



BOOK REVIEWS

The Papers of James Madison, Volume VII—3 May 1783—20 February 1784. Edited by WILLIAM T. HUTCHINSON and WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971. xli, 479 pp. \$16.00.

The Papers of James Madison, Volume VIII—10 March 1784—28 March 1786. Edited by ROBERT A. RUTLAND and WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973. xxviii, 560 pp. \$20.00.

The Papers of James Madison, Volume IX—9 April 1786—24 May 1787. Edited by ROBERT A. RUTLAND and WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975. xxv, 447 pp. \$18.50.

The Papers of James Madison, Volume X—27 May 1787—3 March 1788. Edited by ROBERT A. RUTLAND and WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977. xxvi, 572 pp. \$25.00.

DURING the five years covered by these four volumes James Madison, Virginia politician and intellectual, in his thirties, became widely known beyond his native state, and during this first notable period in his long life he advanced steadily toward the center of the national stage. In the public service continuously as a member of Congress, of the Virginia House of Delegates, of Congress again, of the Annapolis Convention, and of the Federal Convention, he grew in stature as public citizen, political philosopher, and cogent speaker and writer. From the perspective of history, all the problems he contended with, all the issues he argued, with or without success, prepared him unwittingly for the unique role he played in the framing of the United States Constitution.

With this meticulous edition of *The Papers of James Madison* in hand the scholar can trace the transformation of Madison the Virginian into Madison the nationalist. In Virginia the urgency felt by Jefferson to carry forward the goals of the Revolution worthy of an enlightened society was reflected in his friend Madison's support for completing the revision of Virginia laws and enacting the Statute for Establishing Religious Freedom. Their correspondence in these volumes is the most frequent, their letters most noteworthy in length as well as in substance—one of seven printed pages by Jefferson, one of fifteen pages by Madison containing, according to the editors, a complete statement of Madison's political thought (X, 205). Jefferson in France looked to his friend to keep him abreast of crucial events in America, and their exchange of frank opinions confirms the old interpretation of these years as "the critical period."

Many of Virginia's problems were also national problems—commercial relations between Congress and the states, control of the Mississippi River vis-à-vis Spain, administration of the western territory, the political status of Kentucky—and Madison, confronting them from the state and the national viewpoint in turn, gradually came to the conclusion that the solution could be found only by means of a national government in a federal system. With his historical knowledge of previous confederations

and his critical analysis of the reasons for their dissolution, he was well prepared to write on "Vices of the Political System of the United States" in the spring of 1787, having observed them firsthand in Congress and repercussions of them in his own state. Although Madison widened his acquaintance by travel in the northern states exclusive of New England, his chief correspondents, besides Jefferson, were Virginians—Edmund Pendleton, Joseph Jones, Edmund Randolph, George Washington, the Reverend James Madison—who shared many of his political opinions and sensed the need for revision of the Articles of Confederation or a new structure of the general government. Above all, the advice, the opinion, and the *presence* of Washington became a source of strength to the young revolutionary and budding statesman.

From the records of these events, of the thoughts and action of the greater and the lesser participants, the history of this period has often been recounted, but reading the sources in strict chronological order provides a safeguard against faulty historical interpretation. Admitting the limitations imposed by the editors whose focus is *ipso facto* on Madison, the reader can better appreciate the correlation day by day of his public activities with his private life and sense the degree to which the latter was sacrificed to the former. Need it be further argued that these *Papers* and others of the same pattern with their multiplicity of information are invaluable not only to biographers but even more so to innumerable scholars engaged in a great diversity of research? Furthermore, the organic nature of these records, their internal archival relationship, make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Every historical editor who is more than a faithful transcriber must search, select, evaluate, and elucidate; and, admitting that he has the best command of his particular corpus of papers, we judge by his historical accuracy, the rhetorical restraint of his annotations, and the degree to which he indulges in historical interpretation. In the present instance the editors' treatment of Madison's participation in the Federal Convention is commendable; and the fact that the *Records* of the Convention have long been available, especially Max Farrand's edition, was obviously a major consideration in their procedure. An editorial headnote on the Convention and Madison's Notes on the debates provides a helpful historical introduction and critical bibliographical information. The editors have limited the text to Madison's speeches as he recorded them, supplemented by abridgments of parallel reports on them by Yates and others, as annotations. As Madison's arguments in these debates were projected into his support of the Constitution in *The Federalist*, so it is appropriate and convenient to have readily available in the same volume the text of the twenty-nine *Federalist* papers which he wrote.

Many of the comprehensive documentary publications of recent years, including the Madison *Papers*, have been criticized for their extended historical essays and their excessive, often pedantic, footnotes. While these are relative matters, testing the discretion of the editors, there is some justification for this criticism. In the case of the present *Papers* it is evident that Robert A. Rutland, the new editor beginning with Volume VIII, acknowledged these faults and has exercised restraint on both counts. Likewise he has reduced the Madison Chronology in each volume to more practical length, in contrast with the burdensome detail in Volume VII. The reduction of edi-

torial material, however, has not deprived the reader of valuable headnotes, e.g., on the session of the Virginia General Assembly of May 1784, on Madison in Congress, February-May 1787, and on the Virginia Plan for the proposed national government. Whether the long note on paper money problems in Rhode Island can be justified, however, may be seriously questioned.

Dr. Rutland and his staff are making a distinguished contribution to the study of American history and they have been publishing these formidable volumes at two-year intervals. This production should give pause to some carping critics who bemoan the fact that the end is not in sight. The date of publication of the final volume should not be an issue in the support of the project. "Rome was not built in a day."

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