III

CONTAGIOUS
LIBERTY
The following Notes were written in Virginia in the year 1781, and somewhat corrected and enlarged in the winter of 1782, in answer to Queries proposed to the Author, by a Foreigner of Distinction, [namely, the Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, the Secretary of the French Legation in the United States, 1779–85] then residing among us. The subjects are all treated imperfectly; some scarcely touched on. To apologize for this by developing the circumstances of the time and place of their composition, would be to open wounds which have already bled enough. To these circumstances some of their imperfections may with truth be ascribed; the great mass to the want of information and want of talents in the writer. He had a few copies printed, which he gave among his friends: and a translation of them has been lately published in France, but with such alterations as the laws of the press in that country rendered necessary. They are now offered to the public in their original form and language. Feb. 27, 1787 (Advertisement, p. [iii]).

(Query XIII. The constitution of the state, and its several charters?, pp. 123–24)

It is unnecessary, however, to glean up the several instances of injury, as scattered through American and British history, and the more especially as, by passing on to the accession of the present king, we shall find specimens of them all, aggravated, multiplied and crowded within a small compass of time, so as to evince a fixed design of considering our rights natural, conventional and chartered as mere nullities. The following is an epitome of the first fifteen years of his reign. The colonies were taxed internally and externally; their essential interests sacrificed to individuals in Great Britain; their legislatures suspended; charters annulled; trials by juries taken away; their persons subjected to transportation across the Atlantic, and to trial before foreign judicatories; their supplications for redress thought beneath answer; themselves published as cowards in the councils of their mother country and courts of Europe; armed troops sent among them to enforce submission to these violences; and actual hostilities commenced against them. No alternative was presented but resistance, or unconditional submission. Between these could be no hesitation. They closed in the appeal to arms. They declared themselves independent States. They confederated together into one great republic; thus securing to every state the benefit of an union of their whole force. In each state separately a new form of government was established.
Adams (1735–1826), second president of the United States and esteemed lawyer, was much involved in early Continental and Massachusetts politics. He became well known among Boston patriots after successfully defending the British soldiers involved in the Boston Massacre and was an active voice in the Continental Congresses. A relatively prolific writer, his three-volume *Defence of the Constitutions of Government* was written in response to Shays' Rebellion of 1786–87. In it, he gave a synthesis of the history of forms of government, ancient and modern, and used this analysis to argue that the mixed governments, such as had been proposed in America, were more effective than simple ones.

There has been, from the beginning of the revolution in America, a party in every state, who have entertained sentiments similar to these of Mr. Turgot. Two or three of them have established governments upon his principle: and, by advices from Boston, certain committees of counties have been held, and other conventions proposed in the Massachusetts, with the express purpose of deposing the governor and senate, as useless and expensive branches of the constitution; and as it is probable that the publication of Mr. Turgot’s opinion has contributed to excite such discontents among the people, it becomes necessary to examine it, and, if it can be shown to be an error, whatever veneration the Americans very justly entertain for his memory, it is to be hoped they will not be misled by his authority (pp. [3]–4).

Among the most important political contributions of all time, The Federalist Papers are a series of eighty-five essays printed in support of the ratification of the constitution proposed at the 1787 Philadelphia Convention. Although originally intended to encourage New York delegates to accept the constitution as presented (a task that failed, as two-thirds of delegates refused to ratify...
It is supposed that a collection of the papers which have made their appearance in the Gazettes of this City, under the Title of the \textit{FEDERALIST}, may not be without effect in assisting the public judgment on the momentous question of the Constitution for the United States, now under the consideration of the people of America. A desire to throw full light upon so interesting a subject has led, in a great measure unavoidably, to a more copious discussion than was at first intended. And the undertaking not being yet completed, it is judged advisable to divide the collection into two Volumes, of which the ensuing Numbers constitute the first. The second Volume will follow as speedily as the Editor can get it ready for publication.

The particular circumstances under which these papers have been written, have rendered it impracticable to avoid violations of method and repetitions of ideas which cannot but displease a critical reader. The latter defect has even been intentionally indulged, in order the better to impress particular arguments which were most material to the general scope of the reasoning. Respect for public opinion, not anxiety for the literary character of the performance, dictates this remark. The great wish is, that it may promote the cause of truth, and lead to a right judgment of the true interests of the community.

\textsc{New-York}, March 17, 1788
(Preface, pp. [iii]–iv).

\section*{Debates, Resolutions and Other Proceedings, of the Convention of ... Massachusetts Convened at Boston, on the 9th of January 1788, ... for the Purpose of ... Ratifying the Constitution Recommended by the Grand Federal Convention.... Boston, 1788.}

Ratification of the Constitution required state conventions to discuss interests and concerns. The Massachusetts convention ended January 9, 1788, and the delegates ratified the constitution on February 6. This book contains detailed reports of the discussions that took place, including tallies of votes and transcripts of debates and speeches given. General William Heath (1737–1814), who had commanded the Massachusetts military at the Battle of Lexington and Concord, is speaking:

Mr. President—After a long and painful investigation of the Federal Constitution, by paragraphs, this Hon. Convention are drawing nigh to the ultimate question. A question as momentous, as ever invited the attention of man. We are soon to decide on a system of government, digested, not for the people of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts only—not for the present people of the United States only;—but, in addition to these, for all those states which may hereafter rise into existence within the
jurisdiction of the United States—and for millions of people yet unborn. A system of government not for a nation of slaves, but for a people as free, and as virtuous as any on earth. Not for a conquered nation subdued to our will, but for a people, who have fought, who have bled, and who have conquered; who under the smiles of Heaven, have established their independence and sovereignty, and have taken equal rank among the nations of the earth. In short, sir, it is a system of government for ourselves, and for our children, for all that is near and dear to us in life, and on the decision of the question is suspended our political prosperity or infelicity, perhaps our existence as a nation. What can be more solemn? What can be more interesting? Every thing depends on our union. I know that some have supposed that although the union should be broken, particular States may retain their importance, but this cannot be; the strongest nerved state, even the right arm if separated from the body, must wither: If the great union be broken, our country, as a nation, perishes, and if our country so perishes, it will be as impossible to save a particular State, as to preserve one of the fingers of a mortified hand (p. 152).

**Thomas Paine, “Rights of Man”**


England reacted at all levels of society to the French Revolution. Those at the bottom were inspired, while those at the top, such as Edmund Burke (1729–1797), prominent Anglo-Irish member of Parliament, argued that only the conservation of custom and tradition were able to provide a stable society.

