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ARTICLES

A REPUBLIC, MADAM, IF YOU CAN KEEP IT

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ELLEN SHAPIRO McDONALD**

At the close of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, a Mrs. Powell of Philadelphia inquired of Benjamin Franklin, "Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?" "A republic," Franklin replied, "if you can keep it."¹ As was common with Franklin, the observation was more enigmatic than it would at first appear, for Franklin was well aware that there were several varieties of republicanism in America, each of which posited different means of "keeping it."

To understand that observation, one must move back in time from 1787 to the eve of independence. The drive for independence had been spearheaded by what would seem to be an unlikely coalition of leaders in New England and the tobacco-growing regions of the upper South. By contrast, Patriot leaders in the Middle Colonies and the lower South, an equally improbable combination which had led the resistance to parliamentary encroachments until the spring of 1776, balked at making the break with England and, when independence was declared, most became either reluctant rebels or Loyalists. Moreover, that set of alignments—the "Lee-Adams junto"² versus the middle states and the lower South—persisted from the First Continental Congress until 1787.

* Distinguished Research Professor, University of Alabama. This article is adapted from a talk presented to the Notre Dame Community, April 20, 1988, as part of the Thomas J. White Center Lecture Series. Professor McDonald develops the ideas and claims in this article more fully in his book on the subject. See F. McDonald, *NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM: THE INTELLECTUAL ORIGINS OF THE CONSTITUTION* (1985).

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1. 3 *THE RECORDS OF THE FEDERAL CONVENTION OF 1787*, at 85 (M. Farrand ed. 1937).

2. Richard Henry Lee of Virginia and John Adams of Massachusetts.

The first Massachusetts-Virginia coalition long has been regarded as the more ardently republican, but until the late 1960s few scholars paid attention to the nature of the intellectual and ideological roots and content of American republicanism. Since that time Bernard Bailyn, Isaac Kramnick, J.G.A. Pocock, and others have described American republicanism as having stemmed proximately from writers in the eighteenth-century English Opposition and as having been rooted ultimately in ancient political theory, especially as modified by Machiavelli and Harrington.³ The studies of these historians have gained widespread acceptance, and indeed the ideology they describe has often been regarded as a more impelling motive in establishment of a republic than either economic interests or political ambitions.

The ideological school has recently come under attack from various quarters, but no one has addressed the most glaring problem in the ideological interpretation. The problem is this: From 1774 to 1787, republicans from New England and the tobacco belt appeared to speak almost as one man, at least in the national political arena. By 1789, and ever after, representatives of the two regions were poles apart. One explanation for the rift, offered at the time, was that Shays's Rebellion jolted New Englanders out of their extreme republicanism.⁴ The impact of the rebellion was indeed powerful, but the roots of the split run deeper. In actuality the two regions had never spoken as one man; they had embraced two distinct varieties of republicanism all along. The study of republicanism cannot be divorced from an understanding of the prevailing religious beliefs which shaped the content of particular republican theories or from the notions of political economy in which republicanism flourished. The thesis we shall attempt to develop here is that New England republicanism and Virginia republicanism were profoundly different things, manifestations of two profoundly different cultures—Yankee culture and Southern culture; and that republicanism in the middle states was partly

3. B. BAILYN, *THE IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION* (1965); L. BANNING, *THE JEFFERSONIAN PERSUASION* (1978); Z. FINK, *THE CLASSICAL REPUBLICANS* (1949); I. KRAMNICK, *BOLINGBROKE AND HIS CIRCLE* (1968); F. McDONALD, *NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM: THE INTELLECTUAL ORIGINS OF THE CONSTITUTION* (1985); J.G.A. POCOCK, *THE MACHIAVELLIAN MOMENT* (1975); C. ROBBINS, *THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY COMMONWEALTHMAN* (1959); G. WOOD, *THE CREATION OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC* (1969). For a historiographical summary of the literature, see Shalhope, *Republicanism and Early American Historiography*, in 39 *WM. & MARY Q.* 335-56 (1982).

4. See F. McDONALD, *NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM* 176-79 (1985).

one, partly the other, and partly yet a third and unrelated phenomenon.

