

# Political Moderation in America's First Two Centuries

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## Prologue

*Sparta, 432 B.C.*

Irrational recklessness was now considered courageous commitment; hesitation while looking to the future was high-styled cowardice; moderation was a cover for a lack of manhood; and circumspection meant inaction while senseless rage now helped define the true man.

Thucydides

The recorded history of political moderation began in 432 B.C. As tensions mounted during the early stages of the Peloponnesian War, the Athenian leader, Pericles, and King Archidamus of Sparta each took the measure of his adversary and counterpart. They knew and respected each other, and both calculated that the other could be trusted to help keep the conflict within manageable limits. What they miscalculated was the bloodlust of Sparta's truculent allies and the intractability of Athenian commercial interests. A year further into the conflict, Pericles earned immortality for his eloquent, generous, and farsighted funeral oration honoring Athens' war dead. But Pericles was no moderate; he was a dedicated Athenian aristocrat, willing to give credit when credit was due but utterly unwilling to sacrifice any policy option.<sup>1</sup> As the conflict threatened to spiral out of control, it was Archidamus, the product of a martial culture but also the leader of society with its own civil constitution,<sup>2</sup> who recommended moderation. He reminded his allies that

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Steven Lattimore, trans. and ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998), p. 169.

<sup>1</sup> Donald Kagan, *The Peloponnesian War* (New York: Viking, 2003), pp. 40, 47-54.

<sup>2</sup> Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern*, vol. 1: *The Ancient Régime in Classical Greece* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 150-152.

some of you are of my own age, which means you will not let inexperience make you enthusiastic about this business. . . . Any of you making prudent calculations about the operations we are considering would find that it would not be on any limited scale. . . . Instead of taking up arms yet, send to them and make complaints, *not putting too much emphasis either on war or our willingness to accommodate* [emphasis added], and during this time prepare our own resources.

The Spartan ruler acknowledged that Athens was dedicated to the arts of peace, while Sparta was a warrior state. But although Athens might have an ethos of civic participation, Archidamus speculated, Sparta possessed, in its constitution, a disciplined, conscientious approach to life and death choices. "It is very possible that true prudence is *this quality* [this constitution or way of life] of ours. . . . Through our orderliness we are rendered both warlike and wise."<sup>3</sup> In that compound phrase, "warlike and wise," lay the seed of the concept of political moderation.

We are warlike, Archidamus explained, because "a sense of respect" for adversaries and for reality itself "is the greater part of moderation, and courage the greater part of respect." And Spartans were "wise" because they were not all that well-educated and therefore could ill-afford to be cavalier in dismissing inconvenient facts. "Let us never abandon these practices" of "prudence and moderation . . . that our fathers have handed down to us. . . . Let us not be hurried into deciding in the brief space of a day about many lives, possessions, cities, and reputations. Let us decide calmly."

The reference to "our fathers" was telling: it associated moderation with oral tradition and with trust. Because tradition could be fragile and trust elusive, all of this availed Archidamus nothing; Sparta's allies were not prepared to listen to a discourse about moderation, and without their cooperation, his peace plan was stillborn. Nor were Pericles's Athenian followers interested in exploring the Spartan ruler's overture. From 431 to 404 B.C., the Peloponnesian War decimated the Greek world.<sup>4</sup>

When Thucydides composed his *History* of the war, the word he attributed to Archidamus for "moderation" or "prudence" was *sophrosyne* (pronounced "so-FROS-sen-ee"), a word with at least three overlapping meanings. In the first place, *sophrosyne* was a layered term associating "moderation" with "a sense of shame." The foundation of military

<sup>3</sup> Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Steven Lattimore, trans. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, [1998]), p. 41. Cf. Charles Norris Cochran, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003, originally published by Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 53-54.

<sup>4</sup> Kagan, *Peloponnesian War*, pp. 485-490; Lattimore, ed., Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, pp. 168-171.

discipline, *sophrosyne* implied, was "shame" or "fear of reproach." Thus, what made "good soldiers" was their mortal fear of public "shame" and the "reproach" of their commanders and the populations for whom they fought. Second, *sophrosyne* was not just a compound word; it was a *particular kind* of compound word, signaling the presence of two competing conceptions – both of them true at the same time. Moderation and shame sound different, one a confident stance and the other a distressing outcome. But in *sophrosyne*, the two meanings were forever locked in enforced partnership. Similarly, "discipline" rooted in "shame," and "valor" based on fear of "reproach," represented different kinds of motivation,<sup>5</sup> but, as integral features of *sophrosyne*, they constituted a creative; if also an excruciating, tension akin to the "warlike" and "wise" capabilities of a well-trained soldier. "If the more commercial Greek cities stood at one end of the ancient spectrum," classical historian Paul Rahe observes, "Sparta stood at the other. Of all the Hellenic communities, she came the closest to giving absolute primacy to the common good. She did this by turning the city into a camp, the *pólis* into an army, and the citizen into a soldier."<sup>6</sup>

Finally, there is another path to the etymology of "moderation"; the antonym of *sophrosyne* is *polypragmosyne* (pronounced "poly-prag-mo-SEE-nay") or the manner of a "busybody."<sup>7</sup> In this sense, Greek moderation was the maturity and good sense to leave well enough alone. According to one modern editor, Thucydides distinguished between "real moderates," who kept the horrors of war firmly lodged in their civic consciousness, and "moderate partisans" during the horrible latter stages of the Peloponnesian War, who fought with one eye on their duty, the other on their survival.<sup>8</sup>

Just as the United States and Britain in the 1940s and 1950s lived in the shadow of the Munich crisis and looked back on the appeasement of Hitler in the late 1930s as a political and moral disaster, so in the early fourth century B.C., educated Athenians learned from Thucydides that the failure to practice moderation during the Peloponnesian War had been a defining tragic event in their own recent history.<sup>9</sup> Aristotle perpetuated the compound character of political moderation as a lesson of

<sup>5</sup> Simon Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), vol. 1, p. 129.

<sup>6</sup> Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern*, vol. 1, p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> William Arrowsmith, ed., *Aristophanes: Three Comedies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, pp. 169-171.

<sup>9</sup> Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern*, vol. 1, pp. xv-xviii, 193-194.

recent history and as timeless ethical consideration. As he explained in Book Two of his *Nicomachean Ethics* (dedicated to his son, Nicomachus), "moral virtue is a mean between two vices, one involving excess [and] the other deficiency. . . . Its character is to aim at what is intermediate in passions and in actions." Failure to cultivate moderate virtues, he warned, left men at sea amidst their passions; at the same time, the desperate embrace of any saving virtue could carry an individual to an opposite extreme.<sup>10</sup>

So difficult and important was this search that Aristotle translated the concept of middle ethical ground into a problem in mathematics and geometry – the classical disciplines most renowned for clarity and rigor. Viewed from that perspective, moderation defined the very nature of humanity itself as a striving to measure up to the highest potentiality in relation to variables of time and circumstance. Ethical political decisions were often a matter of timing, of measuring time in relation to appropriate actions and choices. The Greek rhetorician Protagoras called "man the measure" of all things, meaning that there are no moral standards external to humans being themselves. Drawing from Euclid, Aristotle posited that the best political choices lay among a range of possible options in an ethical triangulation from the point of view of the individual somewhere in the middle between extremes of barbarism (natural man) and moral zealotry (sophistication or expertise carried to a putrified extreme). The least of two evils, Aristotle concluded, lay somewhere in the middle of an ethical arc as viewed by man looking outward from the center of a knowable world; "hence . . . it is no easy task to find the middle."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> J. L. Ackrill, *Aristotle's Ethics* (New York: Humanities Press, 1973), pp. 73–74.

<sup>11</sup> J. L. Ackrill, trans. and ed., *Aristotle's Ethics* (New York: Humanities Press, 1973), p. 73. On Aristotle's politics, see C.C.W. Taylor, "Politics," in Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 234–235: "Most of the virtues of character, in whose performance the excellent life consists, require interaction with other, e.g., generosity and justice," a quintessential moderate formulation. Aristotle's use of Euclid is discussed in John J. Young, "On Reading Aristotle's *Ethics*," unpublished paper. See also D. S. Hutchinson, "Ethics," *Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, pp. 217–232, and Louise Campbell, "A Diagnosis of Religious Moderation: Matthew Parker and the 1559 Settlement," in Luc Racaut and Alec Ryrie, eds., *Moderate Voices in the European Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), p. 36: "Aristotle implied the mean was equal to the amount which was appropriate for the circumstances, not necessarily therefore, a point midway between two extremes."

## Political Moderation

### An Introduction

Who – moderating melody with different sounds and voices yet most satisfying to sensitive ears – heals sickness, has mingled cold with heat and moisture with dryness, the rough with the smooth, sweetness with pain, shadows with light, quiet with motion, tribulation with prosperity. This greatest harmony of the universe, though discordant, contains our safety.

