

AMERICAN
Political Writing
during the
Founding Era
1760-1805

VOLUME I

CHARLES S. HYNEMAN
DONALD S. LUTZ

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The cuneiform inscription that serves as the design motif for our endpapers is the earliest known written appearance of the word "freedom" (ama-gi), or "liberty". It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash.

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PREFACE

The political writing of the founding era is tremendous in volume. The books, pamphlets, and letters to newspapers written in the last quarter of the eighteenth century that would repay careful reading by students and teachers of American political thought would fill a few dozen volumes the size of the two that this comment introduces. And even appraisals of amount and worth take no account of the personal letters printed in the collected writings of men and women who achieved prominence and of the correspondence in manuscript preserved in archives and libraries. At least one collection of essays, *The Federalist*, has long been a classic of western literature. In the light of such an impressive literature, the appearance of a score, if not a half a hundred, brief essays hitherto unknown except to scholars ought to be high priority reading for political leaders and for those who make analysis and criticism of government a prime concern.

The second volume of this collection closes with the editors' choice of five-hundred-odd items thought to represent the best analytic and polemic writing put into print in the English colonies that converted into states during the forty-five years following 1760; if printed in the type-size of this collection, they would overflow at least fifteen, and possibly eighteen, volumes the size of these two. The editors are convinced that in compiling a selected list of political writings by Americans between 1760 and 1805, they have rejected an equal amount of wordage that met tests of relevance but seemed to be less satisfying on some test of merit.

It is quite clear that a vast amount of wordage went into print during this era and that only a modest proportion of that wordage is in places where readers can get to it today. With few exceptions, what the compilers of this collection examined and considered for inclusion is confined to items available in major university libraries, the less accessible holdings of a few rare book libraries, and the newspapers of that early period which have been preserved. Catalogs of American imprints cite many items which are not to be found in the libraries

that were visited, and it must be supposed that much that is in print has not yet been transferred to microcards and microfilm.

Much more important than speculation about the enormous volume of writing from this era are questions about the tests applied and the judgment invoked by the editors in deciding which item to reprint, which to cite in a selected list of political writings by Americans between 1760 and 1805, and which to exclude in either case for lack of interest or merit or because of present accessibility. How the selections were made is best disclosed by giving a brief account of how the enterprise originated and how it was executed. The probe into the early writing was initiated by the senior editor, and the story will be told in fewest words if related by him in the first person.

Three years before my retirement from teaching I was asked to provide a seminar for selected freshmen. The initial specification was that attention would be restricted to "the founding of the American political system and getting it under way." I had a fair acquaintance with the books of readings to be found in the university library and I was aware that, whether compiled by a historian or political scientist, those that touched on early experience tended to feature government documents over analytic and argumentative writing. I was totally unprepared, however, for the dearth of expository and polemical essays defining and describing republican government, setting forth its ideals and goals, and offering advice on surest ways of making popular self-government operative in North America. The thought that went into the design of the state constitutions turned out to be a valley of unexplored terrain all but concealed from sight by towering preoccupation with the case for independence from Britain and the strategies for forming a federal union. Students could read in print John Adams' *Thoughts on Government* and *The Essex Result* if I would risk their tearing to shreds a volume of the Works of John Adams and the Handlins's *Popular Sources of Political Authority*. It turned out when my syllabus was completed that, save for what was in *The Federalist* or a less illustrious later publication, *A Second Federalist*, compiled by Hyneman and Carey, almost everything the students were asked to read was supplied to them in mimeographed copy.

So provoked, I swore a mighty oath that as soon as I could find time for it I would put into print a collection of the best writings of

the founding era on the conception and establishment of republican government in America.