Republicans in New England and Virginia obviously held a number of attitudes in common; otherwise, they could not have come together and held together as long as they did. The most crucial common ground was a preoccupation with the mortality of republics. The vital, which is to say life-giving, principle of republics is *public virtue*. Every literate American of the founding generation understood that both *public* and *virtue* derive from Latin roots signifying manhood. The public comprehended only independent adult males; virtue comprehended the qualities which defined manhood. The opposites of public virtue were effeminacy and vice. If public virtue declined, the republic declined, and if it declined too far the republic died. Philosophical historians had worked out a regular life-cycle, or more properly death-cycle, of republics in which manhood gave way to effeminacy; republican liberty, to licentiousness. Licentiousness, in turn, degenerated into anarchy, and anarchy inevitably led to tyranny.

American republican ideologues kept in their heads a checklist of indicators of corruption, symptomatic of decay. In New England the search for signs that the republic was starting its ordained decline—signs that it was doomed because of man's loss of virtue—contemplated or complemented Calvinist religious preoccupations. In Virginia the list of demons, though much the same, was phrased in such a way that the wicked ones were external to society and could be eliminated from society. When the New Englanders cried out against corruption—against luxury, sloth, ignorance, privilege—they were condemning vices which they must guard against in themselves as well as in others. When the Virginians named demons—paper shufflers, aristocrats, blood-suckers, monopolists, speculators—they were not naming themselves; they were naming outsiders who must, for the sake of the republic, be kept outside. What distinguished puritanical republicanism from the agrarian variety, therefore, was that the puritanical republic sought moral solutions to the problem of the mortality of republics—which is to say that they sought to make better people, more virtuous people; whereas, the agrarian republicans believed in making better political arrangements—which is to say that, since the public already had a sufficient stock of virtue to maintain the republic, it was necessary only to devise political structures that would prevent the wicked from usurping power. Could any New Englander have written as Madison did

to Jefferson, that "most of our moral evils may be traced to our political?"⁵

The difference becomes clearer when one compares the Constitution of Massachusetts (1780) with that of Virginia (1776). The one uses religion and religious doctrines to enforce morality and thereby support the republic; the other does not. In its *Declaration of Rights* the Massachusetts Constitution asserts that the preservation of civil government and good order depend upon "piety, religion, and morality" as "diffused through a community" by "the public worship of God" and by public instruction in religion,⁶ and the Declaration therefore authorizes and *requires* the legislature to provide for the same. The celebrated section 16 of the Virginia *Bill of Rights*, by contrast, provides for the free exercise of religion—and for freedom of conscience.⁷

Similarly, in the Massachusetts Constitution, article 18 states that "constant adherence to . . . piety, justice, moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality, are absolutely necessary to preserve the advantages of liberty and to maintain a free government."⁸ That corresponds closely to section 15 of the Virginia *Bill of Rights*,⁹ but the Virginia *Bill of Rights* stops with the statement of principle; the Massachusetts Constitution continues by requiring of lawgivers the formation and execution of laws necessary to achieve the end of "constant observance."¹⁰

Furthermore, the Massachusetts Constitution provides for education and explains the need for the provision. Chapter 5, section 1, concerning Harvard College, notes in article 1 that the encouragement of arts and sciences "tends to the honor of God, the advantage of the Christian religion, and the great benefit"¹¹ of the state. The next section encourages public schools and promotes arts and letters in general because "[w]isdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people,"¹² are necessary for the preservation of liberty. Provisions for making a virtuous citizenry through education are not to be found in the Virginia Constitution.

5. 9 THE PAPERS OF THOMAS JEFFERSON 334 (J. Boyd ed. 1950).

6. 3 F. THORPE, THE FEDERAL AND STATE CONSTITUTIONS 1889 (1909).

7. 7 *id.* at 3814.

8. 3 *id.* at 1892.

9. 7 *id.* at 3814.

10. 3 *id.* at 1892.

11. *Id.* at 1906.

12. *Id.* at 1907.

Furthermore, the Massachusetts Constitution, in Chapter VI, formulates careful prescriptions for oaths—the oath for assuming high office, for example, requires one to swear or affirm that “‘I believe the Christian religion, and have a firm persuasion of its truth.’”¹³ The renowned Massachusetts minister Phillips Payson explained the necessity for such oaths by saying that the “fear and reverence of God, and the terrors of eternity, are the most powerful restraints upon . . . men and hence it is of special importance in a free government. . . .”¹⁴ The Virginia Constitution, however, makes no attempt to control men’s behavior in this world by invoking the Higher Power and the threat of damnation in the next world.

