



Revised History

A Different View of the Constitution

By Al Benson July 9, 2020

This is sort of a synopsis of an article I did for another blog several years ago. The thought about doing this came to me about five o'clock this morning. Often I am awake at that time of morning and often I say my first prayers for the day at that time.

Years ago, when I first became involved in conservative and patriotic endeavors I had a good friend and sometimes mentor, Pastor Ennio Cugini, of the Clayville Assembly (church) in North Scituate, Rhode Island, half a country and a whole culture away from where I live now. Pastor Cugini had a radio broadcast, *The Victory Hour*, which he used vigorously to expose the machinations of communists and socialists both in government and in the churches. He was an avid student of history.

I remember talking with him on the phone one time, way back in 1980. I was living in Indiana at the time. Pastor Cugini was telling me about a book he had just read, *Patrick Henry—Patriot and Statesman* by Norinne Dickson Campbell, published all the way back in 1969. It was a biography of Patrick Henry, and toward the end of the book, on page 322, she started to delve into Mr. Henry's views on the U.S Constitution and why he was such an ardent foe of the ratification of that document in Virginia. That fact alone startled me because none of the "history" books I had ever read bothered to mention that. Nowadays I am not surprised, but then I was. In fact the history books never said much about Patrick Henry, himself, for that matter. All you ever got about him were excerpts from his "Give me liberty or give me death" speech, and after that he was pretty much dropped from the historical narrative. After hunting around a finding a copy of Miss Campbell's book—the last one the bookstore had—I can understand why. Patrick Henry was politically incorrect!

Pastor Cugini said something I have never forgotten. He said that, while most conservatives wish we could just get back to following the Constitution, he had concluded, from Henry's comments that "The Constitution is the problem." Miss Campbell's book gives a lot of Henry's reasons for his opposition to it, as he put them forth in Virginia in his opposition to ratification.

Henry was downright prescient in his predictions as to what would happen to this country if the Constitution was ratified. One of his most prophetic statements was that the union that was cobbled together by the Constitution would not last 100 years. He was right on—it didn't. It didn't last ninety years before the War of Northern Aggression followed.

One thing Henry had a problem with was the wording of the Preamble where it said "We the People" which he felt should have said "We the States" because it was states that eventually ratified the document. He also noted, correctly, that the delegates from the various states that assembled in Philadelphia in 1787 *did not have* instructions from their states to form a new government—all they had been delegated to do was to amend the *Articles of Confederation*—and so they way overstepped their bounds in what they ended up doing. Miss Campbell's book on Patrick Henry was excellent. If you can still find a copy at a used book store or on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) (provided it hasn't been reclassified as "Confederate flag material" grab it up before someone else beats you to it.

A more recently published biography of Patrick Henry has been written by David J. Vaughan and is entitled *Give Me Liberty*. Mr. Vaughan echoes much of what Miss Campbell had earlier stated. He wrote: "Although the federal convention that met in Philadelphia in May of 1787 was authorized only to revise the existing *Articles of Confederation*, the delegates devised an entirely new constitution that was subsequently

sent to the states for ratification. Those who favored the new Constitution were named **Federalists** while their opponents were called **Anti-Federalists**. Those labels were apt to be misleading, however. In fact, it would be to name the pro-Constitution faction as **nationlists** and the opposing group as the true Federalists. For it was Henry and those of similar sentiments who espoused the true sentiments of federalism—a federation of independent and sovereign states.

Vaughan also observed that the pro-Constitution group, led by James Madison, felt a stronger national government was needed. He said “The national government, they believed, needed to power to tax and to regulate commerce...The way to give energy to the national government was to give it power, but this required a change in its form. The Anti-Federalists were led by Henry, of course. They were generally united on the principle of confederation. In effect, Henry charged the Constitutional Convention with illegal proceedings. And he was right.”

This is an issue that has generated much controversy over the years, but I don’t think it hurts for us to take a closer look at the Anti-Federalist’s position on this.