

**AN INQUIRY INTO THE
FORMATION
OF WASHINGTON'S
FAREWELL ADDRESS**

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An inquiry into the formation of Washington's Farewell address by Horace Binney

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HORACE BINNEY

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FORMATION
OF WASHINGTON'S
FAREWELL ADDRESS**

*Robert Hale Bancroft
Providence November 3. 1859.*

AN INQUIRY

INTO

Binney, Horace

THE FORMATION

OF

WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS.

"And harmonize what seems amiss to flow
As severed from the whole,
And dimly understood."

COPIES OF
THE ADDRESS

PHILADELPHIA:

PARRY & McMILLAN, PUBLISHERS.

1859.

PREFACE.

IF the title of this paper had substituted the word Authorship for the word Formation, it would have contained the ambiguity which it is the object of the Inquiry to clear away. There are not many words in our language that describe a greater variety of operations than the word Author. From the first step in production, even from the mandate to produce a work of any kind, to the perfect completion of the work, there are many relations to it, and at times several contributions to it, which may make more persons than one authors of it, in different senses, with equal justice and exclusiveness. And only something short of this is the word Authorship; which, though it signifies the quality of being an author, and therefore may comprehend that quality in regard to any property of any subject, yet seems to be generally confined to literary works or compositions in writing, and to admit of nothing being truly predicated of it, except in this relation. The word Authorship is large enough, however, in this limited application, to include more than one person as possessing this quality in regard to the same thing; and in the rather jealous domain of literature, if different persons have contributed to the same written composition, it sometimes happens that the application of the word in honor of one rather than another of them, is the occasion of very lively disputes, where there is perhaps little or no difference of opinion about the respective contributions of the parties, or no previous analysis to ascertain what the respective contributions were. This word has therefore been care-

fully excluded from the title, and will be as carefully avoided in the Inquiry, unless with some attendant definition or description, to show the sense in which it is used. Undoubtedly a written composition may have been so much the mixed work of two persons, that the authorship of it in some sense may be justly attributed to both. Where the contributions are well discriminated, the respective authorships may be attributed to each. In which class the Farewell Address will fall, or whether it will fall into either, is reserved for the judgment of the reader, at the conclusion of the Inquiry.

The writer's aim in this essay, has been certainty in the facts, and accuracy in his deductions from them. He has therefore scrupulously endeavored to avoid embellishment in either of these respects, while he has been regardless of it in any other. He hopes that the result will give equal relief to the friends of Washington and to the friends of Hamilton, who for the most part were the same persons while the objects of their regard were living, some appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. It cannot be denied that there have been since, as there were in the previous day, several appearances which have manifested greater favor to Washington and less to Hamilton, independently of the pre-eminent military and patriotic services of the former; and that these appearances still continue, and have been much enlarged; but perhaps with this distinction, that Washington is praised more and followed less, while Hamilton is praised less, and, at least in the great mass of fiscal, commercial, and judicial principles and arrangements, which he recommended for the Treasury and for the country, is followed more. But the probability, nevertheless, is, that the friends of both, as supporters of the same policy, are still the same persons. Their number will increase, no doubt, from day to day, as these great men shall become more thoroughly known by their writings, and more impartially compared with others; but it is to their friends only, present and to come, that the writer can promise himself to supply either facts or deductions in regard to the Farewell Address, that will be of any considerable interest.

The manner in which Alexander Hamilton's connection with the Farewell Address of Washington has been occasionally written and spoken about, has been a source of discomfort to many persons who have a great admiration for that remarkable man; and perhaps of as much discomfort from the bearing of these remarks upon Washington, as from their bearing upon Hamilton. To all persons who possess, in the same degree with the writer of this paper, a profound veneration for the whole character of the Father of his Country, and at the same time an exalted respect for the intellectual and personal qualities of Hamilton, it must have been for years past a cause of disturbance, to perceive that by some persons the composition of the Address has been regarded either as an unsupported pretension on the side of Hamilton, or as an assistance which he should have taken effectual means to conceal forever; and by others, as a transcript by Washington, with a view to unneedful honor, of what another had written, fundamental or guiding thoughts, and all.