Jean Bodin, 1576

Political moderation has been, and remains, misunderstood. "Moderation is not an halting betwixt two opinions, . . . nor is it lukewarmness," Thomas Fuller declared on the eve of the English Civil War. "But it is a mixture of charity and discretion in ones judgment."<sup>1</sup> Charity was a religious duty and principle, discretion a prudential option, and moderation allowed both to co-exist as an ethical insight. Those elements were the heart of the matter. Political moderation consisted of these ordinary materials – inherited beliefs or *principles*; natural caution, self-protectiveness, or *prudence*; and an ethical compass in matters of governance and citizenship. In our own time, moderation rebukes corrosive partisanship from the right or the left, but because, as Fuller observed,

Luc Mark Greenglass, "Conclusion. Moderate Voices, Mixed Messages," in *Moderate Voices in the European Reformation*, Luc Racaut and Alec Ryrie, eds. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), p. 210.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Fuller, "Of Moderation," in *The Holy State and the Profane State* [1642], Maximilian Graff Walten, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), p. 205. Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language* (1786), defines moderation as "forebearance of extremity; the contradictory temper to party violence; a state of keeping a due mean betwixt extremes." Jürgen Diethe, "The Moderate: Politics and Allegiances of a Revolutionary Newspaper," *History of Political Thought* 4 (1983): 247–279.

"moderate men are commonly crushed betwixt the extreme parties on both sides,"<sup>2</sup> moderation historically has been, and in some respects remains, a risky, hazardous commitment to mediation of intractable political disputes or to ongoing conciliation of persistent social conflicts. Because almost every sane person is in *some* respects a moderate (habitually preferring the company of a respectable constituency of allies to the solitary advocacy of bizarre opinions), political moderates will be defined in these pages as *persons who intentionally undertake civic action, at significant risk or cost, to mediate conflicts, conciliate antagonisms, or find middle ground*. Political moderation has been, moreover, a human phenomenon: *the clear-eyed recognition and willing acceptance of paradox in the discussion and exercise of power*. Except for saints and zealots, no one mediated, conciliated, or reached across political divides all of the time. Those who did were radicals. Moderation has been, rather, a phenomenon of the moment, and moderates have spent time and effort considering and choosing – or allowing themselves to be caught up in – moments of political peacemaking.<sup>3</sup>

From the early modern period until well into the twentieth century, political moderation has encouraged men and women in responsible positions of power to look to Renaissance statecraft for historic guidance. At the same time the history of political moderation has embraced more than government, law, and democratic institutions. Moderation has also curbed and channeled political discourse and consciousness throughout *civil society*.<sup>4</sup> The history of political moderation did not arise just from politics *per se* but also from political dimensions of family, community, and religious life.

The favored son of America's first great political family, John Quincy Adams, understood the cost of political moderation, and he grappled with the moderate paradox of being simultaneously principled and prudent as a holder of political trust. On January 27, 1804, President Thomas Jefferson, Vice President Aaron Burr, and Senator John Quincy Adams, a Federalist from Massachusetts, attended a party at Stelle's Hotel in Washington, D.C., to celebrate the ratification of the Louisiana Purchase. In this gathering of Republican Party notables, Adams felt distinctly out of place, and when

<sup>2</sup> Fuller, *The Holy State and the Profane State*, p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> The earliest and most cogent explication of moderation as a "dialectical passage" toward middle ground is David C. Harlan, "The Travail of Religious Moderation: Jonathan Dickinson and the Great Awakening," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 61 (1983): 411–426.

<sup>4</sup> Marvin B. Becker, *The Emergence of Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 74–87.

someone toasted the proposition, "To the tempestuous Sea of Liberty, may it never be calm!" Adams declined to raise his glass.<sup>5</sup>

His very visible gesture was an act of intellectual courage. A discriminating supporter of administration foreign policy who believed that politics should stop at the water's edge, the son of the second President committed political suicide in 1807 by endorsing Jefferson's hated embargo. Facing certain defeat for reelection to the Senate, he resigned his office in 1808, completing his estrangement from the Federalist Party. President James Madison appointed him Minister to Russia in 1809, chief negotiator of the Treaty of Ghent in 1814, and Minister to Great Britain from 1815 to 1817 – a brilliant foreign policy career culminating in eight years as Secretary of State under James Monroe and elevation to the presidency in the disputed election of 1824–1825. Gifted and ambitious, John Quincy Adams was not an opportunist, certainly not a turncoat. He moved from moderate Federalism to moderate Republicanism during the first decade of the nineteenth century for reasons of principle and patriotism. Why and how?

- Why have American men and women gravitated from partisan peripheries toward the moral center of political life?
- How did moderates create new attachments with others who traveled different routes away from partisanship?
- How did they negotiate between their interests and convictions?
- What prices did they pay and what gratifications did they gain?

This book offers answers to those questions. Chapter 1 locates the beginnings of American political moderation in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century trans-Atlantic dissemination of British and European moderation throughout the Atlantic world – an epoch during which British moderates apprehensively equated Augustan power and prosperity with the Roman transition from republican to imperial rule. Chapter 2 examines the role of political moderates during the era of the American Revolution and charts the ways in which successive stages of resistance, rebellion, warfare, and Christian republicanism moderated, while in the process of creating, a stable constitutional republic. Chapter 3 then chronicles the formation of politically moderate regions in the Southern backcountry and the Middle West. Finally, Chapter 4 demonstrates the ways in which denominational Christianity (institutional and efficient) and primitive Christianity (spontaneous and situational) moderated, of all things, moderation itself. Illustrating these

<sup>5</sup> Marie B. Hecht, *John Quincy Adams* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. 152.

processes are two detailed case studies of religiously grounded political moderation from the 1850s, one from Due West, South Carolina, and the other from the Vine Street neighborhood in Nashville, Tennessee. Those episodes are the climax not only of the chapter but the entire book – documenting conclusively the moderating effects of denominational-primitive competition as agencies of order and civility in politics and society. Four Conclusions draw the elements of the book together and echo questions posed first in the Introduction. The Prologue on the birth of political moderation in ancient Sparta reveals the subtlety and complexity of the earliest language about moderation, and the Epilogue pinpoints the rise and influence of moderate liberalism in the mid-nineteenth century.

The historical record of political moderation underscores a major finding: *while the substantial core of political moderation expressed itself as political philosophy at the core of civil society, at the outer edge of moderation, where it blended into political culture, moderation intermingled with religion.*<sup>6</sup> Epigraphs by Harvey Mansfield, Jr., and Reinhold Niebuhr, at the opening of this book, plot its coordinates. Mansfield is a moderate conservative political philosopher, Niebuhr was a moderate liberal religious ethicist. Written and spoken as World War II erupted, Niebuhr's words about freedom, love, and the limitations of the "gregarious impulse" groped toward an understanding of religiously grounded moderation; as the Cold War ended, Mansfield spoke of moderates as "volunteers" in a society arbitrarily polarized between liberal choice and conservative duty. In war and peace, in political disagreement and consensus, the narrative of moderation history explores unfolding and reshaping human dilemmas.

The history of political thought indicates two contrasting and also complementary ways of approaching political moderation. Informed by political philosophy, the first approach goes to the *central core* of moderation as a tradition and deals with jurisprudence. This book takes a different tack by locating the *peripheral outer edges* of moderation, where it made contact with political culture and where religion and ethics disseminated moderation into the civil order. In 1989, as I sought to redirect my then still rudimentary investigation into early American religion and politics, legal historian Christian G. Fritz initiated a philosophical and jurisprudential study of the search for

<sup>6</sup> For the evolution of this idea, see Robert M. Calhoon, "Cusp of Spring," in *Autobiographical Reflections on Southern Religious History*, John B. Boles, ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), pp. 53–72.

constitutional "middle ground" in the six decades following American independence.<sup>7</sup> Neither Fritz nor I ever became aware of each other's projects, yet it was no coincidence that, eighteen years later, both our book manuscripts found their way to Lewis Bateman's desk at Cambridge University Press in New York.

#### DEFINITIONS

Political moderation invites appreciative description, and sometimes casual dismissal, but resists rigorous definition. Moderation may have been a moral and social virtue and a synonym for political reasonableness, but the concept of *historic political moderation* is not an ideal typology. Viewed in the context of the turbulent, complex political and intellectual history of the early modern Western world, political moderation can be defined, somewhat ambiguously, in five different ways:

1. *Political moderation was an ideology in the making which failed to coalesce.* After Thucydides discovered moderation and Aristotle enshrined it in his *Ethics* (see above), St. Augustine made moderation one of the marks of the beloved community. There it remained ensconced within the protective layering of Christian doctrine for more than a thousand years. Then in the two years following the 1572 St. Bartholomew Day massacre of Huguenot leaders in France, the Renaissance humanist Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) and the Huguenot theorist François Hotman (1524–1590) resurrected political moderation as an autonomous concept.<sup>8</sup> During the turbulent century that followed, four successive generations of moderate political thinkers challenged threatening religious and political polarization by planting moderate remedies directly in between extreme immoderate poles: *conciliation* (during the 1570s and '80s); *custom* (1590s

<sup>7</sup> Christian G. Fritz, *American Sovereigns: The People and America's Constitutional Tradition before the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> "Of Moderation," John Florio, trans., in *The Essays of Montaigne* (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), pp. 156–160. In David Quint, *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy: Ethical and Political Themes in the Essais* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), ch. 4, "An Ethics of Yielding," opens with Montaigne's judgment that ethical moderation cannot be a matter of choice but instead must be a societal imperative: "Humility and submission alone can make a good man; it should be prescribed to him, not left to the choice of his reason," p. 102. Montaigne wrote against the background of religious civil war; which, he feared, had the potential of extirpating all humane values. Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2: *The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 234, 269, 278–280, 299, 305, 310, 322, 324.

