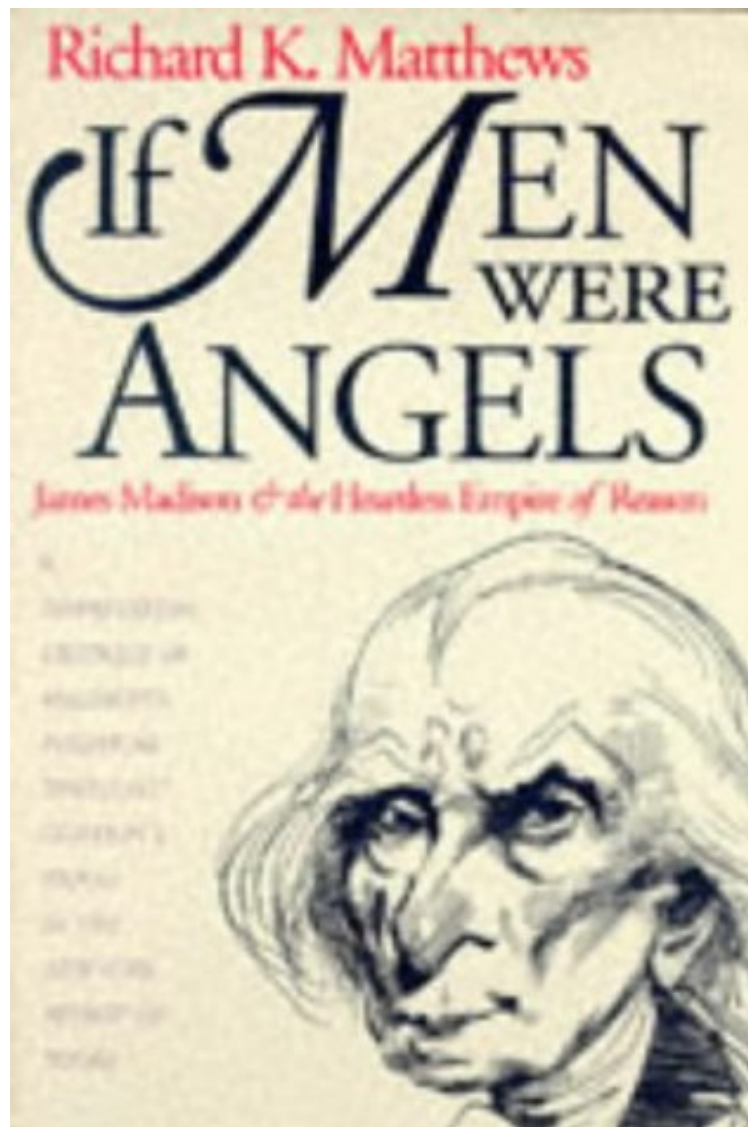


[Download ebook] If Men Were Angels: James Madison and the Heartless Empire of Reason (American Political Thought (University Press of Kansas))

If Men Were Angels: James Madison and the Heartless Empire of Reason (American Political Thought (University Press of Kansas))

Richard K. Matthews

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#1250664 in Books University Press of Kansas 1995-01-18 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.01 x .95 x 6.091, 1.07 #File Name: 0700608079320 pages | File size: 58.Mb

Richard K. Matthews : If Men Were Angels: James Madison and the Heartless Empire of Reason (American Political Thought (University Press of Kansas)) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised If Men Were Angels: James Madison and the Heartless Empire of Reason (American Political Thought (University Press of Kansas)):

30 of 50 people found the following review helpful. An exceedingly poor, revisionist work of pseudohistory
Integrity Reviews
Only a professor writing for a university press could get a book this poor published. Matthews views are on the most extreme fringes of revisionist interpretations of American history, and may be summarized as follows: Thomas Jefferson was idealistic and good, James Madison was materialistic and bad. If you are inclined to think that this is an exaggeration, I will quote 4 sentences from the very last page of this book (consistent with .com's guidelines, I am limited to only 4 sentences of quotations): "It was Madison, not Jefferson, who designed the system. Madison's...dream has, as he knew it would, turned into a nightmare for increasing numbers of marginalized Americans. Instead of the chance to pursue happiness, they have neither the opportunity, the hope, nor even the illusion of either. America...has metamorphosed into an intriguing Orwellian-Kafkaesque labyrinth, where a few Ks still search for the reality behind the ideological myth, while the rich find meaning in each of their possessions." If you think that this makes sense, if you believe that this even remotely resembles the vision of James Madison, one of the fathers of our nation and its greatest expert on the American Constitution he did so much to create, then this is your kind of book. If not, I recommend that you save your money and order other books of real value on the life and works of Madison.
0 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars
By Kelly EOK
10 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Groundbreaking Work
By G. F Gori
This work is truly groundbreaking. The comparison of the liberal/commercial views of James Madison with the radical democratic views of his close friend, Thomas Jefferson are truly enlightening. Matthews shows how Madison was closer to Hamilton than to Jefferson in political philosophy. Madison was obsessed with balance, and order in the liberal tradition. Jefferson, on the other hand, had a vision of radical democracy in the republic. Ward republics, and local democracy were infused into Jefferson's thought. Madison was more concerned with balancing the interests of society and controlling "factions". He viewed government from a more Hobbsian view than other Jeffersonians. Madison was far less trusting of human nature and more concerned with "stability" in society than with experiments in government. This book goes against the grain of current scholarship which unites Jefferson and Madison in philosophy when in fact in many ways they were poles apart. A great book.