Lest it seem that we are refining overmuch, let us consider what John Adams had to say about republics. Republican government, he wrote to Mercy Warren, could be supported only “by pure Religion or Austere Morals. Public Virtue cannot exist in a Nation without private, and public Virtue is the only Foundation of Republics. There must be a positive Passion for the public good, . . . or there can be no Republican Government, *nor any real liberty.*” This public passion, he emphasized, “must be Superior to all private Passions.” To his wife Abigail, Adams wrote that their children might suppose that he should have labored more for their benefit, but “I will tell them that I . . . laboured to procure a free Constitution . . ., and if they do not prefer this to ample Fortune, to Ease and Elegance, they are not my Children, and I care not what becomes of them.” He planned a Spartan existence for them: “They shall live upon thin Diet, wear mean Cloaths, and work hard, with Cheerfull Hearts and free Spirits. . . .” They must “revere nothing but Religion, Morality, and Liberty.”¹⁵

Almost nothing was outside the purview of a puritanical republican government. Every matter that might in any way contribute to strengthening or weakening the virtue of the public was a thing of concern to the public—a *res publica*—and was subject to regulation by the public. Puritanical republican liberty was totalitarian: one was free to do that and only that which was in the interest of the public, the liberty of the individual being subsumed in the freedom or independence of the

13. *Id.* at 1908.

14. Payson, *A Sermon* (Boston 1778), reprinted in *AMERICAN POLITICAL WRITING DURING THE FOUNDING ERA, 1760-1805*, at 529 (C. Hyneman & D. Lutz eds. 1983) [hereinafter *AMERICAN POLITICAL WRITING*].

15. Both the letter to Mercy Warren and Abigail Adams are quoted in P. GREVEN, *THE PROTESTANT TEMPERAMENT: PATTERNS OF CHILD-REARING, RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE, AND THE SELF IN EARLY AMERICA* 346 (1977).

political community. For example, Adams's cousin Zabdiel Adams preached this conjoining of religion, virtue, and free republican government from his pulpits. Much can be done, said he, "towards bringing the people to an outward reformation" through "enacting and carrying into execution" laws requiring the observance of the sabbath, church attendance, and all other matters of morals. Indeed, he asserted that "very many . . . serious people long to see a system of *preventive jurisprudence* better established"¹⁶ for this purpose. In this spirit, the Massachusetts General Court had issued a proclamation "commanding . . . the good People of this Colony, that they lead Sober, Religious, and peaceable Lives," and ordering that "every Person . . . guilty of any Immoralities whatsoever" be brought to "condign punishment."¹⁷

Down the eastern seaboard, in Philadelphia, Thomas Chandler denounced such sentiments. He wrote to "reasonable Americans" that there would be no liberty if they were subjected to a New England Republican Government. (One thinks of the remark of the Athenian Alcibiades about Sparta, the ancient republic that American republicans professed to admire most: "[N]o wonder the Spartans cheerfully encounter death; it is a welcome relief to them from such a life as they are obliged to lead."¹⁸)

Now, militant republicanism was not entirely confined to New England. In Pennsylvania, for example, the events of 1775-76 discredited moderates and conservatives and swept radical Scotch-Irish Presbyterians—the Calvinist party—temporarily into unchecked power. Pennsylvania's traditional liberalism disappeared, as the state constitution of 1776 required officeholders to "acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine inspiration"¹⁹ and required the legislature to make and constantly to keep in force "[l]aws for the encouragement of virtue, and prevention of vice and immorality."²⁰ The moderates soon staged a comeback, however; and, when they did, a new pattern, based upon the development of two distinct and semi-permanent political parties, began to emerge. On the one side were the radical, puritanical republicans, who gained power through highly-organized party

16. Adams, *An Election Sermon* (Boston 1782), reprinted in 1 AMERICAN POLITICAL WRITING, *supra* note 14, at 561 (emphasis in original).

17. POPULAR SOURCES OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY 68 (O. Handlin & M. Handlin eds. 1966).

18. Quoted in 1 WORKS OF FISHER AMES 97 (W. Allen ed. 1983).

19. PA. CONST. sec. 10, reprinted in, 5 F. THORPE, *supra* note 6, at 3085.

20. PA. CONST. sec. 45, reprinted in 5 F. THORPE, *supra* note 6, at 3091.

machinery and exercised it arbitrarily. On the other side were nationally and even internationally oriented advocates of a commercial republic, whose aim was the establishment of a liberal regime in which durability would be protected neither by virtue nor by constitutional arrangements, but by *law*.