to the 1620s); *mediation* (1630s and '40s); and *love* (1630s to '80s), a four-stage efflorescence of moderate political thought.<sup>9</sup>

Had the epic seventeenth-century struggles between constitutionalism and absolutism not eased after 1688 and 1713, ideological moderation might well have matured and hardened during the eighteenth century. Instead, eighteenth-century moderation fragmented into a series of still pertinent, attractive qualities of temperament, ethical sensitivity, and political sagacity floating free amid the Atlantic world diasporas after ideological pressures had abated and demographic movement expanded.<sup>10</sup>

2. *Moderation was a refuge for those wounded by political polarization in early modern Europe.* Moderation may have met the need Huguenots felt in the immediate aftermath of St. Bartholomew's Day for a more resilient, tough-minded political credo. Historians have looked at the political genius of the French Wars of Religion in two different ways. One was Aristotelian (midway between extremes), the other humanist (in the cultural center assailed on all sides). The Aristotelian climax of the struggle in France for political peace, according to Quentin Skinner, was an ideology "capable of defending the lawfulness of resisting [royal authority] on grounds of conscience," while at the same time "they needed to broaden the basis of their support" by embracing "a constitutionalist and less purely sectarian ideology of opposition" in François Hotman's advocacy of a constitutional monarchy. France did not get a constitutional monarchy but did acquire a Gallican tradition of kingship in which the king ruled above the fray of religious parties that accorded with the humanist moderation of Montaigne, who preferred education to ideological positioning.<sup>11</sup> Taking a stand on middle ground between two extremes was neither comfortable nor reassuring, while education was tidal, rising, falling, rising again.

Moderates were thus made by ideological and cultural circumstances they imperfectly understood, and when circumstances changed they often drifted back into older habits. A lifelong moderate – a conscientious Quaker, for example – was in reality a radical. Moderation was a response

<sup>9</sup> See Robert M. Calhoon, "On Political Moderation," *Journal of the Historical Society* 6 (2006): 276–285.

<sup>10</sup> Ideological moderation dissolved at the same time that British imperialism changed from an ideology to an identity; see David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 188–198.

<sup>11</sup> Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 32–38.

to events of the moment, and the political moderates were people who, in Shakespeare's paraphrase of Aristotle, "take arms against a sea of troubles and, by opposing, end them."<sup>12</sup> The royalist political theorist Jean Bodin (1530–1596), whose epigraph, quoted above, spoke of moderation as a discordant harmony and an ultimate source of security, was not a moderate by any conventional standard. In moments when he penned and pondered this insight, however, he made a moderate peace with his Protestant, constitutionalist adversaries.

For those experiencing political turmoil – facing life-threatening risks, harboring fears, distaste, and apprehension – moments of indecision and decision could seem to last an eternity. Moderates were keepers of *kairotic* time (timeless moments of crisis, insight, and wisdom) as well as the *chronological* time, which history normally records.

3. *Moderation was a cluster of ethical insights into the nature of political conflict and the duties of conscientious members of the community.* This definition fits the circumstances of people seeking middle ground better than ideological and psychic explanations of their thought and conduct. Moderates broke threatening political situations into their component parts; they sought to anticipate and discern ways of alleviating instability and capriciousness in public affairs; they offered ethical guidance to conscientious souls contemplating moderate action (Montaigne's *Essays*, Witherspoon's *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, Madison's *Federalist Papers* for example). Moderate political texts were not so much sustained efforts of ethical discourse as they were cautionary political wisdom by statesmen and other political figures caught between danger and duty.

Consequently, moderates treasured and preserved the history of Renaissance statecraft: the politics fashioned by the new monarchies of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in which humanist counselors provided hereditary rulers with maxims drawn from classical and Renaissance political philosophy, history, and literature. Statecraft turned humanism into a political science defining options, considering liabilities, and leveraging power out of relative powerlessness. A guiding principle of Renaissance statecraft was *comity* – the value placed on courtesy, civility, and urbanity and the expectation in diplomacy that nations should respect each other's laws and usages. Thus diplomacy and etiquette became closely joined.

4. *Political moderation was a series of improvised structural conceptions of civil responsibility constructed from historical experience*

<sup>12</sup> *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 1, lines 59–60.



and informed by received tradition. Aristotle formalized his maxim that moderation was middle ground between extremes of deficient civility and excessive hegemonic zeal through the use of Euclidian geometry. From an ethical perspective, he posited, each individual could envision a range of middle ground positions rather than a single fixed moral situation into which he ought to insert himself. Following the Greek maxim, *metron pan* ("measure is everything," analogous to our own expression that "timing is everything"), Aristotle taught that mathematics pervaded ethics in order that actions be proportional to time and place. The meaning of ethical knowledge changed as one moved through life, but an internal moral compass could be a moral constant (a *phromimos*), a sort of "moral godfather" pointing to the whole picture, the relationship of parts and the right course of action in particular circumstances.<sup>13</sup> "Man's mind has been so constituted by God that it is never satisfied with its present condition, however good it may be," a North Carolina speaker told Hampden-Sydney College students, downcast by Confederate defeat in 1866; while dissatisfaction "is absolutely necessary ... for the improvement of mankind, ... there is a certain degree of moderation to which it must be carried, or it will prove a disadvantage rather than an advantage to him. ... Only what is rational and attainable should be the object of our desires."<sup>14</sup>

What *was* rational and attainable, John of Salisbury instructed English courtiers in 1159, was their duty to dissuade the rulers they served from oppressing their subjects – responsibility that, as a last resort, included the credible threat of regicide, though as a rhetorical ploy rather than an overt act.<sup>15</sup> John of Salisbury's political theory was a rare stirring of moderation during the Middle Ages. Then, in 1324, Marsiglio of Padua (d. 1342) became the first of several Renaissance humanists to celebrate the example of Cicero, the Roman republican official and philosopher, as a model statesman who kept his head

<sup>13</sup> John J. Young, "On Reading Aristotle's *Ethics*," unpublished paper.

<sup>14</sup> Edmund Strudwich Burwell (1849–1887), "Moderation in Our Wishes Necessary," October 24, 1866, Edmund S. Burwell Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>15</sup> Cary J. Nederman and Kate Langdon Forhan, eds., *Medieval Political Theory: The Quest for the Body Politic* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 26–27, 53–54, and D. E. Lunscombe and G. R. Evans, "The Twelfth-Century Renaissance," in J. H. Burns, ed., *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, 350–1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 328–329.

and preserved the continuity of government and society during Julius Caesar's bid for power in 49 B.C.

At the heart of Cicero's republican theory was his concept of the concord of the orders. His *concordia ordinum* was the idea that complex societies, containing rival interests, could remain stable only through collaboration among the best elements (orders) in the legislature, the military, and commerce. Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406) and Leonardo Bruni (1369–1444) were also Ciceronians in the Florentine Renaissance who valued Cicero's eloquence, deft statecraft, and understanding of the rural republican roots of civic virtue as a prescription for moderate politics.<sup>16</sup> Five centuries later, in 1808, torn between his patriotism and his countrymen's failure to appreciate his leadership, John Adams found comfort only in Cicero's letters. "Cicero," Adams told Benjamin Rush, "declares that all honors are indifferent to him because he knows that it is not in the power of his country to reward him in any proportion of his services. Pushed, and injured, and provoked as I am, I blush not to imitate the Roman."<sup>17</sup> That excruciating discomfort was the price Adams, and his contemporaries, paid for their republicanism – and for Adams, objective proof that America was an authentic republic.

The most structurally elegant and ambitious moderate political formulations arose from the four stages of moderate efflorescence (1572–1680) briefly sketched above. In each stage, moderates diagnosed political polarization that jeopardized religious and political peace and identified middle ground between partisan extremes; in the middle of each of these spectra they planted moderate remedies. *Moderate middle ground was not a spot on a spectrum so much as it was an epiphany at the onset of a journey.*<sup>18</sup> Humanist Catholics and

<sup>16</sup> Jerrold E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), and Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), p. 89.

<sup>17</sup> Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 62–63.

<sup>18</sup> Metaphors of middle ground and moderate journeys hint at the rich theoretical underpinning of political moderation; see Racaut and Rylie, eds., *Moderate Voices in the European Reformation*, pp. 4–12, 36–37, 71–72, 88–89, 91, 153, and in the "Conclusion," where Mark Greengrass observes that "the moderate voices ... of the Reformation were often humanist voices, expressing a paradox, and using it not as a literary conceit but as a way of understanding their world and defining themselves in relation to commonly held, but inadequately substantiated, opinions," p. 207.

