Whether this probing of the radical mystery of our being represents, as he supposes, "the highest point a modern man can hope to achieve" ("A Half Life") and whether art is invariably our most effective means of conducting the inquiry are issues on which we may well differ from the novelist. Whatever our views on these matters, we cannot but admire the honesty, vigor, and intelligence with which Bellow has pursued the quest.

Invoking the Patrimony
KEVIN R. GUTZMAN


The late M. E. Bradford left an historiographical oeuvre devoted in large part to the story to which the subtitle of his last book, Original Intentions: On the Making and Ratification of the United States Constitution, refers. As a Southern conservative of the Vanderbilt Agrarian stamp, and as a Texan who claimed descent from three members of the Texas Secession Convention, Professor Bradford was driven by an imperative to remind Americans of what they once knew, and to do so before the opportunity passed.

He entitled one of his previous books The Reactionary Imperative. Eugene Genovese was mistaken when he said that the use of the word "reactionary" there was playful in that Bradford wanted a return neither to an ancient nor to a medieval polity. The reason Bradford's vision was truly reactionary is that he yearned for a return to America's birthright, the nomocratic constitution of 1787. "This book," he says, "is by nature and purpose an invocation of the patrimony." To invoke the patrimony is now, alas, reactionary.

The first in this group of essays, which were originally delivered as separate speeches, with their collection in this particular book always in sight, concerns the behavior of James Madison at the Convention of 1787. Its title is "Such a Government as the People Will Approve: The Great Convention as Comic Action," and it follows Delegate Madison of Virginia through the classic U-shaped comic plot: the auspicious beginning to which he had contributed yields to the Convention's nadir thanks largely to Madison's insistent nationalist idealism. When his fellow delegates agree on a plan "the People will approve" (a federal, not a national, one), Madison is left to sulk through the Convention's success. Finally, replicating the comic pattern laid down by the Convention, Madison returns to Virginia and spreads the word that the new charter would create a government with highly limited powers. The ideologue has yielded to the example of wiser, more prudent men such as James Iredell, and is thus in position to play a constructive role.

Most of the important themes of this book, whose length belies its weight, are clear by the end of this first essay. First, Bradford admires statesmen who respect the People at large. Second, he is truly, as he wrote elsewhere, an "old Whig," for his preferred mode of statesmanship concerns reference not to abstract theory but to the inherited rights of Englishmen (thereby, of Americans). Third, Bradford is worried and yet hopeful about the prospects for ordered freedom in the United States.

In his second essay, "The Best Constitution in Existence: The Influence of the British Example on the Framers of Our Fundamental Law," Bradford makes an
argument that is very unpopular in academic historiography these days. Americans of the late eighteenth century were not devoted, he says, to cutting themselves adrift from experience (as the French Revolutionaries would soon be). Rather, they insisted that the benefits of their status as Englishmen be preserved immaculate. One sees in his description of the events of 1774-1791 a dress rehearsal for 1861-1865 (with, however, a different outcome). John Drayton’s statement that “Carolinians wish for nothing more ardently than a speedy reconciliation with our mother country, upon constitutional principles,” calls to mind the view of later Carolinians about the import of their behavior, as captured in the official seal of the Confederate States of America: General George Washington astride a charger, representing true fidelity to the inherited American (thus, British) constitution.

Academia today abets activist judges and overreaching federal officeholders in their endeavors by ignoring the truly conservative nature of the secessions of 1776. This is done, as Bradford repeats again and again, in order to obscure the fact that ours is a nomocratic, not a teleocratic, constitution. That is, our federal compact is devoted entirely to law, not to teleology. It is not, as Harry Jaffa, Mortimer Adler, William Brennan, and others would have it, a blank check for distant officials to experiment with society; instead, it consists almost entirely of limitations on the government established in Articles I, II, and III.