The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or noxious to mankind. Abstractedly speaking, government, as well as liberty, is good; yet could I, in common sense, ten years ago, have felicitated France on her enjoyment of a government (for she then had a government) without enquiry what the nature of that government was, or how it was administered? Can I now congratulate the same nation upon its freedom? Is it because liberty in the abstract may be classed amongst the blessings of mankind, that I am seriously to felicitate a madman, who has escaped from the protecting restraint and wholesome darkness of his cell, on his restoration to the enjoyment of light and liberty? Am I to congratulate an highwayman and murderer, who has broke prison, upon the recovery of his natural rights? This would be to act over again the scene of the criminals condemned to the galleys, and their heroic deliverer, the metaphysic Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance (p. 8).


“This is the first book I ever bought—the start of my collecting.” —Sid Lapidus.
Front cover of *Rights of Man.*
Contemporary note on the recto of the second endleaf.
Note continued on the recto of the third endleaf.
Contemporary notes on the leaf facing the title page of Part II.
RIGHTS OF MAN;

PART

THE SECOND.

COMBINING

PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE,

BY

THOMAS PAINE,

SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO CONGRESS IN THE AMERICAN WAR, AND

AUTHOR OF THE WORKS ENTITLED "COMMON SENSE;" AND THE "FIRST PART OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN."

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR H. D. SYMONDS, PATERNOSTER ROW.

[Price Sixpence.]
TO

GEORGE WASHINGTON,

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

SIR,

I PRESENT you a small Treatise in defence of those Principles of Freedom which your exemplary Virtue hath so eminently contributed to establish.—That the Rights of Man may become as universal as your Benevolence can wish, and that you may enjoy the Happiness of seeing the New World regenerate the Old, is the Prayer of

SIR,

Your much obliged, and

Obedient humble Servant,

THOMAS PAINE.
When Paine reprinted this book in a cheap edition selling at ⅕th the price of the first edition, the British government worried that what had formerly been confined to upper- and middle-class readers would now be available to working-class readers. On May 21, 1792, a Royal Proclamation suppressed the publication. On June 8, Paine was charged with sedition and his trial was set for December 18.

To George Washington, President of the United States of America. Sir, I present you a small Treatise in defence of those Principles of Freedom which your exemplary Virtue hath so eminently contributed to establish.—That the Rights of Man may become as universal as your Benevolence can wish, and that you may enjoy the Happiness of seeing the New World regenerate the Old, is the Prayer of Sir, Your much obliged, and Obedient humble Servant, Thomas Paine (Dedication).

From what we now see, nothing of reform in the political world ought to be held improbable. It is an age of Revolutions, in which every thing may be looked for. The intrigue of Courts, by which the system of war is kept up, may provoke a confederation of Nations to abolish it: and a European Congress, to patronize the progress of free Government, and promote the civilization of Nations with each other, is an event nearer in probability, than once were the revolutions and alliance of France and America (Final paragraph of part 1).

Thomas Cooper. Some Information Respecting America, Collected by Thomas Cooper, Late of Manchester. London, 1794.

Cooper (1759–1839) was known as a humanitarian and a radical, publishing an early critique of the slave trade in 1787. After a 1793 visit to America, Cooper published Some Information Respecting America, which grew out of a series of questions and answers regarding his decision to permanently relocate to America. Cooper addresses political, economical, and social concerns in a surprisingly comprehensive way, considering the short length of his visit.

There is little fault to find with the government of America, either in principle or in practice: [they] have very few taxes to pay, and those are of acknowledged necessity, and moderate in amount: [they] have no animosities about religion; it is a subject about which no questions are asked: [they] have few respecting political men or political measures: the present irritation of men's minds in Great Britain, and the discordant state of society on political accounts, is not known there. The government is the government of the people, and for the people. There are no tythes nor game laws: and excise laws upon spirits only, and similar to the British only in name. There are no men of great rank, nor many of great riches. Nor have the rich there the power of oppressing the less rich, for poverty, such as in Great Britain, is almost unknown. Nor are their streets crouded with beggars. I saw but one while I was there, and he was English (pp. 52–53).
Relations between the United States, Revolutionary France, and the latter’s British antagonist during the 1790s brought into sharp focus the question “What is Republicanism?” Fearing the spread of Jacobin Terror and embroiled in an undeclared maritime war with France, John Adams’ Federalist administration viewed those who criticized their political actions as disloyal or treasonous. Resident aliens and those sympathetic to them in the press came under intense suspicion. A Federalist-controlled Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, legislation aimed at restricting naturalization, authorizing deportations, and prosecuting authors of false or malicious statements about government officials. These draconian laws proved highly controversial.

James Madison (1751–1836), who had temporarily retired to his estate at Montpelier, believed that the Alien and Sedition Acts were subverting the Bill of Rights, and argued that the Virginia legislature should protect its citizens against oppressive and politicized concentration of power in the federal government:

In the United States, the case is altogether different. The people, not the government, possess the absolute sovereignty. The legislature, no less than the executive, is under limitations of power. Encroachments are regarded as possible from the one, as well as from the other. Hence in the United States, the great and essential rights of the people are secured against legislative, as well as against executive, ambition. They are secured, not by laws paramount to prerogative; but by constitutions paramount to laws. This security of the freedom of the press, requires that it should be exempt not only from previous restraint by the executive, as in Great Britain; but from legislative restraint also; and this exemption, to be effectual, must be an exemption, not only from the previous inspection of licensors, but from the subsequent penalty of laws ... In every state, probably, in the union, the press has exerted a freedom in canvassing the merits and measures of public men, of every description, which has not been confined to the strict limits of the common law.—On this footing, the freedom of the press has stood; on this footing it yet stands. And it will not be a breach either of truth or of candour, to say, that no presses or persons are in the habit of more unrestrained animadversions on the proceedings and functionaries of the state governments, than the persons and presses most zealous in vindicating the act of Congress for punishing similar animadversions on the government of the United States (pp. 36–38).
An Account of the Trial of Thomas Cooper, of Northumberland; on a Charge of Libel Against the President of the United States, by Thomas Cooper. Philadelphia, 1800.

Cooper (1759–1840), an Oxford-educated lawyer, chemist, and a Republican editor, was prosecuted under the Sedition Act in 1799 for libeling Adams in a handbill that criticized the President’s progressively authoritarian executive acts:

[Mr. Adams] had not at that time given the public to understand that he would bestow no office but under implicit conformity to his political opinions. He had not declared that “A Republican Government may mean any thing”; he had not yet sanctioned the abolition of trial by jury in the alien law, or entrenched his public character behind the legal barriers of the sedition law…. Mr. Adams … had not yet interfered as President of the United States to influence the decisions of a Court of Justice. A stretch of authority which the Monarch of Great Britain would have shrunk from; an interference without precedent, against law and against mercy! (pp. 6–7).