Huguenots in France and reform-minded Anglicans such as Edmund Grindal (1519–1583) in England proposed religious *conciliation*;<sup>19</sup> Francis Bacon (1561–1626) in the 1590s and Edward Coke (1552–1634) in the 1620s proposed customary law and tradition;<sup>20</sup> Anglicans of the *via media*, such as Joseph Hall (1574–1656) and Thomas Fuller (1608–1661) in the 1630s<sup>21</sup> sought to institute ongoing clerical mediation into the life of the early Stuart court; and finally, between the 1630s and '80s, two communities of spiritual moderates in Cambridge – Puritans led by Richard Sibbes (1577–1635) and Anglicans by Benjamin Whichcote (1609–1683) and later Ralph Cudworth (1617–1688) – celebrated the moderating efficacy of pure Christian spirituality.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The English Puritan Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 118–121, 421–422, and Calhoun, "On Moderation," pp. 277–280. "The most obvious meaning of moderation in this period [the 1560s, the eve of the moderate efflorescence] is theological irenicism: a willingness on the part of leading religious figures to listen to their opponents' views and to learn humbly from them," Racaut and Ryrie, eds., *Moderate Voices in the European Reformation*, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Bacon discerned two underlying constitutional forces: Prescription (the intrinsic authority of the Crown) and Custom: (the weight of historical tradition and parliamentary and legal precedent limiting the authority of the ruler). W. H. Greenleaf, *Order, Empiricism, and Politics: Two Traditions of English Political Thought, 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 185; Francis Bacon to Lord Burghley, ca. 1590, in James Spedding, ed., *The Letters and Life of Francis Bacon* (London: Longmans, Green, 1868–1890), vol. 8, p. 109; Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 360–366; and Calhoun, "On Moderation," 280–281.

<sup>21</sup> "There was," historian Peter Lake writes, "a discourse of moderation and consensus at or near the center of religious debate at the early English court. The ability to control that discourse and to type one's opponents as extreme, innovative subversives was a very valuable political commodity." Peter Lake, "The Moderate and Irenic Case for Religious War: Joseph Hall's *Via Media* in Context," in Susan D. Amussen and Mark A. Kishlanski, eds., *Political Cultures and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England: Essays Presented to David Underdown* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 55–83; Calhoun, "On Moderation," 281–282.

<sup>22</sup> The Sibbesites, called the "Cambridge brethren," and Whichcote's followers, the "Cambridge Platonists," appeared encapsulated within their respective Puritan and Anglican institutions and may have feigned unawareness of each other. See Mark E. Dever, *Richard Sibbes: Puritanism and Calvinism in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart New England* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2000), pp. 73–95; Lenore T. Ealy, "Reading the Signatures of the Divine Author: Providence, Nature, and History in Ralph Cudworth's Apologetic," Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1997; and Calhoun, "On Moderation," 283–285. For a compelling and conclusive demonstration that political moderation, based on love, was a category of political thought that crossed the Atlantic and played a major role in American culture, see Matthew S. Holland, *Bonds of Affection: Civic Charity and the Making of America – Winthrop, Jefferson, and Lincoln* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007).

Except for Bacon and Coke, these are obscure names, and yet they illustrate the complex humanity of early modern political and religious thinkers. Conciliatory moderate Archbishop Grindal may have seemed heavy-handed and politically obtuse, yet, as both his contemporary admirer, John Milton, and his modern biographer, Patrick Collinson, attest, he instinctively found middle ground (between the *real politic* of the Elizabethan Court and the spiritual militancy of the Queen's Protestant subjects) to be both the hottest of hot seats and the strategic position from which ministry could actually moderate a society torn by conflicting theological and political tensions. Fuller, as we have noted, grasped more clearly than any subsequent apologist for moderation that the false stereotype of the moderate as lukewarm was a key to understanding moderation as an ethical quandary. By the fourth generation of moderate theorists – those bent on loving their adversaries – the older language of tough-minded humanism had given way to the irenic sensuality of Richard Sibbes, who likened God's goodness to "a communicative, diffusive goodness . . . as is . . . in the breast that loves to ease itself of milk."<sup>23</sup> Each of these generations of theorists invested their knowledge and their sometimes quirky sense of reality into their structural formulations.

5. *Political moderation was the negotiation between prudence and principle in early modern political thought.* Prudence is a classical virtue,<sup>24</sup> adherence to moral principle a religious duty, and political moderation the recognition that human nature responds, in moments of crisis, danger, and choice, to the objective reality of principle and the subjective workings of prudence. Moderates respected diverging values that, of moral and historical necessity, could not be safely jettisoned in the interest of consistency. Moderation has recognized principle and prudence as received traditions and made humility in the face of the past the glue holding society together.

Each of the individuals discussed in this book was a "political moderate" in at least one, and usually several, of these five ways. There was no typical moderate. Many, though not all, were thoroughly admirable men and women, while some were moderate in their political thought and consciousness but occasionally immoderate in their behavior. They all experienced powerful and telling moderate moments, some during brief crises

<sup>23</sup> Alexander B. Grosart, ed., *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes* (Edinburgh: J. Nichol, 1862–1864), vol. 6, p. 113.

<sup>24</sup> And in some respects an early Christian social practice as in "Render unto Caesar."

and others lasting for years. Roughly two times out of three, moderates began their trek toward the center from a conservative background. The distinction between conservatives and *moderate* conservatives has been more than one of degree. *Moderate conservatism was a crossing of the Rubicon requiring humility in the face of the past. For conservatives, humility was optional, for moderate conservatives it was not.*<sup>25</sup>

The intertwining careers of John Winthrop (1588–1649)<sup>26</sup> and John Cotton (1584–1652), both political and religious moderates, illustrated the principled-prudential character of political moderation. Each was an authentic Puritan peacemaker and each the author of a major treatise on moderation written in old England and carried in manuscript across the Atlantic in the early 1630s. Both became deeply involved in the prosecution of the Antinomian purist Anne Hutchinson – Winthrop in his capacity as Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony determined to maintain peace and harmony, Cotton as Anne's pastor and as the architect of a subtle,

<sup>25</sup> See Robert M. Calhoon, "Watergate and American Conservatism," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 83 (1984): 127–137.

<sup>26</sup> The first American moderate was not John Winthrop but, suggestively, someone who in certain respects resembled Winthrop: Father Vasco de Quiroga, Franciscan priest and Bishop of Michoacán in Mexico. In 1535, Quiroga composed a meticulous legal brief against the enslaving of Indians – positioning himself between Bartolomé de las Casas, the great champion of the rights of native peoples, and Juan Givés de Sepúlveda, the planters' spokesman on matters of New World labor. Quiroga built a hospital providing Indians with protection from Spanish officialdom and "encouragement to live full Christian lives," and he credited Thomas More's *Utopia* as his inspiration. With his scholarly ally, Cristóbal Cabrera, who was suspected of owning a heretical translation of the Bible, Quiroga based his defense of Indians' rights on the teachings of Erasmus. Cabrera praised his friend as a Erasmian Christian humanist whose "integrity, sincerity, kindness, generosity, holiness, blameless life, and inspiring example" placed the Bishop in the forefront of a rhetorical movement to win the souls of native people for Christ through the benign "compulsion" of "example." Similarly, Winthrop approved of Puritan efforts, begun two years prior to his arrival in New England, of "indeavouring to bring the Indians to the knowledge of the gospel" by requiring Puritan settlers to "denieane themselves justly and courteously" toward the native population. When the remnant of the Wampanoag Indians of eastern Massachusetts who had survived a European-spread plague in 1616–1617 contracted smallpox in 1633, Puritan settlers nursed the sick, buried the dead, and adopted orphan children. Winthrop could not help but wonder "if God was not pleased with our inheriting these parts, why did He drive out the native before us and why does He still make room for us by deminishinge them as we increase?" Anthony Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination: Studies in European and Spanish-American Social and Political Theory, 1513–1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 25–27; Rose Dealy, "The Politics of an Erasmian Lawyer, Vasco de Quiroga," in *Humana Civilitas: Sources and Studies Relating to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1976), pp. 4–20; and Alden T. Vaughan, *The New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620–1675* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965), pp. 94–95, 102–104.

careful attempt to loosen the bands of Puritan discipline and guide the laity in exploring the gratifications as well as the demands of Puritan sainthood.<sup>27</sup>

Principled moderate that he was, Cotton conceded only that Hutchinson and her supporters "stood condemned," not for venturesome privileging of grace over discipline but instead for embracing "heterodox opinions ... incautiously drawn from ... [Cotton's] doctrines."<sup>28</sup> The heart of the problem, Cotton explained in his *Commentary on John's First Epistle*, was that service to God moderated Christian believers: "Here [in Christian service] two contraries meet: the prerogatives of God ... and the liberty of Creation." The phrase "two contraries" marked this theology as religiously and politically moderate.

Prudential moderate that *he* was, Winthrop recognized the need to heal a fractured social and political order that he had movingly envisioned in his "City on a Hill" lay sermon preached on the deck of the *Arabella* in 1630. Now, in the aftermath of the Antinomian controversy in 1636, he proposed a new theory of church and state based on a concept of clerical-magistrate reciprocity. Clerics could not compel witnesses to testify to the truth; magistrates could not claim a monopoly of the truth; therefore, there had to be give-and-take between the two sets of officers to avoid wounding the body politic and the body of Christ. Over the next century and a half, Massachusetts officials and subjects, clergy and laity, placed moderate reciprocity at the heart of their political culture.<sup>29</sup>

To one degree or another, every historic moderate conformed to these five definitions. All were products – perhaps fortunate victims – of the failure of ideology to coalesce into an ideology, and most found in their search for political middle ground a refuge from the taunts of the world and from a nagging conscience. Making that refuge morally habitable required ethical thought and reflection. Sleeping in the beds they had thus made required theoretical arrangements consonant with belief and experience. Most important, moderates had an abiding respect for principle and prudence as an *indelible, linked, interacting, reciprocal* expression of their character.