"What is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary." The ever wary James Madison viewed his fellow citizens as anything but angelic. In this radically new interpretation, Richard Matthews portrays a much less optimistic (and yet more liberal) Madison than we've seen before. Neither civic humanist nor democrat, this Madison is a distrusting, calculating, and pragmatic Machiavellian Prince. Hardly an imposing figure, Madison was barely five-feet-six-inches tall, pale complected, a poor speaker, a perpetual hypochondriac and secret epileptic, pursued by bouts of depression and given to dressing in black. And yet his political achievements and intellectual legacy are monumental. Revered as the "Father of the Constitution," Madison was also architect of the "Virginia plan"; one of the two principal authors of *The Federalist*; leader of the inaugural House of Representatives; reluctant champion of the Bill of Rights; cofounder of the Republican Party, Washington's ghostwriter; Jefferson's Secretary of State; and president and commander-in-chief during America's second war of Independence. Nevertheless, Madison's preeminence in the rise of the modern American state has not always been so widely recognized. And, Matthews contends, what has been written about Madison's political thought has been limited in scope and skewed in interpretation. Unlike previous authors, Matthews goes well beyond Madison's work on the Constitution to reconstruct the complete range of Madison's political thought and intellectual development over the course of his extensive life. In the process, he provides a powerful critique of Madisonian politics. It is possible, he shows, to applaud the energy, design, and intellect that went into Madison's thought and simultaneously challenge the assumptions and values upon which that thought rests. Matthews's Madison understood the potentially fatal problems of a weak, divided state; saw salvation in a strong central government astride an expanding commercial republic; drafted that government's fundamental charter; ran the infant regime as an advisor to two presidents before becoming president himself; and, in retirement, strove to control and manipulate historical interpretations of these efforts. From "The Legislator" to chief executive to keeper of the past and controller of the future, Madison adjusted his political posture to suit the moment. . . . just as Machiavelli's ideal Prince would have done. Madison's system achieved the stability he desired, but at a price Americans should have refused to pay. Provocative and controversial, Matthews's study revises our understanding of this central figure in American history. It illuminates his profound impact upon the America imagined by the Framers, his ongoing influence on the nation we have become, and the tragedy of his success in foreclosing the possibility of a radical Jeffersonian America that never was, but might have been.

"Highly opinionated, iconoclastic, controversial, and immensely imaginative. A provocative and deeply stimulating reading of Madison that deserves to be part of the never-ending conversation Americans have about the meaning of America." Isaac Kramnick, author of *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America* "Outstanding. Certainly the most systematic, comprehensive, and penetrating analysis of Madison's political thought, the volume is engagingly written, tightly argued, and persuasive in its

interpretations." Jack P. Greene, author of *The Intellectual Construction of America* and editor of the *Encyclopedia of American Political History* "A controversial and compelling case for Madison's consistent liberalism. Deserves a prominent place on the bookshelf of anyone who takes seriously the study of American political thought." Michael Lienesch, author of *New Order of the Ages* "This book will make a major splash among both historians and political scientists and should have substantial appeal to the general reading public. Its most significant achievement is the discovery and explication of the themes that make Madison consistent despite his many changes of position over a long and varied public career." Forrest McDonald, author of *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* About the Author Richard K. Matthews is professor and chair of the department of government at Lehigh University. *If Men Were Angels* is the second volume in his revisionist trilogy on the Founding that began with *The Radical Politics of Thomas Jefferson* and that will conclude with *Alexander Hamilton and the Creation of the Heroic State*.