During his trial, Cooper mounted his own defense, arguing that his objections were aimed at Adams’ public conduct of office and should thus be shielded from legal attack. Cooper was nevertheless convicted, fined, and served six months in jail. He reported on his case in An Account of the Trial of Thomas Cooper, noting in its preface:

The Citizens of this Country may learn some useful lessons from this trial; and principally, that if they mean to consult their own peace and quiet, they will hold their tongues, and restrain their pens, on the subject of politics: at least during the continuance of the SEDITION LAW; a Law, which I do not think “the powers that be,” will incline to abolish. As it is, the plainest truths, and the most notorious facts, may be controverted and denied; and the innocent and well-meaning asserter of them, may be driven with impunity to spend his time and exhaust his finances, in procuring proof strictly legal of what no man in common life pretends to doubt … Reader, when you have perused this trial, shut the book, and reflect. I dare not state the conclusions with which it is pregnant, but which must force themselves with melancholy conviction on your mind: ask yourself however, is this a fair specimen of the freedom you expected to derive, from the adoption of the Federal Constitution? And whether the Men who sanction these proceedings, are fit objects of re-election?

The pivotal presidential contest of 1800 proved that the Federalists were not “fit objects,” and the Adams administration, split by discord, was removed from office in favor of Thomas Jefferson’s Republican party. The Sedition Act and certain of the Alien Acts were thus simply allowed to expire when Adams left office in 1801; Jefferson pardoned those who had been convicted under them.
Religion

**Thomas Jefferson.** *Notes on the State of Virginia.* London, 1787.

In the appendix to *Notes*, Jefferson published the text of “The Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom,” which passed in 1786. When Jefferson drafted his epitaph, he places the Statue as second in importance only to the Declaration of Independence:

Here was buried
Thomas Jefferson
Author of the Declaration of American Independence
of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom
& Father of the University of Virginia.

*Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly,*

That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

And though we well know this Assembly, elected by the people for the ordinary purposes of legislation only, have no power to restrain the acts of succeeding Assemblies, constituted with powers equal to our own, and that therefore to declare this act irrevocable, would be of no effect in law, yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby asserted are of the natural rights of mankind, and that if any act shall be hereafter passed to repeal the present, or to narrow its operation, such act will be an infringement of natural right (p. 382).


European visitors were regularly astonished to see so many different religious groups living peacefully together in Philadelphia, where this book was published. Indeed, founder William Penn called it a “holy experiment” where one could worship according to one’s own conscience.

More than 2,000 Roman Catholics were living in the city in the later eighteenth century and the printers Kline and Reynolds sought to appeal both to them and a wider audience by issuing the first essay on civil rights by a Roman Catholic to be published in America. The work of Irish priest and religious controversialist, Arthur O’Leary (1729–1802), was here offered to the perusal of the liberal citizens of the free and independent States of America; whose favorable patronage it is the more confident of obtaining, as they
have been among the first to set the illustrious example, and legalise the practice of the generous principle, which the author here endeavours to lay down and establish (Preface).

**→ J[oseph] Priestley. A Letter to ... William Pitt, ... on the Subjects of Toleration and Church Establishments; ... London, 1787.**

I have even no doubt, but that, as Christianity was promulgated, and prevailed in the world, without any aid from civil power, it will, when it shall have recovered its pristine purity, and its pristine vigour, entirely disengage itself from such an unnatural alliance as it is at present fettered with, and that our posterity will even look back with astonishment at the infatuation of their ancestors, in imagining that things so wholly different from each other as Christianity, and civil power, had any natural connection....


Levi Sheftal, president of the Hebrew Congregation of the City of Savannah, Georgia, wrote on behalf of his congregation to newly elected President George Washington:

Sir,... Your unexampled liberality and extensive philanthropy have dispelled that cloud of bigotry and superstition, which has long as a veil shaded religion—unrivetted the fetters of enthusiasm—enfranchised us with all the privileges and immunities of free citizens, and initiated us into the grand mass of legislative mechanism. By example you have taught us to endure the ravages of war with manly fortitude, and to enjoy the blessings of peace, with reference to the Deity, and benignity and love to our Fellow-Creatures.

May the great author of worlds grant you all happiness—an uninterrupted series of health—addition of years to the number of your days, and a continuance of guardianship to that freedom which under the auspices of Heaven your magnanimity and wisdom have given these States (p. 494).

Washington replied:

May the same wonder-working Deity, who, long since delivering the Hebrews from their Egyptian oppressors, planted them in the promised land—whose providential agency has lately been conspicuous in establishing these United States as an Independent Nation—still continue to water them with the dews of Heaven, and to make
the inhabitants of every denomination participate in the temporal and spiritual blessings of that people, whose God is Jehovah (p. 494).


TO MY FELLOW CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

I PUT the following work under your protection. It contains my opinion upon Religion. You will do me the justice to remember, that I have always strenuously supported the Right of every Man to his own opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this right, makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it.

The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is Reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall.

Your affectionate friend and fellow citizen,

THOMAS PAINE (Preface).

Soon after I had published the pamphlet common-sense, in America, I saw the exceeding probability that a Revolution in the System of Government, would be followed by a revolution in the system of religion. The adulterous connection of church and state, wherever it had taken place, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, had so effectually prohibited, by pains and penalties, every discussion upon established creeds, and upon first principles of religion, that until the system of government should be changed, those subjects could not be brought fairly and openly before the world: but that whenever this should be done, a revolution in the system of religion would follow. Human inventions and priest-craft would be detected; and man would return to the pure, unmixed, and unadulterated belief of one God, and no more (pp. 3–4).


Of all the tyrannies that afflict mankind, tyranny in religion is the worst: Every other species of tyranny is limited to the world we live in; but this attempts a stride beyond the grave, and seeks to pursue us into eternity. It is there, and not here, it is to God, and not to man, it is to a heavenly, and not an earthly tribunal, that we are to account for our belief; if then we believe falsely and dishonorably of the Creator, and that belief is forced upon us, as far as force can operate, by human laws, and human tribunals, on whom is the criminality of that belief to fall; on those who impose it, or on those on whom it is imposed? (p. [5]).

James Wilson Stephens. *An Historical and Geographical Account of Algiers; Containing a Circumstantial and Interesting Detail of Events Relative to the American Captives, Taken from Their Own Testimony*. Philadelphia, 1797.
Isaac Cruikshank (Scotish and English printmaker, d. 1811) satirizes Thomas Paine. Published Dec. 26, 1792, by J. W. Fores, No. 3 Piccadilly, London.
Reprinted in this *Account* is an important treaty aimed at eliminating North African hostility toward American shipping. Muslims had long been hostile to Europeans for invading Muslim lands because of religious reasons. One point of this treaty was to show that Americans were totally separate from Europeans on this point.

