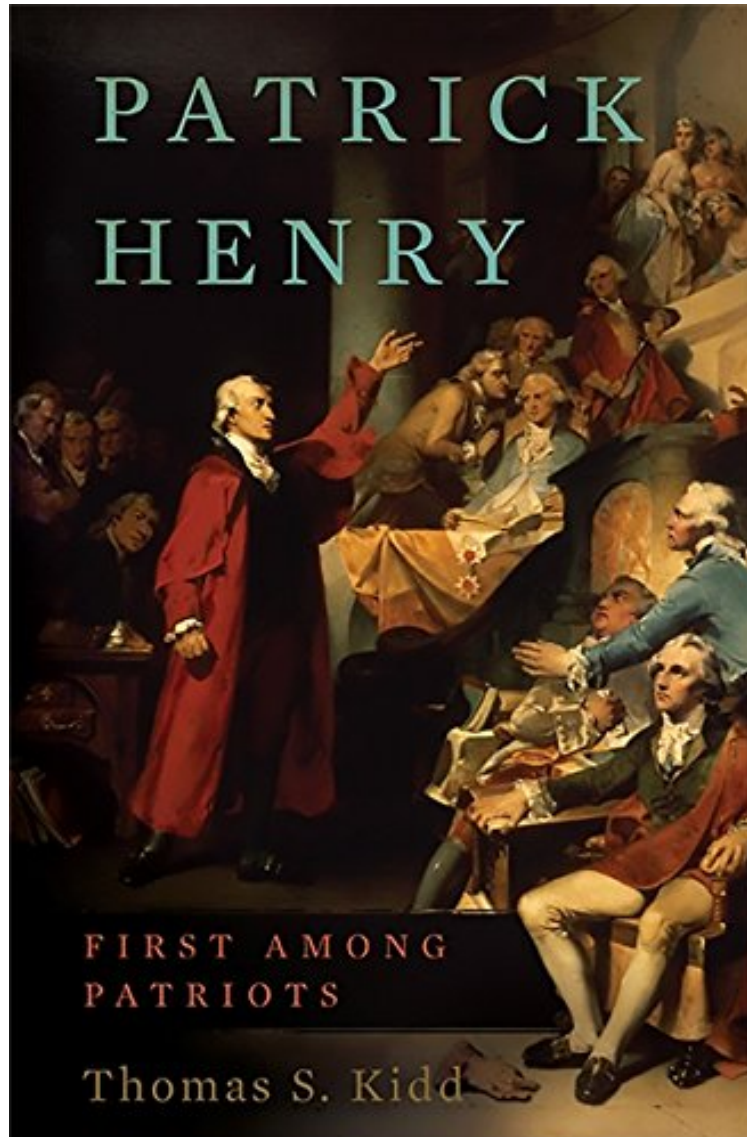


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Patrick Henry: First Among Patriots

Thomas S. Kidd

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Thomas S. Kidd : Patrick Henry: First Among Patriots before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Patrick Henry: First Among Patriots:

24 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Most Underrated Founding Father?By CustomerPatrick Henry was devoted to liberty, patriotism, and public moral virtue. These three threads are important to understanding his life and impact.In First Among Patriots, Thomas Kidd examines the man known as the "Voice of the American Revolution." Most Americans know Henry only for his "Give me liberty" speech. Many, through history and in

