work that is truly pertinent to our times.”—Benjamin Barber

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