As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion, as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen—and as the said States have never entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahomedan nation, it is declared by the parties, that no pretext arising from religious opinions, shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries (Article 11, *Treaty of Peace and Amity between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary*, November 4, 1796, pp. 122–3).

### Economics

The freedoms to pursue economic self interest and self sufficiency serve as the material guarantee of political liberty.

*The State of the Trade and Manufactory of Iron in Great-Britain Considered.* [London], 1750.

The author of this pamphlet is not known. His viewpoint is classic mercantilism of the day: maintain capital in the mother country, leaving the colonies only to be suppliers of raw materials and consumers of finished goods. Within twenty-six years, Adam Smith challenged these ideas.

The *American Scheme*, therefore, by destroying the *British Iron Works*, will lose this Nation three hundred thousand Pounds a Year; and by ruining that part of our Manufactory, which now supplies *America*, one hundred thousand Pounds a Year more: But by not being capable of injuring the Northern Works, will not any way lessen that large Ballance we now pay to *Sweden*, but probably oblige us in a short Time to pay an equal or larger Ballance to our own Plantations. Instead of rendering *Great-Britain* independent of her Northern Neighbours [e.g., *Sweden*], it will rather render *America* independent of *Great-Britain*, and subject *Great-Britain* to a double Dependency. It will take the Bread in effect out of the Mouths of several thousand *British* Families, and give it to barbarous Herds of Criols and Negroes. Lastly, It will sink our Rents, destroy our Coppices, discourage the Preservation of Timber for the Navy, and Bark for the Support of the Leather Manufactory, in order only to improve and cultivate the *American* Forests: Countries which in time to come will have no more regard to *Great Britain*, than we now have for the native Places of our *Saxon* Ancestors (pp. 14–15).
Smith (1723–1790) is widely considered the father of modern economics, and the Wealth of Nations is his magnum opus. Presenting the first defense of free-market economics, it supported a theory of “natural liberty,” which has later come to be known as “capitalism.” Smith published other works as well, notably A Theory of Moral Sentiments, before helping to found the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

We, on this side the water, are afraid lest the multitude of American representatives should over-turn the balance of the constitution, and increase too much either the influence of the crown on the one hand, or the force of the democracy on the other. But if the number of American representatives was to be in proportion to the produce of American taxation, the number of people to be managed would increase exactly in proportion to the means of managing them; and the means of managing, to the number of people to be managed. The monarchical and democratical parts of the constitution would, after the union, stand exactly in the same degree of relative force with regard to one another as they had done before.

The people on the other side of the water are afraid lest their distance from the seat of government might expose them to many oppressions. But their representatives in parliament, of which the number ought from the first to be considerable, would easily be able to protect them from all oppression. The distance could not much weaken the dependency of the representative upon the constituent, and the former would still feel that he owed his seat in parliament, and all the consequence which he derived from it to the good will of the latter (Vol. 2, pp. 234–35).

Jay (1745–1829) was the first chief justice of the United States Supreme Court. Although he was not involved in early colonial politics, he was still elected to the First Continental Congress as a result of his law career. He played an important role in negotiating a peace agreement to end the American Revolution and wrote five of the Federalist Papers before being appointed to the newly formed Supreme Court. In his Circular Letter, Jay reported on the fiscal state of the burgeoning nation, particularly its growing war debt.

At this season, therefore, we find ourselves in a particular manner impressed with a sense of it, and can no longer forbear calling your attention to a subject much misrepresented, and respecting which dangerous as well as erroneous opinions have been held and propagated. We mean your finances.... The war, tho’ drawing fast to a successful issue, still rages. Disdain to leave the whole business of your defence to your Ally. Be mindful that the brightest prospects may be clouded, and that prudence bids us be prepared for every event. Provide therefore for continuing your armies in the field till victory and peace shall lead them home, and avoid the reproach of permitting the
currency to depreciate in your hands, when by yielding a part to taxes and loans, the whole might have been appreciated and preserved. Humanity as well as justice makes this demand upon you, the complaints of ruined widows, and the cries of fatherless children, whose whole support has been placed in your hands and melted away, have doubtless reached you—take care that they ascend no higher. Rouse therefore; strive who shall do most for his country; rekindle that flame of patriotism which at the mention of disgrace and slavery blazed through-out America, and animated all her citizens. Determine to finish the contest as you began it, honestly and gloriously.

Let it never be said that America had no sooner become independent than she became insolvent, or that her infant glories and growing fame were obscured and tarnished by broken contracts and violated faith, in the very hour when all the nations of the earth were admiring and almost adoring the splendor of her rising (pp. 3, 11–12).

Sheffield (1741–1821) was a prominent British politician and a good friend of Edward Gibbon. A wealthy landowner, he was eager to hold public office. After a few years of political setbacks, he eventually took a seat in Parliament in 1780, where he served until his death. He was known as a pamphleteer, and his Observations on the Commerce of the American States was written in opposition to the proposed relaxing of the navigation laws in favor of the United States.

As a sudden revolution, an unprecedented case, a momentous change, the independence of America, has bewildered our reason, and encouraged the wildest sallies of imagination, systems have been preferred to experience, rash theory to successful practice, and the Navigation Act itself, the guardian of the prosperity of Britain, has been almost abandoned by the levity or ignorance of those who have never seriously examined the spirit or the consequence of ancient rules. Our calmer reflections will soon discover, that such great sacrifices are neither requisite nor expedient; and the knowledge of the exports and imports of the American States will afford us facts and principles to ascertain the real value of their trade, to foresee their true interest and probable conduct, and to choose the wisest measures (the wisest are always the most simple) for securing and improving the benefits of a commercial intercourse with this now foreign and independent nation. For it is in the light of a foreign country that America must henceforward be viewed—it is the situation she herself has chosen by asserting her independence, and the whimsical definition of a people sui generis, is either a figure of rhetoric which conveys no distinct idea, or the effort of cunning, to unite at the same time the advantages of two inconsistent characters (pp. [1]–2).

Coxe (1755–1824), born to a Philadelphia merchant family, became a wealthy land speculator by the 1780s. He was a proponent of diversifying economic
pursuits, which would balance America’s abundance of natural resources with manufacturing. In many of his writings, including *Remarks on Lord Sheffield’s Observations*, Coxe showcased a view of the economic future of America in a uniquely optimistic way.

The Lapidus copy of *Remarks on Lord Sheffield’s Observations* has at the end a contemporary manuscript note reading: “[A]nd if an amicable intercourse is properly cultivated between America and England, upon fair and equitable terms, there is no doubt that England may derive greater advantages from that country in the way of trade than she did before the Revolution” (see image above). It is not known who is the author of these hand-written sentiments favorable to America.