Extreme republicanism was also sometimes found in those parts of Virginia where the Great Awakening (especially in its Baptist phase) had its strongest impact. Quite possibly, as Philip Greven has suggested, there was a psychological affinity between republicanism and "the evangelical temperament,"²¹ which was inherent in both seventeenth-century puritanism and eighteenth-century revivalism. But puritanical republicanism was considerably less pervasive outside New England than was the *agrarian* species of republican ideology. The agrarian species was densely concentrated in tobacco-plantation country, because of those peoples' less evangelical temperament. In marked contrast to the industry, frugality, and work ethic that were religiously and socially instilled into New Englanders, southern religion and society taught its members indolence, prodigality, and the leisure ethic. Carter Braxton, outlining a suitable constitution for Virginia in 1776, commented that sumptuary laws, mandates for frugality and plainness, and hostility to elegance and refinement were necessary in some republics because nature affords them "a scanty supply of the necessaries, and none of the conveniences, of life," but such ideas can "never meet with a favourable reception from people who inhabit a country to which Providence has been more bountiful."²²

Despite their easy-going ways, however, Southern republicans could believe that their society produced a sufficient supply of virtue, for there was an alternate and more recently formulated body of republican theory available to them. Virtue meant manliness, and manliness meant independence. In *Oceana*,²³ James Harrington had advanced the proposition that the necessary independence could be had only if a man owned enough land, unencumbered by debts or other obligations, to provide himself and his family with all their material needs; and this independence, in the words of J.G.A. Pocock, was "in the last analysis measured by his ability to bear arms and use them in his quarrels."²⁴ Trenchard and Gordon and Bolingbroke

21. P. GREVEN, *supra* note 15, at 338.

22. BRAXTON, *A Native of this Colony, An Address*, Virginia 1776, in C. HYNEMAN & D. LUTZ, *supra* note 14, at 334.

23. J. HARRINGTON, *THE COMMONWEALTH OF OCEANA* (1887).

24. J. POCOCK, *POLITICS, LANGUAGE, AND TIME* 110 (1971).

reiterated and embellished the idea. In this scheme of thought, virtue, independence, liberty, and the ownership of unencumbered real property were inextricably bound together. "To live securely, happily, and independently," Trenchard and Gordon wrote, "is the End and Effect of Liberty . . . and real or fancied Necessity alone makes Men the Servants, Followers, and Creatures of one another. And therefore . . . Property is the best Support of the Independency so passionately desired by all Men."²⁵ In sum, ownership of the land begat independence, independence begat virtue, and virtue begat republican liberty.

New England as well as Southern republicans, it is true, embraced the dogma that landownership was a natural preservative of virtue; but the Southerners, unlike the New Englanders, believed that a wide distribution of landownership, combined with an extreme jealousy of power and careful attention to its allocation, would preserve an adequate stock of public virtue independent of the store of private virtue. Indeed, in the Southern scheme of things private virtue, in the rigorous sense in which it was defined by the Yankees, was unnecessary to the maintenance of republican liberty. The arch-agrarian John Taylor of Caroline put it succinctly: "The more a nation depends for its liberty on the qualities of individuals, the less likely it is to retain it. By expecting publick good from private virtue, we expose ourselves to publick evil from private vices."²⁶ Taylor went on to deal at length with the importance of the structure of political institutions to republican liberty.

Carter Braxton also excoriated those who confused public virtue and private virtue. The two were "materially different," he wrote. "The happiness and dignity of man" depended upon "the practice of *private* virtues, and to this he is stimulated by the rewards promised to such conduct. In this," Braxton continued, echoing Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, a man "acts for himself, and with a view of promoting his own particular welfare." But *public* virtue "means a disinterested attachment to the public good, exclusive and independent of all private and selfish interest," and that kind of attachment "never characterised the mass of the people in any state." To enforce public virtue as defined would be to exchange "one species of tyranny," monarchy, for a kind that was far more

25. THE ENGLISH LIBERTARIAN HERITAGE 177-78 (D. Jacobson ed. 1965).

26. R. SHALHOPE, JOHN TAYLOR OF CAROLINE: PASTORAL REPUBLICAN 160 (1980).

oppressive.²⁷ Instead, Braxton urged his fellow Virginians to adopt a carefully constructed mixed form of government.

