United States

The Papers of James Madison. I. *16 March 1751–16 December 1779*; II. *20 March 1780–23 February 1781*. Edited by WILLIAM T. HUTCHISON and WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL. Chicago: University of Chicago Press [Toronto: University of Toronto Press]. 1962. Pp. xlii, 344; xx, 344, illus. $9.00 per volume.

THESE ARE THE FIRST of an extensive number of volumes being published with the avowed intention of printing "all extant writings of Madison which appear to have been wholly or in large degree the product of his mind." The talents, indus-try, erudition, and sophisticated historical skills of the editors are exceptional, and are eminently yet not intrusively displayed. It is an excellent performance on very difficult and tricky terrain. Everyone seriously interested in early American history—or in coming to grips with one of the very best minds among American leaders—should subscribe forthwith to the series. One assumes that any library worthy of the name has already done so.

Early volumes of the collected papers of famous men often meet a paradoxical reception. The excitement over their publication is not followed by any similar involvement in their contents. In libraries, for example, they are often found in almost mint condition. A good many items are often missing or mutilated, and there is a propensity to jump into such collections at the place where it is known that the subject had an impact upon his environment. This latter tendency remains true, revealingly enough, even in this age of recruiting psychology as a drill sergeant for historical interpretation.

A routine examination of these first Madison volumes might reinforce that traditional reception. But there is a good deal more here than the scanning eye can catch or absorb. It is true that some important documents have disappeared, but even in those cases the remaining items cast a revealing light on the nature of young Madison's mind, and on the form and direction it was taking in the 1770's. He appears very early, for example, as a self-conscious aristocrat: in classic manner he was at once concerned to supervise the ruffles on his shirts, and to warn that "a watchful eye must be kept on ourselves" to avoid the fallacies of the Romantic movement. He was also deeply involved with the condition of the slaves—those "unhappy wretches"—and disturbed lest the institution itself become the Achilles heel of Virginia (and America).

The quality and rigour of Madison's mind, and the integrated pattern of thought that became so characteristic of his leadership, became evident in his confrontation with the issue of the place of religion in government, in society, and in the life of the individual. If the word means anything, Madison was a religious man. Not only did he consider entering the ministry, but he greatly admired his cousin, the Reverend James Madison, and maintained a close personal and intellectual retationship with Samuel Stanhope Smith, a Presbyterian leader in Virginia. Of all the early documents that have been lost, one wishes that the long letters from Madison to Smith had somehow been saved. But Smith's replies, and the beautiful interpretative work done by the editors, make it clear that from an early date Madison was inclined toward a philosophy that rested on the principle that a tight causal chain of events explained present circumstances and choices. As the Reverend James Madison remarked with pride, his young namesake was a man "with a philosophical Eye." This cast of mind led Madison to conclude that a single, official, and institutionalized religion (or ideology) involved serious dangers for the body politic. It "shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise." It also produced "great ignorance and Corruption." And, ultimately, created the need for every official to "furnish their Quota of Imps." He thus opposed an established state of religion without denying the validity or importance of an overriding moral and ethical system.

Combined with his keen awareness of the secular system of political economy (which one can with excitement see maturing in these volumes), this sense of society as a community provides the central clue to Madison's entire career. Indeed, some of the most striking and significant material in these volumes shows how very early (1779–80) Madison recognized the need for a strong central government if independence was to be won and maintained, and used as the springboard for development. These thoughts are of course the beginnings of the movement which produced the Constitution a decade later. His analysis of the situation was also beginning to produce the kind of sentences that were to become the trademark of his powerful mind. Here he is on the circular nature of the crisis in 1780: "Congress complaining of the extortion of the people; the people of the improvidence of Congress, and the army of both; our affairs requiring the most mature & systematic measures, and the urgency of occasions admitting only of temporizing expedients, and those expedients generating new difficulties."

This reference to the need for "systematic measures" offers what is perhaps the key insight into Madison's career. He was in the early years covered by these volumes becoming a master of the way things went together to form an interrelated whole. In his essay on money, for example, he demolishes the quantity theory through the process of laying bare its *non sequiturs*; goes on to explain inflation; and concludes with a call for a strong Congress to save the monetary

system before it collapses. Madison also favoured mercantilistic controls over the economy as an essential means of development, and realized that the crucial question for mercantilism (as for later modifications thereof) was whether the citizens "will have the necessary prudenc[e,] firmness & perseverence" to honour the system and thereby produce the general welfare.

These volumes also contain three other exciting indicators of things to come. One is Madison's attack on Montesquieu's economic theories, an assault which presages Madison's later denial of the Frenchman's axiom that representative government can survive only in small states. That drift of Madison's thinking is further revealed in his argument that the western lands were "necessary to the safety and prosperity of the States." Finally, Madison was already concerned lest the trade of the new nation be engrossed by Great Britain. That, he feared, would leave London with much of the substance of colonialism even if the form was altered by a victory in the war. Here is certainly a classic example of an early analysis that became the foundation for later action, for Madison's explanation of the need to go to war in 1812 was based on precisely the necessity of achieving economic independence. In this sense, at any rate, Madison speaks to the underdeveloped nations of the mid-twentieth century as pointedly as he did to his contemporaries.

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