The identity of this self-publishing author, a “Citizen of New-York,” is not known, however, his economic tenets are: he favored the fostering of home manufacturing by governmental restraint on importation. Note that this pamphlet is “Given to the Public Gratis.”

We seldom meet with a man who doubts or dares to dispute the utility of trade; but if we look on the fate of Tyre and Sidon, Corinth, and Carthage, we shall not have so high an opinion of it, since it brought on all of them their ruin; and the wretched present state of Venice, Cologne, and Antwerp, which were all within these two centuries very commercial, prove the instability of trade.

But to bring this reasoning more home to ourselves, notwithstanding that our productions amount annually to a very considerable sum, we have found means long before the late war, not only to get rid of it, but to have an immense balance against us; societies therefore to encourage arts and manufactures were entered into, but after a rapid progress they were dropped on the repeal of the Stamp Act, and with the return of the present peace, though attended by Independence, our former luxury was again revived; since which our merchants are importing an inundation of goods from all Europe, but which we are unable to pay for, the consequence of which begins, and will be more severely felt.

The profession of a merchant is trade, they consult their own interest; but it is the Legislature only which can check and prohibit an intemperate, impolitic, and luxurious commerce, and therefore, for the exertion of such power and authority, the following sheets are inscribed to the Legislatures of the respective States: If they are found consistent with truth and right reason, they claim their attention; if otherwise I desire they may be suppressed, as my intention is not to propagate error, but to remove it; but if I have failed in my design, I at least have the pleasure that I wrote as an independent enquirer after truth and right reason, and to enforce it; not from the vanity of being an author, or the most distant desire of any emolument whatever. (p. [3]).

On August 9, 1787, Tench Coxe (1755–1824) addressed the “friends of American manufactures” at the University of Pennsylvania. Concurrently there formed the association “The Pennsylvania Society for the Encouragement of American Manufactures and the Useful Arts.” This society was not only promotional but also opened a textile manufactory, which, unfortunately, burned to the ground three years after it opened.

The wealth and prosperity of nations principally depend on a due attention to agriculture, manufactures and commerce. In the various stages of her political existence, America has derived great advantages from the establishment of Manufactures and the useful Arts. Her present situation in the world calls her by new and weighty considerations to promote and extend them. The United States, having assumed the station of an independent government, require new resources to support their rank and influence both abroad and at home. Our distance from the nations of Europe,—our
possessing within ourselves the materials of the useful arts, and articles of consumption and commerce,—the profusion of wood and water, (those powerful and necessary agents in all arts and manufactures)—the variety of natural productions with which this extensive country abounds and the number of people in our towns and most ancient settlements, whose education has qualified them for employments of this nature,—all concur to point out the necessity of our promoting and establishing manufactures among ourselves.

From a conviction of the truth and importance of these facts, a number of persons have agreed to associate themselves under the name of The Pennsylvania Society for the Encouragement of Manufactures and the Useful Arts.
The foundations of national wealth and consequence are so firmly laid in the United States, that no foreign power can undermine or destroy them. But the enjoyment of these substantial blessings is rendered precarious by domestic circumstances. Scarcely held together by a weak and half formed federal [sic] constitution, the powers of our national government, are unequal to the complete execution of any salutary purpose, foreign or domestic. The evils resulting from this unhappy state of things have again shocked our reviving credit, produced among our people alarming instances of disobedience to the laws, and if not remedied, must destroy our property, liberties and peace. Foreign powers, however disposed to favor us, can expect neither satisfaction nor benefit from treaties with congress, while they are unable to enforce them. We can therefore hope to secure no privileges from them, if matters are thus conducted. We must immediately remedy this defect or suffer exceedingly. Desultory commercial acts of the legislatures, formed on the impression of the moment, proceeding from no uniform or permanent principles, clashing with the laws of the other states and opposing those made in the preceding year by the enacting state, can no longer be supported, if we are to continue one people. A system which will promote the general interests with the smallest injury to particular ones has become indispensibly necessary. Commerce is more affected by the distractions and evils arising from the uncertainty, opposition and errors of our trade laws, than by the restrictions of any one power in Europe. A negative upon all commercial acts of the legislatures, if granted to Congress would be perfectly safe, and must have an excellent effect. If thought expedient it should be given as well with regard to those that exist, as to those that may be devised in future. Congress would thus be enabled to prevent every regulation, that might oppose the general interests, and by restraining the states from impolitic laws, would gradually bring our national commerce to order and perfection. Such of the ideas suggested in the preceding part of this paper, as shall be honored with the public approbation, may be better digested, and, if they appear worthy of it, may form new articles of confederation, which would be the foundation of the commercial system (pp. 45–48).

↔ [Alexander Hamilton]. Report by the Secretary of the Treasury to the House of Representatives, Relative to a Provision for the Support of the Public Credit of the United States, ... New York, 1790.

An early step in Hamilton’s plans for fiscal solvency for the budding nation, this report, commonly known as the First Report on the Public Credit, focused on resolving the various foreign and domestic debts thus far accrued by the United States. Hamilton approached public debt by taking an idea developed in England. He sought to finance it through what is was termed a “sinking fund”—a program of both paying interest on as well as buying back public securities.

The Secretary of the Treasury, in obedience to the resolution of the House of Representatives, of the twenty-first day of September last, has, during the recess of Congress, applied himself to the consideration of a proper plan for the support of the Public Credit, with all the attention which was due to the authority of the House, and to the magnitude of the object.

In the discharge of this duty, he has felt,
in no small degree, the anxieties which naturally flow from a just estimate of the difficulty of the task, from a well-founded diffidence of his own qualifications for executing it with success, and from a deep and solemn conviction of the momentous nature of the truth contained in the resolution under which his investigations have been conducted, ‘That an adequate provision for the support of the Public Credit is a matter of high importance to the honor and prosperity of the United States.’

Public credit ... is ... effected ... by good faith, by a punctual performance of contracts....

While the observance of that good faith, which is the basis of public credit, is recommended by the strongest inducements of political expediency, it is enforced by considerations of still greater authority. There are arguments for it, which rest on the immutable principles of moral obligation. And in proportion as the mind is disposed to contemplate, in the order of Providence, an intimate connection between public virtue and public happiness, will be its repugnancy to a violation of those principles.

This reflection derives additional strength from the nature of the debt of the United States. It was the price of liberty. The faith of America has been repeatedly pledged for it, and with solemnities, that give peculiar force to the obligation (pp. [3]–4).

⇒ [Alexander Hamilton]. Report of the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, on the Subject of Manufactures.... December 5, 1791. [Philadelphia, 1791].