Here, Bradford relies heavily on the work of Raoul Berger, who has dispositively proven, for the benefit of anyone who cares to know, that the great bulk of the U. S. Supreme Court’s post-1932 jurisprudence is lawless sophistry. The heart of this book, and its essential contribution, comes in the three middle chapters. There, Bradford considers the meaning of the Massachusetts and South Carolina ratifying conventions of 1788 and finally of the North Carolina convention’s rejection of the constitution that same year. The method he employs in these chapters, though commending itself to the student aware that it is in the understanding of each of the ratifying conventions, not in that of the framers, that the constitution’s meaning is to be found, is very seldom used.

Probably because today’s opinion leaders came of age in an environment in which the teleological view of the constitution was being touted as the only moral view, but perhaps also in part as a result of the fact that many of the ideological schemes of the day would be impossible of achievement lacking a large role for judicial and federal fiat, the work of combing the ratification conventions for meaning is rarely undertaken. It should be pursued on a massive scale, for what little (forty-five pages) Bradford gives us here helps to explain all subsequent federal constitutional history.

“The United States Constitution as ratified in Boston on February 6, 1788, continues to have a life among us even greater than the once more popular views of that document approved by the states outside of New England.” Having stated his thesis in that way, the author spins it out neatly. Shays’s Rebellion, it seems, was the result of “a characteristic New England virtue carried so far into the extreme that it became a vice—a pattern that I understand has had some influence over the history of the region.” Yankees refused to be indebted, so when the war ended they spiked the tax rates. The result? Rebellion and a consensus in favor of the new constitution.

Still, even in Massachusetts, “The Constitution was a way of preserving a known felicity, not a means of achieving a new one.” Although the Bay State was in the midst of a ferment over tax rates, “the Massachusetts tradition of ordered liberty was ever stronger than anger with
lawyers and speculators in public debt. The dead voted yes on the Constitution—and were powerful enough to carry the day.” One would have thought that the Antifederalists, arguing for Massachusetts’ (or New England’s) status as New Zion, would benefit from fidelity to the Puritan fathers, but Federalists were able to turn the delegates’ image of their state to their advantage:

“The State government is a beautiful structure. It is situated, however, upon the naked beach. The Union is the dike to fence out the flood. That dike is broken and decayed, and if we do not repair it, when the next spring-tide comes, we shall be buried in one common destruction.”

Thus spoke Fisher Ames at the convention’s close. His trope, Bradford points out, recalls the old New England covenant, the Mayflower Compact: either all would be good, or none would. This is hardly the government as necessary evil of Madison, nor the limited government of Iredell of North Carolina or of the South Carolinians. The Massachusetts Union would make us all better men.10

The losing interpretation, of course, has been identified almost exclusively with South Carolina. Again, a rhetorician’s trick is regnant here, for “natural aristocracy” was a notion equally as prevalent in Virginia ruling circles, and in those of New York, as in those of the Palmetto State. Limited government and states’ rights have come, though, to be seen as primarily the cause of South Carolina.

The essay here on the ratification in South Carolina, “Preserving the Birthright: The Intention of South Carolina in Adopting the United States Constitution,” has two functions. It reminds us that there was much to admire in the ratifiers, both Federalist and Antifederalist, in America’s richest state, and it proves (again, if anyone cares to know) that South Carolina never freely consented to a teleocratic constitution. Not in 1787. Nor in 1865. Never.

A contrast is drawn to Massachusetts’ ratification, whose explanation “lies in the fact that it was the Puritan commonwealth, marked by 170 years of Puritan thought on the positive advantages of government as a source of human virtue, freedom, and felicity, resonant of a hundred artillery sermons and a thousand spiritual autobiographies.” South Carolinians thought so then, too, as is proven by references to the Yankees’ “low cunning” and “levelling principles.” The argument in the convention in Charleston was over the question whether South Carolina was being asked to approve a teleocratic constitution; Federalists insisted not, and Antifederalists said so.12

Rawlins Lowndes, the Antifederalist leader, made the case for the general goodness of South Carolina’s polity as it stood.13 Looking to the future (and showing an acute understanding of a certain society to the north), he pointed to Yankees’ “jealousy,” warned of their “encroachment,” and predicted South Carolina would be stripped of her sovereignty at some point after ratification.14 The Federalists countered that the federal government would have only those powers “expressly granted by the Constitution”; not trusting them, South Carolina ratified only on that condition. The sum of Bradford’s account is that South Carolina’s position in 1833, as well as that taken in 1861, 1948, and 1964, showed absolutely no deviation from that taken in 1788. The progressive imposition of Massachusetts’ vision has made Lowndes appear a prophet.

