

J. Jackson Barlow, Leonard W. Levy, & Ken Masugi, eds. *The American Founding: Essays on the Formation of the Constitution*. New York, Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 1988. Pp. xii, 341. Cloth, \$45.00.

Prepared with the explicit intention of helping to commemorate the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, *The American Founding* brings together the views of several prominent historians and political scientists on the constitution-writing process of the founding fathers. The original basis for this collection of essays was the publications of the Claremont Institute for the Study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy and of Public Research.

These essays are based on the question "Is America the best regime sought by the philosophers of old?" In their discussion, the authors point toward a renewed scholarly interest in the concept of the "best regime" as a theme in the study of the writing of the Constitution. The historians in these essays seek to understand the founding fathers as they understood themselves and focus their attention on both particular events, such as Jack N. Rakove's essay on the Confederation Period, as well as on broader themes in political thought, as Marvin Meyers and Merrill Peterson do in their essays on James Madison and Thomas Jefferson. Political scientists, on the other hand, look for the more permanent and enduring, as well as the classical, in the contributions of the founding fathers. As Thomas G. West and Charles R. Kessler point out, the spirit of the founding fathers was a classical one, formed by a strong knowledge of the classical authors and by a classical conception of the nature of politics. However, as Michael P. Zuchert and Edward J. Erler demonstrate, they knew such modern authors as John Locke and the concept of natural rights.

If there is a theme to these essays, it would be that, in attempting to create the best regime, the founders were not utopians or perfectionists, but optimists. They realized that such progress toward good government as Americans had made was founded both on an attachment to "abstract truths" and a healthy skepticism of claims that a particular arrangement of offices or a particular constitution could guarantee good results. Their optimism comes out in the feeling that experience would uncover defects in the Constitution and that future political leaders would continue to make improvements in the means of government. As the editors note, the book might well be titled "Essays on the Political Science of the American Founding."

As the theme is oriented more toward political science, this book might well be considered for adoption in courses on the American Constitution or Political Thought as a supplementary reader. Historians, however, may find useful those essays pertaining to the influence of classical and modern thought on the founding fathers.

Mount Saint Mary College

John T. Reilly

Douglas T. Miller. *Frederick Douglass and the Fight for Freedom*. New York & Oxford: Facts on File Publications, 1988. Pp. viii, 152. Cloth, \$16.95.

Frederick Douglass, the extraordinary nineteenth-century black leader, is the subject of this life-and-times treatment in this entry in the *Makers of America Series*. The series is edited by John Anthony Scott. A statement about the series on the book's jacket claims that it is targeted for young adults and general readers, and a reading of the text confirms this claim. The reading level is appropriate for college undergraduates and advanced secondary students, and the book would work as an assigned reading for a class. The length is modest and the data and interpretations are not strenuous.

The book opens with Douglass a witness to a beating of his aunt for refusing the sexual advances of her owner. Douglass was then seven years of age, his aunt only eight years older. From that slavery-damning opening, the narrative proceeds to enumerate the many evils and personal affronts associated with slavery in what might be termed a PG rating style if this were a movie. Maybe even a G rating. We read that Douglass was separated from his black mother at an extremely early age and did not know which local white was his father, although he had his suspicions; raised by grandparents and in the company of many cousins, at an appropriate working age he was turned over to his owner to begin his working life; he lived a sheltered life for a time as the companion of

a contemporary white until sent to Baltimore while still a young man; he taught himself literacy skills with some assistance at first, but then when it was pointed out that this might make him rebellious, the assistance stopped; he learned the caulker's trade in the shipyards, but experienced discrimination from fellow workers; and he ran away to the North with the assistance of a free black named Anna, whom he later married, and then became the show-case lecturer for the Garrisonian abolitionists.

Douglass was a remarkable man, and is presented in these pages as such. He became a touring lecturer who condemned slavery with his words and with his presence. He traveled in Europe for the cause, and for his personal safety and security from recapture. He was accepted as an equal there much more than in the North, where he often experienced segregation in public accommodations. During the American Civil War he became an advocate of President Abraham Lincoln's declaring the end of slavery as a goal, and of the use of black troops to fight for their freedom and for the freedom of other blacks. Douglass always believed in the self-made concept and thought that slaves deserved the right to earn their own freedom on the battlefield instead of having it won for them by white soldiers in blue uniforms.

Douglass's passion for the equality of women of all races receives considerable space in these pages. His relations with individual women is less precise. Miller states that he was never unfaithful to Anna, who remained illiterate, but suggests that apart from rearing their children they had little in common. He apparently did have opportunities to be unfaithful at least, but Miller does not want us to believe they were actualized. After Anna's death he married Helen Pitts, his white secretary.

Because of his race and accomplishments, Douglass had access to Lincoln's office, and Miller believes that Douglass did influence policy in the Lincoln administration. Many Lincoln scholars would minimize this. He was insulted by President Andrew Johnson and ignored by President Ulysses Grant, but did receive appointments from Presidents R. B. Hayes and Benjamin Harrison, including an unhappy stint as a minister to Haiti.

Miller includes a lengthy and critical bibliographic essay on sources that lists and evaluates more complete biographies and monographs. Scholars will want to consult them for materials that could not be included in this brief account. But this is a good introduction to the subject for its target market.

Stephen F. Austin State University

Archie P. McDonald

Keith L. Bryant, Jr. and Henry C. Dethloff. *A History of American Business*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990. Second edition. Pp. xiii, 384. Paper, \$28.67.

I reviewed the earlier first edition of C. Joseph Pusateri's *A History of American Business* in this journal in 1985 (Spring, x, 1). At that time I chose to review, in addition, all the other basic texts that had appeared in response to a growing interest in American business history. One of those was the first edition of Bryant and Dethloff's *A History of American Business*, published in 1983, and which I had used in my own upper-level undergraduate/graduate course in American business history.

At that time I wrote that "this text (the first edition) is much better for undergraduate use, but breaks from the chronological tradition to follow a topical outline." On the whole, I felt, and still do, that students experienced some difficulties following the text if, as I do, the instructor utilizes a shorter chronological approach interspersed with cases. I believed then, and I do now, that unless the instructor takes care, the student will not see the constant interplay of business and society over time. That fact is supported by the catchy title . . . rather it would have been "business in American history" or "American business history."

Now, as to the current second edition, I guess I have the feeling that a second edition published some seven years after the first should show the effects of recent scholarship, changes in the environment, and the general forces that have been affecting American business in that period. I really can find little more than a glancing attempt to appreciably change this text.

The preface contains some new language and a suggestion that something has seriously affected the American business community in a negative manner, i.e. increasing debt and a troubled financial sector. However, the section on "Banking in the Modern Era" in the chapter on "Banking and