This Second Report on the Public Credit, growing from a need for the Treasury to have short-term credit available to them, presented Congress with a proposal for a national bank. Asking for a twenty-year charter, Hamilton had developed a plan whose distinguishing feature was the privatization of bank stock whose value was partially determined by government securities. Although originally viewed as unconstitutional by some, notably James Madison, the National Bank eventually was founded and American public credit secured.
branches, conspiring with the promising symptoms which attend some less mature essays in others, justify a hope, that the obstacles to the growth of this species of industry are less formidable than they were apprehended to be; and that it is not difficult to find, in its further extension, a full indemnification for any external disadvantages, which are or may be experienced, as well as an accession of resources, favorable to national independence and safety (p. [1]).

It is now proper to proceed a step further, and to enumerate the principal circumstances, from which it may be inferred. That manufacturing establishments not only occasion a positive augmentation of the produce and revenue of the society, but that they contribute essentially to rendering them greater than they could possibly be, without such establishments. These circumstances are:

1. The division of labor.
2. An extension of the use of machinery.
3. Additional employment to classes of the community not ordinarily engaged in the business.
4. The promoting of emigration from foreign countries.
5. The furnishing greater scope for the diversity of talents and dispositions which discriminate men from each other.
6. The affording a more ample and various field for enterprize.
7. The creating in some instances a new, and securing in all, a more certain and steady demand for the surplus produce of the soil (p. 8).


This is the last of Jefferson’s seven published reports as Secretary of State, the earlier being: the Weights and Measures Report, the Cod and Whale Fisheries Report, the coinage reports of 1790 and 1793, the Indian Lands report of 1792, and the message relative to France and Great Britain of 1793.

The following principles, being founded in reciprocity, appear perfectly just, and to offer no cause of complaint to any nation:

1st. Where a nation imposes high duties on our productions, or prohibits them altogether, it may be proper for us to do the same by theirs, first burthening or excluding those productions which they bring here, in competition with our own of the same kind; selecting next such manufactures as we take from them in greatest quantity, and which at the same time, we could the soonest furnish to ourselves, or obtain from other countries; imposing on them duties, lighter at first; but heavier and heavier afterwards, as other channels of supply open. Such duties having the effect of indirect encouragement to domestic manufactures of the same kind, may induce the manufacturer to come himself into these states, where cheaper subsistence, equal laws, and a vent of his wares, free of duty, may ensure him the highest profits from his skill and industry. And here it would be in the power of the state governments to cooperate essentially, by opening the resources of encouragement which are under their control, extending them liberally to artists in those particular branches of manufacture, for which their soil, climate, population, and other circumstances, have matured them, and fostering the precious efforts and progress of household manufac-
James Madison. *Speech, in the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States, Delivered January 14, 1794, ... in Support of ... Propositions for the Promotion of the Commerce of the United States, ... New York, 1794.*

Jefferson's 1793 Report was perceived as pro-French by Representative William Smith (South Carolina), whose speech against Jefferson was, in turn, answered by James Madison.

With respect to the mercantile opinion, he [Madison] was disposed to pay all due attention to it. The mercantile class of citizens was certainly an enlightened and a respectable one. Their information ought always to be received with respect, and their interest protected with care. But it did not follow that their opinion, even on questions of trade, ought to be consulted as an oracle, by those who were equally bound to watch over the interests of every class of citizens, and over the joint concerns of the whole. There were considerations of different kinds which suggested caution on this subject.

However intelligent and constant the merchant might be, in directing his operations, for commercial purposes, he might not be equally in the habit of combining with these, the various other rational objects which the Legislature might be bound to consult.

The interest of the mercantile class may happen to differ from that of another class; and possibly both may differ from that of the whole community. For example; it is, generally speaking, the interest of the merchant to import and export every thing; the interests of manufacturers to lessen imports in order to raise the price of domestic fabrics, and to check exports, where they might enhance the price of raw materials. In this case it would be as improper to allow the one to judge for the other, as to allow either to judge for the whole.

It may be the interest of the merchant, under particular circumstances, to confine the trade to its established channels; when the national interest would require those channels to be changed or enlarged. The best writers on political economy have observed, that the regulations most unfriendly to the national wealth of Great Britain, have owed their birth to mercantile counsels. It is well known, that in France, the greatest opposition to that liberal policy which was as favorable to the true interest of that country as of this, proceeded from the interest which merchants had, in keeping the trade in its former course.

If, in any country, the mercantile opinion ought not to be implicitly followed, there were the strongest reasons why it ought not, in this. The body of merchants who carry on the American commerce, is well known to be composed of so great a proportion of individuals who are either British subjects, or trading on British capital, or enjoying the profits of British consignments, that the mercantile opinion here, might not be an American opinion; nay, it might be the opinion of the very country of which, in the present instance at least, we ought not to take counsel. What the genuine...
American mercantile opinion would be, if it could be collected apart from the general one, Mr. Madison said he did not undertake positively to decide. His belief was, that it would be in favor of the resolutions.

It could scarcely be necessary, he said, to add, that his remarks were not meant to be, as they were not in fact, the least reflection on any part of the mercantile order among us. They only suppose what, in political reasonings, ought always to be supposed, that the prejudices of birth and personal interests will be a bias on the judgment (pp. 61–62).

**Women**

By the eighteenth century, in England and elsewhere, the learned woman was an established figure. This was made possible by changes in education and social values during the many years since the rise of Protestantism, the reform of Catholicism, and the invention of printing’s impact on literacy. Common interest in reform allied such learned women as Catharine Macaulay and Hannah More with such activist men as John Wilkes and the Rev. John Newton. Intellect, literary acumen, and a growing acceptance among learned men required their voices to be heard and their arguments to be answered.

**Catharine Macaulay. Observations on a Pamphlet, Entitled, Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents. London, 1770.**

Macaulay (1731–1791) is perhaps best known for her eight-volume *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Elevation of the House of Hanover*, a comprehensive work that was at first lauded by the Whigs as an answer to David Hume’s seemingly revisionist Tory interpretation of events. Macaulay, however, was even more radical than the Whigs anticipated, a condition made startlingly clear upon her publication of *Observations on a Pamphlet, Entitled, Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*, a response to an earlier pamphlet by Edmund Burke. In *Observations*, Macaulay claimed that the Glorious Revolution had been overtaken by those “who called themselves whigs, but who in reality were as much the destructive, though concealed enemies of public liberty” (p. 12). She suggested radical parliamentary reforms, notably rotation of office and term limits, and called for a “true parliament of the people.”

It is an undertaking of the highest difficulty as well as delicacy to point out the corruptions or mistakings of men, whose disappointed ambition has led them to offer their services to an alarmed and enraged populace, and whose abilities of character and situation promise a successful exertion in the cause of opposition. In important parts
of duty, every consequence which relates to self is to be hazarded; on this consideration, I will ever, notwithstanding the long and malevolent persecution I have endured from the interested part of mankind for a work written on the general principles of honest policy, in all great points of national welfare, express my genuine opinions to my countrymen; and on this consideration alone I undertake the invidious task of making disagreeable observations on the baneful tendency of a pamphlet, entitled, “Thoughts on the Cause of the present Discontents (p. [5]).