contemporary culture, try to claim him as a patron saint for their own political positions. Henry, however, is much more than any popular conception. A native of what was then the "back-woods" region of Virginia, Henry achieved prominence as a lawyer and eventually as a representative in the colonial legislature. It was there that his oratorical skills would help rouse the nation to the cause of Independence. Considered a radical by some, a patriot by others, Henry would become a controversial figure in both Virginia and national politics. He would serve as the state's war-time governor and repeatedly in the state legislature. His legendary oratorical skills were not matched by political aptitude, and he often grew impatient with extended deliberation. This was to his detriment - on more than one occasion, he would lose a battle he thought already won. Henry's passion for liberty would rouse a nation to independence. His passion for limited government would pit him against the architects of the new American government. It was his role as a leader of the anti-Federalists, those who opposed the adoption of the Constitution, that earned him the animosity of many of the founding fathers and his former friends. Kidd makes note of the influence of faith in Henry's life. Much of his thinking, including his views on an established church, was shaped by a firm belief in the necessity of public morality to the stability of a nation. Siding against his one-time friend Thomas Jefferson and the Baptists of Virginia, he believed that the government should encourage morality through support of churches. The author notes that Henry believed the government should promote morality. "Two primary ways of doing this were punishing immorality under the law, and encouraging morality through churches and schools." He continues, "Jefferson and Madison cooperated with many evangelical dissenters, especially Baptists, in arguing that religion would survive, and even thrive, on a purely voluntary basis." Henry was no saint. His flaws include inconsistency on the issue of slavery, a tendency to bend principle for the sake of profit, and occasional lapses in his characteristic frugality are evident. Kidd highlights these, but frames them charitably in their proper context. I found this book enjoyable to read. It provides a more accurate portrait of the man I consider one of the most underrated of the founding fathers. The author strikes a proper balance between the subject and the historical setting without getting either out of focus. He gives insight into an important period of our history through the life of a man who was "first among patriots."

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Give me liberty not debt By Cabin Dweller "Fierce winds and roaring thunder forced him to conclude his speech. Frightened members scurried to take cover. For Henry's biographer William Wirt, the 'spirits whom he had called, seemed to have come at his bidding.' Angels or not, Henry failed to stop ratification. The convention voted the next day to approve the Constitution, 89-79." So it was that Patrick Henry was "vastly overpowered by the deep reasoning of our glorious little [James] Madison." James Madison, Edmund Pendleton, Thomas Jefferson as of 1780, Alexander Hamilton, atheistic Frenchmen and just about all the rest of those 89 ye-h voters were Henry's nemeses among many. Thomas Kidd shows Henry as brash and confrontational, not a surprise to any reader who's heard not only of "give me liberty or give my death" but of his wife in chains at the time of that oration. Kidd also shows the Patrick Henry who opposed the Constitution for its concentration of federal power and its lean away from religion, Henry being one to support freedom "of" religion much more so than freedom "from" religion. The question I would still have: who were the 79 voting against the Constitution and making its legacy not, at the time, such a sure thing? (George Mason and James Monroe, also much less revered and men of ideas more than action.) What disqualifies Henry from the top rank of Founding Fathers is not his opposition to the Constitution. In business, Henry did not accomplish enough to fill up one chapter. In military matters, all accounts agree this was simply not his forte. Although to his credit he was something of a self-made man, his one niche in Colonial era government was protest of centralized and tyrannical power, be it British or presidential. It makes no sense for someone today to disqualify a Tea Party candidate from government because of that candidate's stance against the wielding of government interference and programs, but Henry in the 1780s and 1790s functioned from the outside looking in without outlining how a political figure such as himself could be a silent partner to democratic pockets run by states.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An interesting and well written book about a man whose ... By Astrea Jones An interesting and well written book about a man whose name is well known, but who is often thought of only in relation to his famous "give me liberty or give me death" speech. Patrick Henry was a man of strongly held convictions and oratory skill able to inspire others and dedicated to his idea of liberty. Although he was an integral part of our country's struggle for freedom from the British, he strongly opposed the system of government proposed by former friends James Madison and Thomas Jefferson. He believed we were only trading the tyranny of a king for the tyranny of a president. Was he right?

Most Americans know Patrick Henry as a fiery speaker whose pronouncement "Give me liberty or give me death!" rallied American defiance to the British Crown. But Henry's skills as an orator—sharpened in the small towns and courtrooms of colonial Virginia—are only one part of his vast, but largely forgotten, legacy. As historian Thomas S. Kidd shows, Henry cherished a vision of America as a virtuous republic with a clearly circumscribed central government. These ideals brought him into bitter conflict with other Founders and were crystallized in his vociferous opposition to the U.S. Constitution. In Patrick Henry, Kidd pulls back the curtain on one of our most radical, passionate Founders, showing that until we understand Henry himself, we will neglect many of the Revolution's animating values.

Richard Beeman, John Welsh Centennial Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania, and author of *Plain, Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution* “Thomas Kidd's account of the life of Patrick Henry combines first-rate scholarship with a lively and elegant gift for story-telling. It makes a powerful case for the Virginia orator's pre-eminent role in the fight to limit central government power during the era of the Revolution and early republic.”