<sup>27</sup> Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founding Father*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), ch. 3–7, and Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), chs. 11–13.

<sup>28</sup> Emery Battis, *Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), p. 226.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 223–224.

Historic moderates were, emphatically, not immune from folly, wickedness, or chicanery. An esteemed critic of this study urged that it give full play to that side of the moderate politics so as to instruct readers to distinguish between politicians for whom moderation was "a matter of life and death" and those for whom it was the main chance.<sup>30</sup> Here and there it does so. But the focus of this book, and its principal finding, is a durable ethical tradition of political moderation running from 1572 to 1884 deserving a place in historical memory.<sup>31</sup>

#### JOHN LOCKE AND POLITICAL MODERATION

The political philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) knew well the *conciliatory*, *customary*, *mediatory*, and *spiritual* layers of moderate political thought. They were part of his education; he anticipated and then hastened their peeling apart; and he expected that even after his own

<sup>30</sup> The American Colonization Society existed in the murky ethical boundaries between historic moderation and opportunistic avoidance of the issue of race, beyond the scope of this book. The next step in firming up those boundaries should build on Eric A. Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); Randall M. Miller, ed., *Letters of a Slave Family* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); Ellen Eslinger, "The Brief Career of Rufus W. Bailey," *Journal of Southern History* 71 (2005): 39–74; Jeffrey Brooke Allen, "Were Southern Critics of Slavery White Racists? Kentucky and the Upper South," *Journal of Southern History* 44 (1978): 169–190, and "The Racial Thought of White North Carolina Opponents of Slavery, 1789–1876," *North Carolina Historical Review* 59 (1982): 49–66; Robert M. Calhoon, "Scotch Irish Calvinists in Conflict: The South Carolina Slave Literacy Controversy, 1834–1860," *Journal of Scotch Irish History* 2 (2004): 64–88; and Joseph Moore, "William Hemphill and Slavery," dissertation in progress, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. While older studies depict colonizationists of both races as polite proslavery apologists, this most recent scholarship presents a more nuanced picture of people – both Northern and Southern, white and black – as scarred by, and wary of, both white racism and the evil of slavery, and using racist language out of habit and for tactical reasons as well.

<sup>31</sup> The Gilded Age and the transformation of American capitalism between 1890 and 1917 marked the beginning of a new era in American political thought. The rise of the Mugwumps in the mid-1880s is therefore an appropriate, if somewhat anticlimactic, point at which to bring to a close the early history of political moderation. I originally intended to end the book with 1913, the moderate first year of the Wilson presidency. Professor Harry S. Stout persuaded me that the late 1880s and 1890s were a prelude to twentieth-century political moderation comparable to Augustan moderation as the beginning of the moderation of eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries – a possibility Woodrow explored in his academic scholarship; see Bradley R. Foley and Robert M. Calhoon, "Woodrow Wilson and Political Moderation," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 85 (2008): 137–150.

comprehensive natural rights theory of liberty supplanted historic moderation these four large, coherent pieces of political wisdom and experience would continue to enrich Western civilization.

What if Locke had never lived or had remained a physician rather than serving as in-house political theorist in the home of the Earl of Shaftsbury? That hypothetical question can be absorbed into a wider counterfactual speculation:

If James II had remained in power in 1687 – if he had maintained strong support among the English Tories who, during the Exclusion controversy, had defended his right to ascend to the throne, if he had successfully instituted a pro-French foreign policy and a pro-Catholic religious policy, if his son, James, had followed him to the throne, and if the ideological chasm between absolutism and constitutional government had deepened during the early eighteenth century, admittedly chancy ifs but instructive as an exercise in counterfactual history – then political moderation might have realized its ideological potential as its conciliatory, customary, mediatory, and spiritual strands melded into a full-fledged ideology.

That did not occur. Instead Locke propounded – in manuscript form during the Exclusion controversy of 1679–1682 and in print in 1690 – his own mature ideology of liberalism resting on dual foundations of a theory of contract government and a sensory explanation of human psychology.

Locke realized that his *Two Treatises of Government* and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* supplanted a nascent ideology of moderation. Consider these pieces of circumstantial evidence. Political theorist Neal Wood has convincingly demonstrated that *Human Understanding* was "a Baconian natural history of the psyche" lifted without attribution from the writings of Francis Bacon – and "impregnated with the liberal social attitudes of the moderns," that is, humanist writers of the Renaissance and their seventeenth-century successors.<sup>32</sup> Arguably, the entire category of *customary* moderation passed intact into Locke's theory. Locke did not acknowledge a debt to Bacon because scholarly conventions of his time did not require him to do so – and also, perhaps, because Locke did not want his ideas tagged as Baconian when they were, in fact, much more than that.

Locke, moreover, recognized that even if political moderation had only been at best a loose-knit series of political perceptions, it had been,

<sup>32</sup> Neal Wood, *The Politics of Locke's Philosophy: A Social Study of "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 5, 65–93.

and remained, a cogent set of ethical propositions and some of the best material available for a philosophy of liberty. The long-simmering constitutional crisis of the seventeenth century, Locke appreciated all too well, made every political action, every political thought, a matter of life and death, and that, in these circumstances, circumspection ruled.

Decisively and with great intellectual agility, Locke moved around and beyond moderate Puritan and Anglican conciliation and mediation. The rights to life and liberty and, by implication, property were unalienable but also too vulnerable to be secured by conciliatory appeals or mediatory processes. Life was sacred; liberty was the condition that made courage, generosity, solidarity, and political companionship possible; and property was a gift of God closely associated with life and liberty.<sup>33</sup> To strengthen his claim that life and liberty were natural rights carried out of the state of nature in the human psyche, Locke took a strikingly modern – and decidedly *moderate* – approach to property rights. But Locke did this so adroitly that only the historian John Dunn, in 1969, and the University of Chicago economic theorist Richard Epstein, in 1985, noticed its importance.

Epstein contends that Locke hastily blundered when he neglected to construct a common law defense of property and instead simply called the right to possess property a gift of God.<sup>34</sup> But Locke anticipated this criticism. Locke's implicit placement of property as close to, but just below, life and liberty was intentional, and it represented, along with his Baconian empiricism, a major concession to historic moderation.

Locke concluded that property could not, in the nature of things, have been given quite the same degree of security as life and liberty – and he showed that benefits flowed from that conundrum. The human community as a whole, he cautioned, retained an interest in the property of the fortunate few. What legitimate owners of property conceded to the

<sup>33</sup> Lee Ward, *The Politics of Liberty in England and Revolutionary America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 213–225.

<sup>34</sup> Richard A. Epstein, *Takings: Private Property and the Power of Eminent Domain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 9–15. Epstein scrupulously conceded that the Anti-Takings movement in the United States (which his book instigated) would have to make the best use it could of Locke's flawed theory of property. Jennifer Nedelsky, *Private Property and the Limits of American Constitutionalism: The Madisonian Framework and Its Legacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 323, explains that "Epstein is unusual among the advocates of returning property to its status as a boundary to state power in not basing his approach on property's 'thing like quality.'" In conceiving of property as embedded in consciousness, Epstein follows Jefferson's lead in equating "pursuit of happiness" with "property."

interests of the community was, in Locke's estimation, infinitesimal; however, the reality of property as *palpably individual and libertarian but also subtly and implicitly communitarian* pervaded in positive ways the outlook and psyche of individual property holders. Anticipating modernity, here as in other areas of thought, Locke recognized and welcomed a creative tension – a trade-off – between the minimal costs of associating property with enterprise and the modern expectation for property owners and potential property owners that they are citizens of a beneficent state.<sup>35</sup>

Locke not only believed that God sanctioned property rights so that risk-taking innovators would receive their just rewards and that everyone would benefit from the taming of the environment and sharing the benefits of civil society, but furthermore that

God gave the world to men in common, but since he gave it to them for their benefit and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable of drawing from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational, ... not to the fancy and covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious.<sup>36</sup>

The *quarrelsome* and *contentious* included latecomers to husbandry and prosperity who had no just reason to complain or to sow social divisions and political strife. But by the same token, the *industrious* and *rational* acquired a responsibility to live under, participate in, and uphold the very government on which the protection of their property depended. Once becoming a property owner, there was no going back to a state of nature, no reverting to savage pursuit of wealth or power. Lockean constitutionalism was strewn with reminders of civic responsibility and the moral imperative of self-discipline.

On issues requiring courage, Locke could be radical. His behind-the-scenes leadership of the Exclusion movement required courage. His presumption in telling monarchs that they were bound by a contract with their subjects was radical. And his far-reaching advocacy of religious toleration was so radical that he initially published it anonymously in Holland.<sup>37</sup> Characteristically, when he spoke of his own religious beliefs,

<sup>35</sup> John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 212.

<sup>36</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Peter Laslett, ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 309. Cf. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, pp. 51–53.

<sup>37</sup> John Horton and Susan Mendus, eds., *John Locke: A Letter Concerning Toleration in Focus* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 1–3.