A more extended and equal power of election, a very important spring in the machine of political liberty, is entirely disregarded by our author; but he does not forget to flatter his sovereign with the hopes, that were his party once taken into favour, the purse of the people would be as prodigally sacrificed to every lust of capricious grandeur and expence, as it is as present supposed to
be, to the venal machinations of state policy. Such infamous flattery, could it have any effect on a wise and just sovereign, was fitter for the royal ear than for public criticism. The public must consider moderation as the most useful virtue of a prince, and that a parliament fulfilling its duty will on no pretence whatsoever suffer more money to be raised on their constituents than is necessary for their defence, and the decent magnificence of their governors (pp. 19–20; footnote omitted).


This is the first book of poems by a woman of African descent to be published in English. Wheatley (c. 1753–1784) was born in Gambia, then, on July 11, 1761, was sold in Boston to John and Susanna Wheatley, who enabled her to learn to read and write. In 1770, her prowess for poetry first came to prominent attention when she published an elegy upon the death of George Whitefield, the famous preacher of era of the “Great Awakening.” By the end of 1773, she had both received her freedom and published in London her *Poems on Various Subjects*. The book was financed by Sarah Hastings, countess of Huntington, who was the patroness of Whitefield.

The following Poems were written originally for the Amusement of the Author, as they were the Products of her leisure Moments. She had no Intention ever to have published them; nor would they now have made their Appearance, but at the Importunity of many of her best, and most generous Friends; to whom she considers herself, as under the greatest Obligations.

As her Attempts in Poetry are now sent into the World, it is hoped the Critic will not severely censure their Defects; and we presume they have too much Merit to be cast aside with Contempt, as worthless and trifling Effusions. As to the Disadvantages she has laboured under, with Regard to Learning, nothing needs to be offered, as her Master’s Letter in the following Page will sufficiently shew the Difficulties in this Respect she had to encounter. With all their Imperfections, the Poems are now humbly submitted to the Perusal of the Public (Preface, pp. [iv]–v).

To the PUBLICK.

AS it has been repeatedly suggested to the Publisher, by Persons, who have seen the Manuscript, that Numbers would be ready to suspect they were not really the Writings of PHILLIS, he has procured the following Attestation, from the most respectable Characters in Boston, that none might have the least Ground for disputing their Original.

WE whose Names are under-written, do assure the World, that the Poems specified in the following Page,* were (as we verily believe) written by PHILLIS, a young Negro

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*The Words “following Page,” allude to the Contents of the Manuscript Copy, which are wrote at the Back of the above Attestation.
Girl, who was but a few Years since, brought an uncultivated Barbarian from Africa, and has ever since been, and now is, under the Disadvantage of serving as a Slave in a Family in this Town. She has been examined by some of the best Judges, and is thought qualified to write them.

_His Excellency_ Thomas Hutchinson, Governor,
_The Hon. Andrew Oliver_, Lieutenant-Governor.

_The Hon._ Thomas Hubbard, _The Rev._ Charles Chauncey, D.D.
_The Hon._ John Eving, _The Rev._ Mather Byles, D.D.
_The Hon._ James Pitts, _The Rev._ Ed. Pemberton, D.D.
_The Hon._ Harrison Gray, _The Rev._ Andrew Elliot, D.D.
_The Hon._ James Bowdoin, _The Rev._ Samuel Cooper, D.D.
John Hancock, _Esq_; _The Rev._ Mr. Saumel Mather,
Joseph Green, _Esq_; _The Rev._ Mr. John Moorhead,
Richard Carey, _Esq_; _Mr._ John Wheatley, _her Master._

_N. B._ The original Attestation, signed by the above Gentlemen, may be seen by applying to Archibald Bell, Bookseller, No. 8, Aldgate-Street.

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“The poem in this magazine brings together three of my deepest interests: Tom Paine, then editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, the American Revolution as symbolized by Washington, and slavery in the person of Wheatley.”

—Sid Lapidus.

This most famous of Wheatley’s Revolutionary-war-era poems earned her an audience with General Washington in March 1776.

_SIR._

I Have taken the freedom to address your Excellency in the enclosed poem, and entreat your acceptance, though I am not insensible of its inaccuracies. Your being appointed by the Grand Continental Congress to be Generalissimo of the armies of North America, together with the fame of your virtues, excite sensations not easy to suppress. Your generosity, therefore, I presume, will pardon the attempt. Wishing your Excellency all possible success in the great cause you are so generously engaged in. I am,

Your Excellency’s most obedient humble servant,

Phillis Wheatley.

Providence, Oct. 26, 1775.

His Excellency Gen. Washington
(Dedication).

Proceed, great chief, with virtue on thy side,
Thy ev’ry action let the goddess guide.
A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine,
With gold unfading, Washington! be thine.  (Final couplets).

Known as a poet, religious critic, and philanthropist, More (1745–1833) was a member of the “Bluestockings,” a London circle of learned women centering on Elizabeth Montagu, reformer and patron of the arts. Well known for the success of her dramatic works, More also wrote *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, a critique of both Rousseau’s and Wollstonecraft’s views on female education. *Slavery* was written in support of William Wilberforce’s bill to abolish the slave trade; for her work in the abolitionist movement she was nominated to the committee of the Female Anti-Slavery Society in Bristol.

If heaven has into being deign’d to call
Thy light, O Liberty! to shine on all;
Bright intellectual Sun! why does thy ray
To earth distribute only partial day?
Since no resisting cause from spirit flows
Thy penetrating essence to oppose;
No obstacles by Nature’s hand imprest,
Thy subtle and ethereal beams arrest;
Nor motion’s laws can speed thy
active course,
Nor strong repulsion’s powers obstruct
thy force;
Since there is no convexity in mind,
Why are thy genial beams to parts
confin’d?
While the chill North with thy bright ray
is blest,
Why should fell darkness half the South
invest?
Was it decreed, fair Freedom! at thy birth
That thou should’st ne’er irradiate all the
earth?
While Britain basks in thy full blaze of
light,
Why lies sad Afric quench’d in total night?
(lines 1–18).


Shortly before her death, Macaulay published another pamphlet criticizing Burke.

My Lord,

Your lordship’s character as a patriot, a philosopher, and the firm friend of the general rights of man, encourages me to present to you the following Observations on Mr. Burke’s famous Reflections on the Revolution in France. They claim no popular attention for the ornaments of stile in which they are delivered; they can attract no admiration from the fascinating charms of eloquence; they are directed, not to captivate, but to convince; and it is on the presumption that your lordship attends more to the substance and end of literary compositions, than to the art of their arrangement, which induces me to flatter myself with your approbation.