Bradford’s account of the North Carolina ratification convention is notable for showing how contingent the final adoption of the constitution was. Only the scheduling miscalculations of the North Carolina Antifederalists kept their local victory from having national significance. Besides that, the Old North State’s first
convention was the one convention in which a delegate suggested that abstract theory be the measure of an acceptable constitution. The suggestion was voted down by a nigh-unanimous convention.

The closing two chapters of the book take up the questions whether it is plausible that the founders, the great majority of whom were committed Christians dedicated to Christian teaching, intended to establish a religious regime such as that which the Supreme Court has legislated in the second half of the twentieth century (of course not!); and whether the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments were intended by Congress and the state legislatures to nationalize all-important questions of governance (of course not!).

A review such as this can merely hint at the learning displayed in *Original Intentions*. Inevitably, the ethic displayed in his work and the identities of his enemies testify that his performance of his civic duties was exemplary.

1. Eugene D. Genovese, *The Slaveholders’ Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860* (Columbia, S.C., 1992), 13. 2. Bradford, xv. 3. John Dickinson of Delaware finally asks Madison, “You see the consequence of pushing things too far?” Bradford, 7. 4. I made a similar argument about another important incident in Madison’s life in “A Troublesome Legacy: James Madison and 1788,” Master’s Thesis, University of Virginia (1994). 5. For the regnant academic argument, see Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution: How a Revolution Transformed a Monarchical Society into a Democratic One Unlike Any That Had Ever Existed* (New York, 1992). This seriously flawed work, whose title seems so improbable, was so fashionable as to be voted all the major historical prizes. 6. Bradford often refers to Raoul Berger, *Government by Judiciary: The Transformation of the Fourteenth Amendment* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1977), which makes the general point. Also essential are the same author’s *The Fourteenth Amendment and the Bill of Rights* (Norman, Okla., and London, 1989), which exposes the application of certain Bill of Rights provisions by the federal courts against the states and the assumption of a broad range of powers by Congress as usurpations, and *Federalism: The Founders’ Design* (Norman and London, 1987), which proves that states’ rights are republican rights. 7. Of course, “We’re the first generation moral enough to live up to the constitution’s obvious meaning” has a certain (unsavory) appeal. 8. The most common (because easiest?) distortion is to rely on the opinions of only one or two men as paradigmatic, as in Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York and London, 1988). Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York and London, 1969) is the leading text today. Its guiding assumptions are that the constitution had one meaning and that the Federalists obscured that meaning, thereby securing ratification of a document that would not otherwise have been approved. (Both of these books won leading historical awards.) Each of these assumptions is impossible if we assume, as Bradford here shows the founders did, that the understanding of the ratifying conventions determines the constitution’s meaning. When the possibility of different experiences in different states is considered, as in *The Constitution and the States: The Role of the Original Thirteen in the Framing and Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, ed. Patrick T. Conley and John P. Kaminski (Madison, 1988), the question is why each state came to adopt the one constitution; the questions whether they had disparate understandings and how that should affect constitutional adjudication are never raised. 9. Bradford, 44-45. 10. Bradford, 47. 11. Bradford, 56-58. 12. Bradford, 62-63. 13. He even made the case for the positive goodness of slavery, fully thirty years before Nathaniel Macon supposedly led the way on that score. Bradford, 64. 14. Bradford, 64.

Science versus Theology

JOHN C. CAIAZZA


This book, by Sunday *London Times* columnist Bryan Appleyard, has stirred controversy in both England and America. In England it was attacked by *Nature*, the foremost British scientific journal, as “a very dangerous book,” and was the topic of a formal debate by novelist Fay Weldon and a prominent biologist. In this country the book was the subject of a critical 3,000 word review in *The New York Re-

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