Locke did so as a religious moderate. "God has endowed us with various faculties for the formation of belief," Locke explained in his treatise *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff reminds us that Locke's idea of religious beliefs involved not just any beliefs but rather beliefs that are "true." Beliefs that are true, Wolterstorff stipulates, "do not operate deterministically" – that is, they do not threaten anyone's intellectual freedom. Like the source of all truth, these beliefs simply *are*. For Locke, the philosopher of liberty, religious beliefs could be "governed" or "regulated" by "habits" that were "self-tutored and socially tutored." They can take the heat of human inquiry. Religious faith may not be a Lockean objective reality, but the testing or "regulation" of faith through rational discussion, through comparison of natural and supernatural phenomena, and ethically through self-conscious civic behavior were all processes that bathed faith in objective reality. That process of bathing belief in rational discussion was what Locke meant by "the reasonableness of Christianity."<sup>38</sup>

By *reasonableness* Locke meant that Christianity had become imbued with historic moderation. To be sure, both Locke's radical belief in religious toleration and his moderate belief in the "reasonableness of Christianity" were more than a century ahead of their time. He juxtaposed radical and moderate ideas in a traditional moderate fashion but put an immoderately sharp edge on his mixture of radical thought and moderate belief.

So, if Locke was more than a moderate, he was nonetheless appreciative of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century political moderation at several levels. He appreciated custom as a force countervailing royal prescription; he valued empiricism as a method of determining what was truly customary; he respected conciliation and mediation but knew they were inadequate political defenses against absolutism and must therefore be supplanted with natural rights to life and liberty; he concluded that a divinely granted right to possess and enjoy property rewarded initiative and diligence and created incentives for civic-minded support of legitimately constituted authority; and he confessed his belief in a Christian gospel that was, at heart, reasonable, open to scrutiny, and a divinely ordained model for moderate political discourse.

<sup>38</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. xvii–xix, 180, 218–219, 225–226; Richard Ashcraft, "Faith and Knowledge in Locke's Philosophy," in John W. Yolton, ed., *John Locke: Problems and Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 194–223; John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, I. T. Ramsey, ed. (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1958), pp. 75–77.

Even as Locke's ideas caught the attention of rising political and social leaders in eighteenth-century British colonial America,<sup>39</sup> large pieces of historic moderation, circulating in the Atlantic world, found safe harbor there.

<sup>39</sup> John Dunn, "The Politics of Locke in England and America," in Yolton, ed., *John Locke: Problems and Perspectives*, pp. 57–67; Jerome Huyler, *Locke in America: The Moral Philosophy of the Founding Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), pp. 192–204.

## Epilogue

### Moderate Liberalism in Post-Civil War America

The English race has long and successfully studied the art of curbing executive power to the constant neglect of perfecting executive methods. It has exercised itself much more in controlling than in energizing government. It has been more concerned to render government just and moderate than to make it facile, well-ordered, and effective.

Woodrow Wilson, "The Study of Administration," 1886

Moderate liberalism was a mid-nineteenth-century development in American political thought, occurring in scattered places in the South and flourishing in the North and Middle West.<sup>1</sup> Inspired by German political thought, moderate liberalism appealed to the middle class in urban denominational Protestant churches. Nineteenth-century German philosophers and German immigrants to America refurbished the Scottish moral thought of the Revolutionary era.

The most prominent and fully developed cluster of ideas about how constitutionalism and philosophy moderated entire societies available to Lincoln's generation was Adam Smith's moral philosophy and political economy enunciated in *A Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1754) and *Enquiry*

*The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Arthur S. Link, ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), vol. 5, p. 367.

<sup>1</sup> John W. Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998); Leo P. Hirrel, *Children of Wrath: New School Calvinism and Antebellum Reform* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998); and Charles R. Mack and Henry H. Lesesne, eds., *Francis Lieber and the Culture of the Mind* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 11-29.

into the *Wealth of Nations* (1776). In *Moral Sentiments*, Smith discussed persuasion, self-interest, and the public good, and in *Wealth of Nations* he depicted a market-driven society as a place teeming with humane inquiry and constructive possibility: "If you would implant public virtue into the breast of him who seems heedless to the interest [i.e., well-being] of his country, it would often be of no purpose to tell him what superior advantages the subjects of a well governed state enjoy." Human beings, Smith taught, did not cling to a vertical great chain of being from which only a fortunate and virtuous few near the top enjoyed vision and wisdom while most of humankind were too close to the raw struggle for survival to care whether they lived in a well-ordered state or were fortunate enough to have civic interests as well as personal ambitions.

Instead, Smith concluded from his lifelong study of the mind and conscience, human beings entered life hard-wired to be simultaneously benevolent and ambitious:

You will be more likely to persuade [others] if you describe the great system of public policy which procures these advantages, . . . the connections and dependencies of its several parts, their mutual subordination to each other, and their subservience to the happiness of society.<sup>2</sup>

Smith assumed that readers of *Wealth of Nations* would already be familiar with *Moral Sentiments* and would grasp the complementarity of the two works as he turned to his third great project, his *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (which lay undiscovered in manuscript until 1957 and unpublished until 1978). The entire body of Smith's work contended that if benevolence was intrinsic to human consciousness, then self-interest was, for the most part, a virtuous faculty before it was a learned behavior. As an ethicist, even more than as an economic prophet, Smith posited that an intuitive appreciation of the needs of society moderated the acquisitive appetites fueling marketplace behavior.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Jerry Z. Muller, *Adam Smith in His Time and Ours* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 55-56.

<sup>3</sup> Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 12-66. See also Dierdre N. McCloskey, *The Bourgeois Virtues: Ethics for an Age of Enterprise* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 407, 414: "If Smith had been a modern econometrician, he would have put it as follows. Take any sort of willed behavior you wish to understand - brooding on a vote, for example, or birthing children, or buying lunch, or adapting the Bessemer process to the making of steel. Call it *B*. Brooding, buying, borrowing, birthing, bequeathing, bonding, boasting, blessing, bidding, bartering, bargaining, baptizing, banking, baking. It can be put on a scale and measured; or perhaps will be seen to be present or absent. You want to give an account of *B*, a little story



In contrast with their embrace of the Scottish Common Sense writings of Francis Hutcheson and Thomas Reid, Americans were slow to notice Adam Smith and were even slower to consider Smith's moral philosophy and his political economy as an integrated whole.<sup>4</sup> Instead, it was intellectuals in Prussia and other German states – who had also been impressed with the Scottish Enlightenment and were intent on reforming their societies in the aftermath of Napoleon's invasions – for whom Smith's paradoxical views on self-interest and benevolence caught on in the early nineteenth century. As early as 1801, when he began teaching in Jena, and then in 1817–1820 in Heidelberg and Berlin, Georg Frederick Hegel taught Scottish political economy, emphasizing that the marketplace tamed and humanized human nature by expanding freedom. “For Hegel and the Scots,” historian Norbert Wazsek explains, “the socio-economic model of universal interdependence and exchange implie[d] . . . that *labor is free*.” By placing a dynamic marketplace at the center of society, Hegel prophesied that enlightened governments in the modern world could realize the Greek humanist ideal of society as a place where men felt “at home.”<sup>5</sup>

Dynamic, however, did not mean unfettered. Both Smith and Hegel believed that governments would have to intervene to counteract individuals and groups who attempted mischief in the marketplace or threatened to corrupt the commercial and financial institutions on which free enterprise depended.<sup>6</sup> By the 1840s, when thousands of middle-class Germans emigrated to the United States, the Scottish enlightenment had become thoroughly absorbed into German liberalism that they brought with them and that carried some of them into the Republican Party and many others into the reformist faction of the northern Democratic Party.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> about what causes it to happen. . . . What the hard men from Machiavelli to Judge Posner are claiming is that you can explain *B* only with Prudence Only [“self-interest” as opposed to “Solidarity”] the *P* variables of price, pleasure, payment, pocketbook, purpose, planning, property, profit, prediction, punishment, prison, purchasing, power, practice, in a word, the Profane.” McCloskey confirms my interpretation of political moderation with great subtlety and insight. Her terminology of Prudence and Solidarity dovetails with Prudential and Principled moderation.

<sup>5</sup> See John E. Crowley, *The Privileges of Independence: Neomercantilism and the American Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 70–71, 77–80, 85, 89–91, 92–93, 162–163.

<sup>6</sup> Norbert Wazsek, *The Scottish Enlightenment and Hegel's Account of “Civil Society”* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), p. 161.

<sup>7</sup> Jerry Z. Muller, *The Mind and the Markets: Capitalism in Modern European Thought* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), ch. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Carl F. Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution: The German Forty-eighters in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952). Facilitating the appeal of German

The major spokesmen for German liberalism in America were Francis Lieber and Carl Schurz. Both came to America as political refugees, Lieber in 1826 and Schurz after the failed Revolution of 1848. Lieber had been a student and protégé of the renowned historian Barthold Georg Niebuhr, as had Schurz's academic and political mentor, Gottfried Kinkel.