It is not surprising that an event, the most important to the dearest interests of mankind, the most singular in its nature, and the most astonishing in its means, should not only have attracted the curiosity of all civilized nations, but that it should have engaged the passions of all reflecting men.”

Two parties are already formed in this
country, who behold the French Revolution with a very opposite temper: to the one, it inspires the sentiments of *exultation* and *rapture*; and to the other, *indignation* and *scorn*. I shall not take upon me to consider what are the *secret* passions which have given birth to these last sentiments; and shall content myself with observing, that Mr. Burke has undertaken to be the oracle of this last party (pp. 5–6).


Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) was a tireless supporter of women’s rights. Her first book, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, earned her £10; her *Vindication of the Rights of Man* brought her to the forefront of the literary scene. And once *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published, her husband, William Godwin, wrote in his *Memoirs* that “no female writer ever obtained so great a degree of celebrity throughout Europe (*Memoirs*, p. 73).” Although opinion of her teachings remained divided for many years, she is today considered to be among the most admired feminist intellectuals.

But, Sir, I carry my respect for your understanding still farther; so far, that I am confident you will not throw my work aside, and hastily conclude that I am in the wrong, because you did not view the subject in the same light yourself.—And, pardon my frankness, but I must observe, that you treated it in too cursory a manner, contented to consider it as it had been considered formerly, when the rights of man, not to advert to woman, were trampled on as chimerical—I call upon you, therefore, now to weigh what I have advanced respecting the rights of woman, and national education—and I call with the firm tone of humanity. For my arguments, Sir, are dictated by a disinterested spirit—I plead for my sex—not for myself. Independence I have long considered as the grand blessing of life, the basis of every virtue—and independence I will ever secure by contracting my wants, though I were to live on a barren heath.

It is then an affection for the whole human race that makes my pen dart rapidly along to support what I believe to be the cause of virtue: and the same motive leads me earnestly to wish to see woman placed in a station in which she would advance, instead of retarding, the progress of those glorious principles that give a substance to morality. My opinion, indeed, respecting the rights and duties of woman, seems to flow so naturally from these simple principles, that I think it scarcely possible, but that some of the enlarged minds who formed your admirable constitution, will coincide with me....

Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice. And how can woman be expected to co-operate unless she knows why she ought to be virtuous? unless freedom strengthen her reason till she comprehend her duty, and see in what manner it is connected with her real good? If children are to be educated to understand the true principle of patriotism, their mother must be a patriot; and the love of mankind, from which an orderly train of virtues spring, can
only be produced by considering the moral and civil interest of mankind; but the education and situation of woman, at present, shuts her out from such investigations (The author to M. Talleyrand-Périgord, late bishop of Autun, pp. [iii]–v, vi–viii).


Adams (1755–1831) is best known for her religious writings, particularly her first work, \textit{An Alphabetical Compendium of the Various Sects} (later published as \textit{A View of Religions}). While writing \textit{A Summary History of New England}, she permanently damaged her eyesight, making it considerably more difficult to continue reading and writing. It has been said that she was the first American to derive sole income from writing.

Many, especially in early life, may wish to peruse a sketch of American affairs, before they have time or ability to acquire more enlarged knowledge. Though the compiler of the ensuing work is impressed with the many difficulties attending it, yet she hopes the charge of arrogance will not be incurred, since her design is merely to encourage and gratify such a wish, by giving the outlines of the interesting history of New-England.... But though a female cannot be supposed to be accurate in describing, and must shrink with horror in relating the calamities of war, yet she may be allowed to feel a lively interest in the great cause, for which the sword was drawn in America. The compiler is apprized of the numerous defects of the work, and sensible it will not bear the test of criticism. Her incapacity for executing it has been heightened by a long interval of ill health, which has precluded much of that studious application, which, in a work of this kind, is indispensably necessary. She hopes, therefore, that generous humanity will soften the asperity of censure, and that the public will view with candor the assiduous, though, perhaps, unsuccessful efforts of a female pen (“To the Reader,” pp. [3–4]).


Warren (1728–1814), wife of revolutionary leader James Warren and sister of outspoken patriot James Otis, began her literary career with a series of propaganda plays, first published in 1772, which harshly criticized colonial government. As the war progressed and came to an end, she turned her pen from the British government to the burgeoning American one. Staunchly Republican, this is her major work, both insistent of citizenly safeguard of liberty and skeptical of Federalist ideology.

It is true there are certain appropriate duties assigned to each sex; and doubtless it is the more peculiar province of masculine strength, not only to repel the bold invader
of the rights of his country and of mankind, but in the nervous style of manly eloquence, to describe the blood-stained field, and relate the story of slaughtered armies.

Sensible of this, the trembling heart has recoiled at the magnitude of the undertaking, and the hand often shrunk back from the task; yet, recollecting that every domestic enjoyment depends on the unimpaired possession of civil and religious liberty, that a concern for the welfare of society ought equally to glow in every human breast, the work was not relinquished. The most interesting circumstances were collected, active characters portrayed, the principles of the times developed, and the changes marked; nor need it cause a blush to acknowledge, a detail was preserved with a view of transmitting it to the rising youth of my country, some of them in infancy, others in the European world, while the most interesting events lowered over their native land (Vol. 1, p. iv).

The state of the public mind, appears at present to be prepared to weigh these reflections with solemnity, and to receive with pleasure an effort to trace the origin of the American revolution, to review the characters that effected it, and to justify the principles of the defection and final separation from the parent state. With an expanded heart, beating with high hopes of the continued freedom and prosperity of America, the writer indulges a modest expectation, that the following pages will be perused with kindness and candor: this she claims, both in consideration of her sex, the uprightness of her intentions, and the fervency of her wishes for the happiness of all the human race.


The storage or detention of a few cargoes of teas is not an object in itself sufficient to justify a detail of several pages; but as the subsequent severities towards the Massachusetts were grounded on what the ministry termed their refractory behaviour on this occasion; and as those measures were followed by consequences of the highest magnitude both to Great Britain and the colonies, a particular narration of the transactions of the town of Boston is indispensable. There the sword of civil discord was first drawn, which was not re-sheathed until the emancipation of the thirteen colonies from the yoke of foreign domination was acknowledged by the diplomatic seals of the first powers in Europe. This may apologize, if necessary, for the appearance of locality in the preceding pages, and for its farther continuance in regard to a colony, on which the bitterest cup of ministerial wrath was poured for a time, and where the energies of the human mind were earlier called forth, than in several of the sister states (Vol. 1, p. 105).