Proceeding beyond Indiana University and its Lilly Library I settled down in The Huntington Library. The first thing I learned on arrival in San Marino was that Huntington maintained an up-to-date file of all American imprints in its possession arranged by year of publication and alphabetically by author. This chronological file became my primary guide for identifying the books, pamphlets, and broadsides that I was to examine. For newspapers I would have to look elsewhere. The titles that I had noted from footnotes and bibliographies of other writers and from the aids provided by professional bibliographers would tip me off to items that the Huntington Library did not have. My first resort was to examine every printed piece in the Huntington Library that carried a title suggesting it might have something interesting to say. If the title page identified an election day sermon, or a sermon delivered before the local militia or at the funeral of a former public official, I read it; if it celebrated the ordination of a minister or promised to weigh the pros and cons of baptizing infants in cold weather, I did not read it. Discourses, dissertations, and orations on comets and pleas for kindness to dumb animals I did not look at. But if the title was simply *A Discourse; A Dissertation; An Oration; A Sermon*—in that case I had the piece before me and turned enough pages to make a decision to reproduce or to reject on the basis of judgment rather than presumption. David Daggett's *Oration: Sunbeams May Be Extracted from Cucumbers, But the Process Is Tedious* I would have sent for even if it had carried a subtitle: *A Repository of Advice Recommended for Morons Only*.

Assuming the Huntington chronological file was as complete as the Library's staff supposed it to be, the probability of overlooking anything relevant to the subjects I kept at the front of my mind is slight indeed. Far more critical are these two questions: (1) What did I conceive to be relevant to the founding experience? And (2) What considerations ought to control a decision that a piece of writing would repay reading by polished scholars and aspiring students in our own time? Lacking foreknowledge of what bounds a prospective publisher might set for range of subject matter, and unwilling to guess how many pages of print I might have to settle for, I resolved all doubts in favor of inclusion. My personal interest was fixed on the character

of republican government and whatever might hinder or support it but I examined pamphlets that promised attention to the placement of America in the British empire, sentiments of localism and union, satisfaction and dissatisfaction with political institutions, policies, and practices; and on to disputes and strategies relating to independence, formation of new governments, union, and nationhood. Visions of the virtuous individual and the good society, exposition of ideals, analysis of conditions affecting the achievement of goals—anything commonly conceived to be theoretic or philosophic in contrast to the descriptive and narrational was prospective content for the compilation I had in mind.

Cut-off points for quality were settled in an arbitrary if not perfunctory manner. It seemed to me that when the time came to choose the items to be reprinted, I ought to have before me for comparative scrutiny three to five pieces for every one that would finally claim a place in the collection. And so, if I saw a chance that for one reason or another a piece might ultimately be selected for appearance in a collection of 2,000 pages, I placed an order for its reproduction by Xerox or photo-film. Subsequent experience justified the decision. The repository of political thought now before you contains forty pamphlets which were located in the Huntington Library or Library of Congress by the process just described; they were final choices from more than five times that number of pamphlets which were copied for comparative evaluation.

It is now time to introduce the other half of the team, Donald Lutz. When I was deep enough into the search to sense the size of the lion whose tail I had latched onto, apprehensions of geriatric origin prompted an appeal for help. Lutz assumed the responsibility of searching out the content of newspapers available on microcards or to be found in original print in the Library of Congress, pursuing essentially the policies for selection described above. Beyond this, he checked out the two volumes of Shipton and Mooney, *National Index of American Imprints* (NIAI) for items not located at the Huntington Library or the Library of Congress, and guided by the abbreviated titles supplied in NIAI read microcards for promising items that had so far been missed. Finally, titles found in the footnotes and bibliographic listings of prominent writers—Bernard Bailyn, Trevor Colburn, Jack Greene, Jack Pole, Gordon Wood, etc.—were brought under scrutiny if they had not already been encountered.

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P R E F A C E

This account of procedure should assure readers that the items reprinted here were selected with care. In addition to the purposeful exclusion of personal correspondence, many important writings are missing here because they are already readily accessible in university and major college libraries. More regrettable are the items missed because considerations of time and resources set limits to this search.

Within the restrictions just noted, no piece was denied a place in this collection if the editors viewed it as among the best of the best. But for most of the candidates for inclusion there were rival contenders. In some instances where aptness and force of argument seemed near equal we made the choice that favored a wider distribution of authorship or extended the range of topics discussed. Also, we sacrificed two or three pieces of unusual length whose primary value was reinforcement of points made in other essays, and so made room for several short statements that addressed basic principles, assumptions, or beliefs widely held but rarely discussed in the public press. A good example is Essay 49, the 1788 piece by "An Elector" which lays out the case against electioneering, a practice commonly viewed with apprehension at the time.