That Washington, like other executive chiefs, or heads of military command, consulted his ministers, officers, and friends, and was sometimes obliged to use their pens for the expression or the arrangement of his thoughts, is not only probable but certain. He left behind him some traces of this wise practice, and it was more than once avowed by him; but that he had done this at any time and under any circumstances, with such an appeal, either expressed or understood, as would reflect upon his minister or friend if he left a trace of his contributions among his papers, or that in the instance of this great paper he had cloaked the service so carefully as to imply a corresponding duty on the other side to do the same, for the purpose of leaving the honors of the entire written composition with him, is a thought that cannot be recalled without the greatest repugnance, from both its aspects. In this last case, the character of each party was a guarantee that whatever was asked or done was properly asked and done; that there was no vain-glory on either side, no sense of humiliation or superiority, no aspiration for the honors of authorship at the expense of either truth or loy-

alty, but just such a contribution on each side, if there were two contributing parties, as would leave to the principal party the merit and the responsibility of the fundamental thoughts, and to the other the merit of expanding, defending, and presenting them in the most suitable form, a task which public engagements, or a particular turn of mind, may have made unusual to the one, while it was habitual and easy to the other; and that no sense of honor had been wounded, nor any pretension of vanity consulted, by leaving the traces of a joint co-operation, just as each party has left them. Such as the character of both Washington and Hamilton gave assurance that the co-operation, if it took place, would be, such upon very full examination of the facts, it turns out to have been. The reader will probably regard the character of each, after he has considered the proofs, with as much esteem and admiration as he felt before the fact of co-operation was known to him. It is not improbable that he will regard it with even greater.

A recent perusal of the correspondence between Washington and Hamilton, in regard to the Farewell Address, has led to the preparation of this paper. Part of that correspondence, the letters of Washington, has been in print for some years, and is to be found in the Congress edition of Hamilton's works. The letters of Hamilton to Washington have not been heretofore printed. The writer did not keep a copy of any of them. The originals were found among the papers of Washington, at the time of his death, and copies of them have been supplied by Mr. Sparks, the Editor of Washington's writings, and the author of his biography, to Mr. John C. Hamilton, the author of *Hamilton's Life*, and of "*The History of the Republic*," now in course of publication, who has given me permission to print them. I am indebted to the same gentleman for permission to print certain other papers, derived by him from the kindness of Mr. Sparks, which enable me to identify the original or preparatory draught by Washington of a Farewell Address, as the same which he sent to Hamilton on the 15th May, 1796, and which became the basis of Hamilton's work. The permission of Mr. Hamilton enables

me to place a copy of this preparatory paper in an appendix. The originals of Hamilton's letters to Washington, and Washington's original draught, were, I understand, deposited in the office of the Department of State, after the conclusion of Mr. Sparks's great work; but Mr. Hamilton informs me, that by order of Mr. Marcy, when Secretary of State, diligent search was made, at Mr. Hamilton's request, and these letters and draught were not found.

For the greater convenience of the reader, I have appended to this Essay, 1. A copy of Washington's original or preparatory draught of a Farewell Address; 2. A copy of Hamilton's "Abstract of Points to form an Address;" 3. A copy of Hamilton's original draught of an Address; 4. Washington's Farewell Address, conforming to the record of it in the Department of State; and 5. A copy of Washington's autograph paper, from which the Farewell Address was printed. I should not have felt at liberty to use for this purpose the reprint of that autograph paper in the appendix to the fifth volume of Mr. Irving's *Life of Washington*; but I have been favored, through Mr. Hamilton, with a permission to reprint it, by its proprietor, Mr. Lenox, who printed a very fine edition of it for private distribution. The pagings in Mr. Irving's appendix, are noted in this reprint, to facilitate a reader in tracing my references to that appendix.

HORACE BINNEY.

PHILADELPHIA, August 9, 1859.

