



flocks for a time. Students of abnormal psychology as well as of religion will enjoy the author's insight that most new religions borrow from older models. These movements had more to do in shaping the American character than most people realize--in many ways we learn that Jonathan Edwards, "a Stormer of Heaven" and his "Great Awakening" is still with us. We also can find the roots of modern tomes like A Course in Miracles in the New Thought Movements of the 19th Century and why millions in Amercia still flock to "secrets" about the "Law of Attraction." We still want to believe in the power of mental magic. i really enjoyed this book.4 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Remarkable book about a remarkable timeBy Gregory S. MartinezThis is a history and analysis of the proliferation of fringe religious movements during the 19th century in the United States. That alone makes for interesting reading, but when one adds Seldes insightfulness and the wit and intelligence of his prose, you have a fascinating and delightful reading experience.14 of 26 people found the following review helpful. More Relevant for USA 2005 than for USA 1928By Robert AberWritten in 1928 and re-issued in 1964, The Stammering Century is a social history of the metamorphosis of religious revivalism - which is to say, American Christian Fundamentalism.The Stammering Century traces the root of revivalism to early 18th century New England and the effects of Rev. Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon,

Gilbert Seldes, the author of The Stammering Century, writes: This book is not a record of the major events in American history duringthe nineteenth century. It is concerned with minor movements, with thecults and manias of that period. Its personages are fanatics, and radicals,and mountebanks. Its intention is to connect these secondary movementsand figures with the primary forces of the century, and to supply abackground in American history for the Prohibitionists and the Pentecostalists;the diet-faddists and the dealers in mail-order Personality; the play censorsand the Fundamentalists; the free-lovers and eugenists; the cranks andpossibly the saints. Sects, cults, manias, movements, fads, religiousexcitements, and the relation of each of these to the others and to theorderly progress of America are the subject.The subject is of course as timely at the beginning of the twenty-first century as when the book first appeared in 1928. Seldess fascinated and often sympathetic accounts of dreamers, rogues, frauds, sectarians, madmen, and geniuses from Jonathan Edwards to the messianic murderer Matthias have established The Stammering Century not only as a lasting contribution to American history but as a classic in its own right.

One of the most perceptive and entertaining studies of the American spirit in the nineteenth century. Richard HofstadterThe quality of The Stammering Century lay in the fact that its author was interested in the history of his country, not to mock the past or to instruct the present, but for its own sake. Because he was a man of intelligence and sympathy, because his judgment was notably sane and because he worked hard in the sources, his book offered a remarkable picture of the rise and decay of the evangelical strain in American reform.The Stammering Century is a work of continuing vitality and interest. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.He [the reader] will find plenty in to excite his interest and stimulate his reflective powers. He will be continually wondering what is this thing in the mind of man which makes him love impossibilities, and not only believe in them but act on them. Many of Mr. Seldess moonshine captains are rogues and frauds, but many are honest dreamers, and many are men of incoherent power. The New York Times Mr. Gilbert Seldes has written a book which I for one have found extraordinarily delightful reading. Dealing as he does with all the cranks of the nineteenth century in America, he might easily have fallen into a tone of hard satire, but throughout he preserves a mood of wistful and whimsical regret.The Stammering Century is not only interesting psychologically and pathetic morally; it is also exceeding amusing, since most or the characters dealt with are delightful absurdities. Being myself inclined to crankdom, I have read the book as an awful warning, but those who have no inclination that way should read it humbly, with the realization that many of the most futile of these saints are authentically of the Kingdom of Heaven. Bertrand RussellAbout the AuthorGilbert Seldes (18931970), the younger brother of famed foreign correspondent and investigative journalist George Seldes, was an influential American journalist, writer, and cultural critic, noted for championing the popular arts. Born into the Jewish agricultural community of Alliance Colony, New Jersey, to philosophical anarchist parents of Russian Jewish descent, he attended Philadelphias prestigious Central High School and graduated from Harvard University, where he became friends with e. e. cummings and John Dos Passos. After working as a newspaper reporter in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., and as a war correspondent in England during World War I, he joined the staff of The Dial and became the New York correspondent for T. S. Eliots The Criterion. In 1923, however, he went to Paris to write a book in praise of popular culture. The result, The Seven Lively Arts, appeared the following year to both considerable acclaim and criticism for its celebration of the likes of Al Jolson over John Barrymore and Charlie Chaplin over Cecil B. DeMille. In Paris, Seldes met and married Alice Wadhams Hall; the couple would have two children, Timothy, a literary agent, and Marian, a Tony Awardwinning actor. Seldes later wrote columns for The Saturday Evening Post and Esquire, adapted Lysistrata and A Midsummer Nights Dream for Broadway, made historical documentary films, wrote radio scripts, and became the first director of television for CBS and the founding dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. His other many books of cultural criticism and social analysis include The Years of the Locust (1932), The Movies Come from America (1937), The Great Audience (1950), and

The Public Arts (1956). Seldes also published a novel, *The Wings of the Eagle* (1929), and, under the name Foster Johns, two books of detective stories. Greil Marcus is the author of *The Shape of Things to Come: Prophecy and the American Voice*, *Lipstick Traces*, and other books; with Werner Sollors he is the editor of *A New Literary History of America*. In recent years he has taught at the University of California at Berkeley, Princeton University, the New School University, and the University of Minnesota. He was born in San Francisco and lives in Oakland.