

# Compromise and the American Founding

The Quest for the People's Two Bodies

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Why is today's political life so polarized? This book analyzes the ways in which the divergent apprehensions of both 'compromise' and the 'people' in seventeenth-century England and France became intertwined once again during the American founding, sometimes with bloody results. Looking at key-moments of the founding, from the first Puritan colonies to the beginning of the Civil War, this book offers answers of contemporary relevance. It argues that Americans unknowingly combined two understandings of the people: the early modern idea of a collection of individuals ruled by a majority of wills and the classic understanding of a corporation hierarchically structured and ruled by reason for the common good. Americans were then able to implement the paradigm of the 'people's two bodies'. Whenever the dialectic between the two has been broken, the results had have a major impact on American politics. Born by accident, this American peculiarity has proven to be a long-lasting one.

Compromise and the challenge of realism; 1.3. E Pluribus Unum; the people's two bodies – then and now; 2. The uncompromising Puritans: 'If the whole conclave of hell can so compromise ...'; 2.1. '... Puritanism was in the eye of the beholder'; 2.2. '... As the entrails of a creature cut down the back'; 2.3. '... They look backward as well as forward'; 2.4. '... They don't weigh the intellectual furniture ...'; 2.5. '... Until a better light will be available to guide them'; 3. The uncompromising patriots: 'friends, brethren, enemies will prove ...'; 3.1. '... We are breaking to pieces in our churches'; 3.2. In the wake of the awakening; 3.3. 'How then do we new Englanders derive our laws?'; 3.4. The king 'unkings himself'; 4. The compromising confederates: '... mounting a body of mermaids on alligators'; 4.1. '... A rope of sand'; 4.2. 'We are the state'; 4.3. '... Mutual sacrifices should be made to effect a compromise ...'; 5. The constitution: '... that greatest of all compromises'; 5.1. 'The states must see the rod ...'; 5.2. '... To smoke the calumet of union and love'; 5.3. 'The house on fire must be extinguished ...'; 5.4. 'It will wait upon the ladies at their toilet ...'; 6. 'This is essentially a people's contest': 'Shall we compromise?'; 6.1. '... Fresh from the loins of the people ...'; 6.2. 'Party spirit ... only ask to lick the sores of the body politic'; 6.3. 'The day of compromise has passed'; 7. Conclusions: resuscitating the people's two bodies; 7.1. Parties without partisanship?; 7.2. Purged Individualism and Facebook; 7.3. "We, the people ...".

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