The most celebrated skeptic of private virtue and advocate of preserving the republic by making better arrangements was, of course, James Madison. Madison wrote in *The Federalist* No. 51:

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.²⁸

In *The Federalist* No. 10 and elsewhere Madison argued that adequate arrangements had been made in the Constitution. His anti-Federalist opponents in Virginia—including Richard Henry Lee, Patrick Henry, George Mason, William Grayson, and James Monroe—insisted among other things that a Bill of Rights was a necessary additional arrangement, but none questioned the premises that Madison had laid down.

The focus of agrarian republicanism, in other words, was not militant: it demanded protective devices only against those men and institutions which, historically, had proved inimical or fatal to liberty. The version of history to which they adhered has been described as the Anglo-Saxon myth. Free institutions, according to this myth, had originated among the ancient Teutonic tribes, who planted them in Britain during the sixth and seventh centuries. From then until the Norman Conquest, England was an agrarian paradise. Society and the minimal government that was necessary were organized around farmers, great and small, whose landholdings were absolutely free, and around powerful heads of families, nuclear or extended. No coercion was necessary in such a society, relations were governed by tradition and consent, and every man was free to worship God as he saw fit. Disputes were settled by established custom and the common law, which all men understood and revered. When foreign invaders threatened, the heads of families mustered in militia companies and repulsed the intruder.

The trouble was that the world contained a few evil men who were perpetually conspiring to destroy this Eden, and it was against them that one must be vigilant. The Anglo-Saxons, the myth went on, had relaxed their vigil during the eleventh

27. Braxton, *supra* note 22, at 334-35.

28. THE FEDERALIST NO. 51, at 356 (J. Madison) (B. Wright ed. 1961).

century, and the Norman Yoke was the result. They had won back their liberties in the Magna Carta in 1215, and in the ensuing centuries they repeatedly lost and regained them. During the seventeenth century it was the Stuart kings who attempted to destroy liberty, until they were ousted in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. And then, just when it seemed that liberty had finally been secured, new enemies appeared in the form of prime ministers and their trains of placemen and their aristocratic and stock-jobbing allies.

What kept the coalition of Yankees with Virginians intact for over a decade was a shared, somewhat paranoid viewpoint which enabled them to perceive shared perils. They agreed in the mid-seventies that a ministerial conspiracy was aimed at enslaving them. By 1780 they were convinced that an aristocratic conspiracy, involving Benjamin Franklin, the Philadelphia commercial republican Robert Morris and his circle, and mysterious figures in the French government posed a new threat to liberty. In 1783 and 1784 they saw yet another aristocratic plot in the form of the Society of the Cincinnati. As late as the fall of 1785 the Massachusetts delegates in Congress refused to carry out the instructions of their legislature to seek a general convention to enlarge the powers of Congress: "plans have been artfully laid, and vigorously pursued," they explained, to change "our republican Governments, into baleful Aristocracies."²⁹ When the convention did materialize in 1787, Patrick Henry refused to attend because, as he said, he "smelt a rat," and neither Sam Adams nor John Hancock sought to attend.

But by 1787 the rending of the coalition was already underway, to be completed by the spring of 1791, if not before. The process by which Yankees and Virginians came to realize that they adhered to different species of republicanism repays careful analysis, for such analysis demonstrates that their ideologies were motive forces only insofar as they were compatible with underlying religious and social norms and economic interests.

New England's shift began in reaction to Shays's Rebellion³⁰ or, more properly, to the misperception of the rebellion

29. Letter from Elbridge Gerry, Samuel Holten and Rufus King, to Governor James Bowdoin (September 3, 1785), *reprinted in* 8 *LETTERS OF MEMBERS OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS* 208 (E. Burnett ed. 1921).

