

Men of Little Faith: Selected Writings of Cecelia Kenyon



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During a scholarly career that extended from the late 1940s to the mid-1980s, Cecelia Kenyon wrote a series of essays and reviews that reshaped thinking about the American Revolution and its aftermath. Beginning with her influential essay "Men of Little Faith: The Anti-Federalists on the Nature of Representative Government," Kenyon challenged prevailing interpretations of the Revolutionary era by emphasizing the crucial role of ideology. In so doing, she helped spark a major shift in early American historiography.

By bringing Kenyon's key writings together in a single volume, the editors have sought not only to reaffirm the importance of her contributions to scholarship but also to reveal the subtlety and imagination of her mind at work. Whether assessing the limitations of Charles Beard's "An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution," analyzing the enigma of Alexander Hamilton (whom she memorably describes as "the Rousseau of the Right"), or evaluating what was truly radical about America's revolution, Kenyon's insights remain as fresh as they are shrewd.

As the editors point out in their foreword to the book, Kenyon had an extraordinary talent for opening up to scrutiny subjects whose significance had previously been overlooked. Although her originality may not have been fully appreciated at first, her writings had an undeniable impact on subsequent work in her field. Eminent scholars such as Bernard Bailyn, Gordon S. Wood, and John Pocock all drew on Kenyon's ideas in their own groundbreaking studies of the Revolutionary era, and today the pivotal importance of her essays is widely recognized by a new generation of historians.

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