With only a very few exceptions, every piece is reproduced in its entirety. The literature of the founding period included a number of essays running to a hundred pages or more, some that were of book length, and a few multi-volume histories. Such lengthy texts could not be reprinted in full, yet to exclude some of them altogether would not only have repressed some extremely good writing but have denied notable and influential authors a rightful claim to stand with their peers in public memory. We chose in those instances to reproduce selected portions of the lengthy work.

Care has been taken to preserve the original text, with certain exceptions. The letters "f" and "s" are scarcely distinguishable in much of the original print. To ease readability we have made the letter "f" look the way it ought to. Aside from this consistent alteration, such other changes as were made are mentioned in the notes introducing the items where the revisions occur. These exceptions are rare. In general we have retained the original grammar and spelling whether correct or not. If a word could not be deciphered from the original a bracketed space is inserted in its place. If there is more than one version of a text available and some later editor has inserted the supposed word, we have placed this word in brackets. When more

P R E F A C E

than one version of the text was available we chose the earliest version for reproduction. This usually meant choosing the newspaper version over the pamphlet form where both were available. In a few instances the newspaper version was so blurred that we felt more secure reproducing the later pamphlet form. If the newspaper version is being reprinted we have identified the title and date of the newspaper. If it is a pamphlet that is being reproduced, only the date and place of publication are noted. The original pagination of each essay is indicated by bracketed page numbers embedded in the text—the only other emendation made in the original.

Finally, the reader unfamiliar with the literature of the period should be warned that there is one important respect in which these essays are not representative of the massive outpouring of printed material during the era. Political writing then was often quite colorful as a result of being vituperative, self-serving, prone to name-calling, full of high-flown rhetoric, or just plain nasty. The anonymity of authors was as likely to be used so as to avoid action for libel as to avoid prosecution by authorities. The essays reproduced here retain a certain colorful quality, but the reasoned analysis they contain is exceptional, not necessarily typical.

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Charles S. Hyneman is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Indiana University. He is a past President of the American Political Science Association and author of many books and articles, including Popular Government in America and The Supreme Court on Trial.

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This compilation of the best writing of the founding fathers received the warm support of William J. Baroody, Sr., from its inception until his death, and that relationship continued when William J. Baroody, Jr., succeeded his father as President of American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. From the beginning AEI picked up the tab for travel and living costs incurred by either of the editors in visiting libraries and meeting occasionally in conference, and for reproduction of pamphlets and newspaper articles from which final selection of items was made. Howard R. Penniman was a skillful negotiator of the terms and conditions of this collaboration, later joined by Austin Ranney, who came to share with Penniman some of the responsibility for AEI's projects relating to American politics. To all these men everyone who finds these two volumes useful is indebted. For two years the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars provided the senior editor a living and a room for work and accumulation of litter, all of which necessities for scholarship contributed substantially to this project. Finally, Richard Ware and the Earhart Foundation once more exhibited a disposition to come to the relief of the editors when commendable ambition of either of them rubbed too abrasively against limited resources.

There is no chance of saying too much in favor of the Huntington Library as a place to explore the holdings they have accumulated. For the literature of the founding period their collection is voluminous. Without miss, in several visits, the service staff was genial, courteous, diligent, and knowledgeable, words especially applicable to those we mainly did business with: Virginia J. Renner, Noelle Jackson, and Mary Wright in Readers' Services; Barbara Quinn of Photographic Reproduction; and Senior Research Scholar Ray A. Billington. Staff of the Rare Book Room of the Library of Congress were consistently courteous and concerned to meet every request. Anne C. Palumbo at the Woodrow Wilson Center and Raymond L. Faust at Indiana University helped in the early stages of the search for elusive material and have earned our appreciation.

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Dean Charles F. Bonser, Professor Charles Moffatt, and Judy Deckard threw the doors of Indiana University wide open for the comfort and convenience of the senior member of the team. The junior member did much of the culling and assembly of the manuscript while on a leave granted by the Faculty Development Leave Committee of the University of Houston. Professor David Brady, Professor Richard Hofstetter, and Provost George Magner at the University of Houston each made administrative decisions which eased the work or made available resources for work on the manuscript. Final preparation of the manuscript by the junior editor was done as part of the program of Liberty Fund, Inc. Last but not least Sharon McCormick, Martha Knutson, Lucy Redding, and Denise Reddick ably assisted in the final manuscript preparation.

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