30. A revolt by farmers in Massachusetts (1786) in opposition to high taxes and stringent economic conditions. Armed mobs forced the closing of several courts to prevent farm foreclosures and debt processes. Though the extent of the revolt was exaggerated, the fear caused by the revolt was

as a movement of desperate agrarians seeking to cancel all debts and bring about a general redistribution of property. The reaction took several forms. One was in the direction of monarchy: Henry Knox believed that three-sevenths of the people in the region favored remodeling American government along British lines; George Richards Minot said that "persons respectable for their literature and their wealth" formed the "seeds of a party" favoring a king; Crèvecoeur reported that throughout New England "they Sigh for Monarchy."³¹ Another was to rethink earlier notions about the security of republics: to conclude that ownership of land was not enough (most Shaysites were landowning-farmers), that institutional arrangements were not enough (the Massachusetts constitution was the most carefully crafted and balanced of all the state constitutions), that the people would ever lack sufficient virtue, and that external authority, non-monarchical but high-toned, was needed to keep them in check. In a manner of speaking, the republic must be watched over by the Elect.

Still another aspect of the Yankees' reaction was more deeply rooted. Puritans, republican or otherwise, felt most comfortable in a state of crisis or with a sense of impending doom: only when the world seemed or could be made to seem to be coming to an end was their militance necessary or desirable. Success, well-being, and happiness were not only alien to them, they were a threat. Thus when a genuine crisis, or the appearance of one, was thrust upon them, they agonized verbally but inwardly rejoiced: they and their militance were justified. That they might have to reverse previously declared positions disconcerted them not at all. For the sole change of mind of which an ideologue is incapable is that of ceasing to be an ideologue.

The change in New England was more profound than that of abandoning a long-felt fear of national authority and embracing the new government under the Constitution. New Englanders eagerly supported Alexander Hamilton's financial system as well. That they could favor funding of the public debts and federal assumption of state debts can be accounted for by economic interest; the public debts in New England were enormous, and Hamilton's program promised profits for public creditors and relief for beleaguered taxpayers. But the

enough to convince many that the Articles of Confederation should be scrapped.

31. L. DUNBAR, *A STUDY OF "MONARCHICAL" TENDENCIES IN THE UNITED STATES FROM 1776 TO 1801*, at 72, 55, 71 (1970).

Yankees went further, plunging toward the kind of acquisitive individualism—the preoccupation with moneymaking—which would characterize the Yankee stereotype during the nineteenth century, but which formed no part of their puritanism either in its original or in its militant republican phase.

That the Yankees could make such a turn can be understood by considering John Adams's views on political economy. To be sure, Adams never approved of Hamilton's program. So opposed to credit, public or private, was Adams that he suggested only half in jest that a statue be erected to the man who would abolish it entirely. Moreover, Adams believed that economic growth was illusory; indeed, he would later endorse the doctrines of Malthus. But in his conception of economic activity as a zero-sum game there was a puritanical peculiarity that was widely shared in New England and would serve after 1790 as a powerful rationale for money-grubbing. Nations and individuals did grow wealthy, Adams observed, but the only legitimate way to do so was by practicing republican and/or puritanical virtues: frugality, temperance, prudence, and industry. Consequently, there was a great distinction between social classes, between the virtuous and wealthy few and the non-virtuous and impoverished many.³² Thus could *puritanical* virtues pass through a stage of *republican* virtues to emerge as *bourgeois* virtues.

In attempting to understand the course that Virginia followed while New England was veering toward entrepreneurial capitalism, it is helpful to begin with Virginians' attitudes toward property. They were not opposed to expanded commercial activity. On the contrary, they needed growing markets to support their lavish consumption and their equally lavish hospitality, and they sought markets avidly. Moreover, they were always involved in trying to reap great wealth through land speculation. On the other hand, habitual indolence as well as the posture of gentlemen kept all but a handful from seeking to maximize profits. It is significant that John Taylor of Caroline, possibly the most influential Southern political economist, regarded consumption as the one true measure of wealth. Southerners held their property for use and enjoyment, not for making more money.

There were two additional dimensions which complemented the Virginians' republicanism and conditioned their political behavior. The first was that Virginians had imbibed deeply of Viscount Bolingbroke's "Gospel of Opposition."

32. 6 THE WORKS OF JOHN ADAMS 560 (C. Adams ed. 1850).

That Gospel glorified the gentry: Jefferson's oft-quoted passage about those who labor in the earth being God's chosen people could have been taken directly from Bolingbroke's *Craftsman*. At the same time, Bolingbroke castigated the "kind of false wealth, called paper credit" by which Sir Robert Walpole had undermined the English gentry, corrupted the body politic, and poisoned traditional society. Stock-jobbers and money-men and figure-jugglers, who lived and grew rich not by honest labor or trade, nor by "any other business of use or advantage to mankind," were "cankers" who preyed on the vitals of their country till they had reduced it to "the most declining condition."³³ Virginians believed they had avoided that fate only by opting for independence.