After his flight to America, Lieber taught at South Carolina College from 1835 to 1856 (where he suppressed his own opposition to slavery) and for the remainder of his life at Columbia University where he championed antislavery nationalism.<sup>8</sup> In his influential *Essays on Property and Labour*, Lieber, citing Adam Smith, contrasted the expansion of wealth in vibrant market economies in Britain and the United States with economic stagnation in India where princely palaces had hoards of “unproductive treasures.”<sup>9</sup>

As an exile of the Revolution of 1848, Schurz, once he settled in America in the 1850s, plunged into reform politics. He was instrumental in making Illinois Germans a critical element of Lincoln's 1860 plurality in his home state.<sup>10</sup> For his part, Lieber was part theorist, part popularizer of the liberalism that had come first out of Scotland and then from German-speaking Europe; Schurz, in contrast, was its promoter and political tactician, in the 1860s and '70s as a Liberal Republican and in the 1880s and '90s as a Mugwump Democrat. “Your strength with the people,” he wrote to President-elect Grover Cleveland in December 1884, “consists in your character and reputation as a reformer, that is to say, as a man whose honest purpose is to put the administrative part of the government upon a sound business basis. This is what the best part of the American people expect you will do.” Schurz saw gilded age politics as a marketplace of middle-class reform – tariff reduction, civil service

liberalism was the movement among middle-class Protestants toward professionalism in their careers and more self-centered and less communally virtuous ambition and social consciousness. See Wilson Smith, *Professors and Public Ethics: Studies of Northern Moral Philosophers before the Civil War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956), ch. 9; and Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), ch. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Friedel, *Francis Lieber: Nineteenth-Century Liberal* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1947), and Mack and Lesesne, *Francis Lieber*, pp. 103–126; on Lieber and slavery, see Phillip S. Paludan, *Covenant with Death: The Constitution, Law, and Equality in the Civil War Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), pp. 61–108, 281.

<sup>9</sup> Francis Lieber, *Essays on Property and Labour* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1841), p. 219, n.

<sup>10</sup> Hans L. Trefousse, *Carl Schurz: A Biography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), pp. 92–94.



reform, sound money, and anti-imperialism – causes in which “honest” political leaders acted on virtuous principles, on electoral self-interest, and on the rising expectations of an expanding and productive society.<sup>11</sup>

Invoking Adam Smith, Schurz held aloft social virtue, economic acquisitiveness, and political ambition as interlocking civic habits and values. In a public lecture on Benjamin Franklin delivered to several large audiences in 1884 and 1885, he correctly pinpointed 1775 as Franklin’s moment of truth. On January 29, 1774, members of the House of Lords had jammed into the meeting room of the Privy Council known as “The Cock Pit” to witness a “Bull-baiting,” the ritual humiliation of Benjamin Franklin – then Massachusetts Agent in London – by Alexander Wedderburne, the king’s solicitor general in retaliation for Franklin’s conveying a Massachusetts petition condemning Governor Thomas Hutchinson. Wedderburne’s tirade terminated Franklin’s long career as a British imperialist. Schurz accurately surmised that Franklin’s good standing with David Hume and Adam Smith salvaged his reputation among British enlightenment writers and served as a springboard for Franklin’s return to America as a formidable foe of the ministry’s disastrous American policy. Schurz surmised accurately that Franklin’s humiliation represented an ethical link between where Franklin had been as an enlightened imperialist and where he was going as an aroused revolutionary nationalist.<sup>12</sup>

In Schurz’s telling, Wedderburne was a voice of the past, whereas Franklin’s friend, Adam Smith, was a voice of the future. That historic connection between practical intellectuality and political acumen was what Schurz wanted Americans to hold in their civic consciousness on the eve of the Cleveland presidency, just as the Revolutionary generation had done 110 years earlier.

Schurz’s celebration of Grover Cleveland as a moderate liberal political reformer occurred at the climax of the nineteenth-century history of political moderation in America. By the 1890s and early twentieth

<sup>11</sup> Frederic Bancroft, ed., *Speeches, Correspondence, and Political Papers of Carl Schurz* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1913), vol. 4, p. 399.

<sup>12</sup> Schurz, “Benjamin Franklin,” in *ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 330; Robert Kelley, *The Transatlantic Persuasion: The Liberal-Democratic Mind in the Age of Gladstone* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 301, 306, 317, 328, 344. On Adam Smith and Franklin’s reputation, see “Extract of a Letter from London,” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, William B. Willcox, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), vol. 21, pp. 112–115. Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), p. 151, supports this scenario.

century, when liberal reformers brought the full force of their moderate and humanitarian heritage to bear on the excesses and polarization of the gilded age, a more democratic and assertive liberalism arose. Political reformers became less reflective, less attuned to the history of ideas. Presiding over this transition in moderate politics was a cluster of moderate advocates educated in the earlier era and attaining professional prominence by the turn of the century, most notable among them the Princeton political scientist and public intellectual Woodrow Wilson. But as Wilson himself came to realize by the second full year of his presidency, in 1914 he had to choose between moderation and progressivism, terms that were no longer synonymous.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Nancy Cohen, *The Reconstruction of American Liberalism, 1865–1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), chs. 6 and 7. See especially her account of the revival of liberal moderation on the editorial pages of the *Chicago Tribune*, pp. 38–43. Wilsonian liberalism, from 1879 through the first year of his presidency in 1913, was both a harbinger of twentieth-century progressivism and a refurbishing of the moderate tradition of Burke, Madison, and Lincoln. See Foley and Calhoun, “Woodrow Wilson and Political Moderation.”

## Conclusions

### MODERATES AND CENTRISTS

American men and women gravitated toward the moral center of politics to acknowledge their humility in the face of the past.<sup>1</sup> Moderates did not presume the center of political opinion to be a precise place on a spectrum of belief. Instead, they estimated that a middle range of political choices, between manifestly antagonistic polarities, accorded with their experience and was recommended by tradition. Their preference for middle ground made them centrists; their humility and appreciation of paradox made them moderates.

Disjunction between centrism and moderation is as old as moderation itself. Thucydides, in the fourth century B.C., lamented the tendency, during a long and bitter war, to thrust forward into central prominence recklessness and senseless rage and to pull prudent hesitation, thoughtful circumspection, and moderation back into the shadows of tarnished civic conduct. Thomas Aquinas, in the thirteenth century, warned that any attempt to locate ethical middle ground would become an opportunity for sin. Extremes of crudeness and sophistication, the great medieval

<sup>1</sup> Of the two heroes of Watergate who took responsibility for their actions and sought to cleanse the political system of evils in which they had been complicit, Egil Krogh acted as a moderate and John Dean as a centrist. Krogh writes of standing with his family at the restored House of Burgesses, pondering "the founding ideals of America" as his moment of decision; Dean writes of extricating himself and the nation from a moral morass through "strategy, . . . what I was good at." Krogh, *Integrity* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2007), pp. 129–130, and Dean, *Blind Ambition* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), pp. 194, 301. See also Calhoun, "Watergate and American Conservatism," pp. 136–137.

interpreter of Aristotle sternly declared, would be irresistibly seductive and, therefore, moderate ethics would be tainted by proximity to opposing forms of vice. Even Montaigne, the sixteenth-century Renaissance humanist who rescued moderation from oblivion and restored it to an honored place in European political thought, suspected that, in his time, a moderate political identity, inculcated by older "habits of independence and self-definition," might be inconsistent with allegiance to a monarch. For that reason he refined moderate politics to mean "submission" based on "free individual choice, . . . a servitude that would preserve human dignity."<sup>2</sup> Even for Montaigne, the line between centrist positioning and a clear moderate conscience could be tissue-thin.

Moderation (as a moral compass) nonetheless intellectually overshadowed centrism (a useful tactic). The new professional elites in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world needed to speak and write authentically to colleagues and clients about political constraint. Irish and Scottish men and women of letters were among the most venturesome British moderates.<sup>3</sup> The aspiring Edinburgh literati of the eighteenth century were, according to historian Richard B. Sher, "tolerant conservatives," liberal on intellectual freedom, religious tolerance, politeness, learning, and rationality as cultural imperatives but also conservative on questions of law, social order, and church governance.<sup>4</sup> Irish Protestants were not republican in the sense of rejecting monarchy or hereditary privilege, and yet their hard-won appreciation of Irish economic and religious grievances elicited from them searing criticism of English mercantilism and sweeping vindications of religious and civil liberty. The Anglo-Irish politician Edmund Burke founded British conservatism on twin foundations of respect for the organic nature of society and utter contempt for aristocratic and bureaucratic arrogance, mendacity, and corruption—a moderate polarity of the first order. Guided by these traditions, Scottish and Irish colonial figures in America such as Arthur Dobbs, Frances Alison, John Witherspoon, Charles Carroll, and the early American Burkes—Aedanus and Thomas—gravitated toward the moral center of American politics and significantly moderated pre-Revolutionary protest and Revolutionary statecraft. Similarly,

<sup>2</sup> Quint, *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy*, pp. 102, 107–108.

<sup>3</sup> Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 101–103, 470–472.

<sup>4</sup> Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 262.

the children and grandchildren of Huguenot refugees such as Francis Fauquier, William Wragg, Henry and John Laurens, and John Jay never forgot the arbitrary injustice of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes or the moral value of comity and reciprocity.