A second dimension was derived largely from Adams Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.³⁴ Smith was read and admired by a variety of Americans, but the one group that came closest to accepting his doctrines in their entirety—far closer, interestingly enough, than the commercial republicans—was the agrarian republicans, for Smith's work furnished them with a body of thought whereby their circumstances, mores, and prejudices could be fashioned into a symmetrical and satisfactory whole. The most obvious source of Smith's appeal was his demonstration that agriculture was by far the most fruitful form of investment and activity. Virginia planters were also in accord with Smith's insistence that there was a natural order of productive and socially desirable capital investment in which agriculture came first; commerce, second; and, manufacturing, a poor third.³⁵ Indeed, Southerners embraced free trade in considerable measure because of Smith's description of the horrors of British factory life, which had been brought about by an artificial and premature investment of capital in manufacturing.

These various attitudes of the Virginia republicans became volatile in response to the designs of Alexander Hamilton, the master architect of commercial republicanism. The initial opposition to Hamilton's funding plan, led by Madison and what Madison called "the republican interest," was less a matter of ideology than of economics: the tobacco-planting states had retired most of their public debts and were pressing exorbitant claims for services rendered during the Revolutionary War. Even the opposition to the incorporation of the Bank of

33. I. KRAMNICK, *BOLINGBROKE AND HIS CIRCLE 70-71 passim* (1968); L. BANNING, *JEFFERSONIAN PERSUASION* (1978).

34. A. SMITH, *AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF THE WEALTH OF NATIONS* (1780).

35. See generally *id.* at vol. 3, bk. IV, chap. IX.

the United States was based on opportunism. But during the spring of 1791 Jefferson and Madison became convinced that Hamilton was Walpole incarnate, and they responded to the "discovery" with approximately the same measure of hysteria that Bolingbroke had responded to Walpole himself. The following December, when Hamilton revealed the full range of his aims in his *Report on Manufactures*,³⁶ the Virginians were as thoroughly alarmed as Yankees had been at Shays' Rebellion.

Their response, in keeping with their brand of republicanism, was to make better arrangements. Doing so entailed the acquisition of power, and they labored long, patiently, diligently, and brilliantly toward that end (the political arena, it may be said, is the only one in which Southerners have historically been willing to work harder and more systematically than other Americans). The first objective, when they finally obtained the power they sought, was to destroy Hamilton and all his works. That was far from an easy task, for the New Yorker had built wisely and well, and no sooner had they set his creations in train to extinction than they blundered into a war which necessitated rebuilding them; but that is another story.

More constructively, the agrarian republicans developed a strategy for national development that was explicitly designed to thwart the spread of bourgeois republicanism. The strategy was based upon the Scottish Enlightenment's theory that society inevitably evolves through stages of progress, thereby ameliorating the human condition but also leading ultimately to luxury and corruption. Agrarian republicans aimed to arrest evolution at the commercial-agricultural stage, partly through a policy of territorial expansion that would permit most Americans to remain farmers, partly through a policy of commercial expansion that would make it unnecessary for any but rudimentary manufacturing to develop in the United States.

The policy aims of the agrarians were as irreconcilable with those of the Yankees as the agrarian republican vision was with that of the bourgeois republicans. For the most part, the agrarians had their way in national politics until 1860. But they were struggling against the tide of history, and their cause was doomed.

For a hundred years after the triumph of the Northern way—until the early 1960s—it was possible to believe that the victory of bourgeois republicanism and (for a time) its kindred commercial republicanism over an archaic agrarian republicanism was an unmitigated blessing to the nation. In light of the

36. Communicated to the House of Representatives, December 5, 1791.

decay of American society since that time, one can no longer be so sure. The regime of liberty under law which the commercial republicans counted on to preserve the system long since has been expelled from these shores. No one could reasonably maintain that the institutional arrangements counted on by the agrarian republicans, the system of checks and balances and the federal system, is still intact, any more than one could maintain that we continue to be a nation of independent landowners. And private virtue, counted on by the Yankees to produce public virtue, is clearly at the lowest ebb in the nation's history.

From the vantage point of 1989, we think Doctor Franklin would have answered Mrs. Powell differently. He could only have said, "A republic, madam, but you will not be able to keep it."