#### ORDERED LIBERTY

Between October 24 and December 24, 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville and his companion, Gustave de Beaumont, traveled from Pittsburgh to Memphis – skirting the northern and western edges of the Southern backcountry. In the Ohio Valley, which was a permeable boundary between the backcountry and the Middle West, they met Whig politicians and men of letters Salmon Chase, John McLean, and Daniel Drake, from whom Tocqueville drew the firm conclusion that “one thing is incontrovertibly demonstrated by America which I doubted until now: it is that the middle classes can govern a state. . . . In spite of their petty passions; their incomplete education, their vulgarity, they can demonstrably supply practical intelligence, and that is enough.”<sup>5</sup> Moderate Whigs were not the only people who impressed Tocqueville, but the moderation of men such as Chase (Lincoln’s Secretary of the Treasury and rival for the presidency), McLean (appointed to the Supreme Court by John Quincy Adams), and Drake (celebrated Cincinnati author and physician) helped to convince the great French political commentator that the American Revolution had produced “a mature and considered taste for liberty” rather than “a vague and indefinite instinct for independence.”<sup>6</sup> It was an acquired taste and a chosen attachment.

Where did ordered liberty – in Tocqueville’s terms, liberty that was “mature” and “considered” – originate? Montaigne said it came from conversation, “talking things out,” and therefore moderates were people patient and skilled in conversation.<sup>7</sup> Tocqueville heard too much shouting in Jacksonian America and too much conspiratorial whispering in post-Revolutionary France to believe that Americans or the French were moderates in *that* sense. Instead, Tocqueville found Americans to

<sup>5</sup> Hugh Brogan, *Alexis de Tocqueville: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 198–204.

<sup>6</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, as quoted by Christopher Caldwell in the *New York Times Book Review*, July 8, 2007, p. 18. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, eds., *Democracy in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 67, have Tocqueville speak of “a mature and reflective taste for freedom.”

<sup>7</sup> Quint, *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy*, pp. 108–122.

be religiously grounded moderates because their democratic political culture and their Protestant heritage mirrored the manifest structure of the moral cosmos:

Providence has not created mankind entirely independent or completely enslaved. In truth, Providence has traced a circle around each man beyond which he cannot pass; but within its vast limits each man is powerful and free, and so are peoples.<sup>8</sup>

By “Providence,” Tocqueville did not mean miraculous displays of divine assistance; rather, he understood Providence to be a human conceit about God resembling *fortuna*, or “unlegitimated contingency” in Machiavellian theory<sup>9</sup> – all of those circumstances that even virtuous and conscientious rulers and subjects cannot control. Providence was not so much the will of God as it was an implicit assumption that, if there were a God, then there would be veiled limits on the exercise of human freedom. Religion among Americans, Tocqueville emphasized, “never mixes directly in the government of society. Religion . . . should [however] be considered as the first of their political institutions, for if it does not give them the taste for freedom, it singularly facilitates their use of it.”<sup>10</sup>

As this book has argued, that analysis of religion and politics did not originate with Tocqueville; a century of Atlantic-world cultural impulses, from the Glorious Revolution to the Constitution, impressed that conventional wisdom on Americans. The spontaneous facilitation of freedom attached citizens to each other and to their political institutions; it drove, and at the same time moderated, their democratic politics.

#### STATECRAFT

The reemergence of moderate political discourse during the early modern period tracked closely with the sixteenth-century transformation of governance. Weak monarchies gave way to robust “new” monarchies in which royal justice created a bond between the people and their monarch and in which royal tax revenues endowed the Crown with the resources to conduct foreign policy and to regulate the economy. The new monarchs surrounded themselves with humanist scholars knowledgeable about recently recovered Greek and Roman classics that preserved

<sup>8</sup> Sheldon Wolin, *Tocqueville between Two Worlds: The Making of a Political and Theoretical Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 184.

<sup>9</sup> J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 156.

<sup>10</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, in Mansfield and Winthrop, p. 280.

ancient knowledge of history, logic, metaphysics, natural science, mathematics, oratory, and political theory. Statecraft was the application of such knowledge to the effective exercise of power and the building of stable regimes. Quintessentially moderate, statecraft derived from the past, it carefully matched ends against means, and it understood the management of the state as the husbandry of limited resources and exploitation of favorable opportunities that might not soon recur.

Statecraft presumed that political societies had their own constitutions – sometimes written in historic documents but always implicitly understood. Early American politics abounded in negotiated constitutional arrangements, and moderates cherished insights embodied in constitutional development. William Samuel Johnson of Connecticut was perhaps the most discerning of the moderate students of statecraft in the Revolutionary era. The son of the Reverend Samuel Johnson, leader of colonial Anglicans in the mid-eighteenth century, William Samuel was a lawyer, colonial legislator, and, from 1767 to 1771, the agent (paid lobbyist) for Connecticut in London during the tense circumstances of the Townshend duties crisis. A well-informed and principled critic of British colonial policy and political ally of the leading Connecticut Whigs, Johnson agonized in 1775 over the looming imperial crisis. Reluctantly, in 1776, he declined to support the Revolution. In 1779, however, he appeared before the Connecticut Council of Safety – composed of four old friends and nine strangers who were newcomers to political power. The changing political scene had a sobering affect. Pressed to declare his allegiance to the Revolutionary regime, he took just two weeks to comply, implicitly conceding that three years of political responsibility had earned the new regime in Connecticut, and the American states as a whole, a decisive degree of legitimacy. Welcomed back into political power, Johnson represented Connecticut in the Constitutional Convention of 1787 because both nationalists and states rights factions considered him trustworthy.

He trod cautiously in Philadelphia. His brief, unadorned remarks on June 29 marked the adoption the Great Compromise (the House and Senate, the origination of money bills in the House, the three-fifths clause, and the decennial census).<sup>11</sup> That package of provisions, Johnson declared, had merged two seemingly incompatible ideas: the nascent nationalism of the Revolutionary regime and the stubborn existence of “interests” peculiar to each state. “On the whole, I think that . . . in some respects the states are to be considered in their political capacity and in others as districts of individual citizens.” Those two conceptions, “instead of being

opposed, ought to be combined,” Johnson entreated the Convention, because otherwise “the controversy must be endless whilst gentlemen differ in the grounds of their arguments.”<sup>11</sup>

William Samuel Johnson thus delivered a short moderate benediction on the adoption of the Great Compromise. Until that moment, the delegates had sought to put into constitutional language what they knew; thereafter, they would clothe the federal paradox of nationality and statehood, held in creative tension, with the spare language of implication. None of the issues still needing their attention – runaway slaves, the slave trade, the electoral college, federal supremacy, not even the poetically concise impairment of contract clause – was settled in attractive language. But Johnson’s quiet celebration of the statecraft of compromise nonetheless speeded the drafting of the Constitution toward completion.

#### COMITY

Of the four types of political moderation that had emerged between 1572 and 1680 – *conciliation, custom, mediation, and love* – Custom had the longest run. Customary moderation specified tradition and precedent as limits on the power of the Crown and ascribed to Parliament and common law courts the authority to say what was customary and what was not.

In 1877, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Munn v. Illinois* that states could regulate the operation of grain elevators. Writing for the majority, Chief Justice Morrison R. Waite invoked an opinion by the seventeenth-century English jurist Matthew Hale – a Baconian customary moderate – that private warehouses, licensed by the King, ceased to be strictly private businesses and were “affected by a public interest.” Accordingly, the owners of such facilities could only charge tolls that were “reasonable” because, as Justice Waite later interpreted Hale’s jurisprudence, “the privilege or prerogative of the King” in licensing port facilities was “for the protection of the people and the promotion of the general welfare.”<sup>12</sup> Waite’s opinion in *Munn* not only upheld the Granger laws protecting farmers from extortionate charges by the distributors of wheat,

<sup>11</sup> Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911), vol. 1, pp. 461–462; Elizabeth P. McCaughey, *From Loyalist to Founding Father: The Political Odyssey of William Samuel Johnson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 211.

<sup>12</sup> *Supreme Court Reporter*: 4 Otto at 113.

barley, and corn. In declaring that the public interest and general welfare bound rulers and subjects together, Hale in the seventeenth century and Waite in the nineteenth echoed Edmund Grindal's protégé, Thomas Becon, who had declared in 1542 that a properly governed country was a providential gift to its people. "Our country," Becon memorably declared, employing an apt agricultural metaphor, "soweth into the fields of our breasts [such] precious seeds as . . . honest behavior, affability, comity."<sup>13</sup>

Francis Bacon, the great Elizabethan expositor of customary moderation, taught that the fashioning of a polity based on shared responsibility for the public good took precedence over facilitating the talents and achievements of individuals and over the gratifications and costs of civil society. "For Bacon," explains Finnish historian, Markku Peltonen,

it was foolish to claim that obtaining "all we can wish to ourselves in proper fortune" rendered us happier than even failing "in good and virtuous ends for the public" – let alone succeeding in promoting the common good. True felicity consisted rather of "the conscience of good intentions, howsoever succeeding" than of "all the provision we can make for security and repose."<sup>14</sup>

Happiness was thus attained, in Bacon's political philosophy, as it would be in Jefferson's pursuit of happiness, through reciprocity and moderate ethical discipline.

Bacon was not given to ornamental prose,<sup>15</sup> but he would have concurred with Bishop Joseph Hall's description in 1640 of moderation as "the silken string running through the pearl-chain of all virtues."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> "Comity," in *Oxford English Dictionary*; Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Thomas Becon and the Reformation of the Church in England* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1952), pp. 118–119.

<sup>14</sup> Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 142.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Hall, *Of Christian Moderation* (London, 1640), p. 6.