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**Pauline Maier**

## **American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence**

*"Takes its place as the defining statement of the Declaration of Independence as the embodiment of the American mind and historical experience." —The New York Times Book Review*

# AMERICAN SCRIPTURE

Making the Declaration  
of Independence

*JULY 4, 1776.*

*States of America*

**PAULINE MAIER**

*The political bonds which have connected them with another  
time, a loyal respect to the opinions of mankind requires  
that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the  
Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are  
Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*

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Title: American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence

Author: Pauline Maier

Format: Paperback

Language: English

Pages: 336

Publisher: , 0

ISBN: 0679779086

Format: PDF / Kindle / ePub

Size: 8.8 MB

Download: allowed

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## Description

Pauline Maier shows us the Declaration as both the defining statement of our national identity and the moral standard by which we live as a nation. It is truly "American Scripture," and Maier tells us how it came to be -- from the Declaration's birth in the hard and tortuous struggle by which Americans arrived at Independence to the ways in which, in the nineteenth century, the document itself became sanctified.

Maier describes the transformation of the Second Continental Congress into a national government, unlike anything that preceded or followed it, and with more authority than the colonists would ever have conceded to the British Parliament; the great difficulty in making the decision for Independence; the influence of Paine's *Common Sense*, which shifted the terms of debate; and the political maneuvers that allowed Congress to make the momentous decision.

In Maier's hands, the Declaration of Independence is brought close to us. She lets us hear the voice of the people as revealed in the other "declarations" of 1776: the local resolutions -- most of which have gone unnoticed over the past two centuries -- that explained, advocated, and justified Independence and undergirded Congress's work. Detective-like, she discloses the origins of key ideas and phrases in the Declaration and unravels the complex story of its drafting and of the group-editing job which angered Thomas Jefferson.

Maier also reveals what happened to the Declaration after the signing and celebration: how it was largely forgotten and then revived to buttress political arguments of the nineteenth century; and, most important, how Abraham Lincoln ensured its persistence as a living force in American society. Finally, she shows how by the very act of venerating the Declaration as we do -- by holding it as sacrosanct, akin to holy writ -- we may actually be betraying its purpose and its power.

## Insightful reviews

Erin: A really great look at the lead up to and actual creation of the Declaration of Independence, as well as Americans' treatment of the Declaration in the century after the Revolution. Wonderfully written for a lay audience, though the section on the actual writing of the Declaration gets a bit tedious. Only gave it four stars because I was hoping it would be more about Americans' memory of the Declaration than the Declaration itself. Still, I would recommend this book to anyone interested in learning about the Declaration as those who wrote it would have thought about it.

judy: The four stars count only if you're not frightened by academic approaches and are deeply interested in the Declaration. She has impeccably researched her subject and brought a new view that scholars will appreciate. I was on a hunt for something specific so I raced through the book. Didn't find it but am glad to know this book is out there if I need it.

Richard: I read this for my U.S History class at Brigham Young University. The subtitle of my text is different from this edition, which is "Making the Declaration of Independence". I only

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switched to this edition due page numbering, not because of the subtitling.

I thought this book was a good insight with how the Second Continental Congress made an effort to declare Independence and made a revolution in government. I now understand the friendship that was developed between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams at this time, and how they were still friends at the end of mortality, despite their political differences. I thought it was interesting how Jefferson was influenced by John Locke and George Mason in creating this document.

What I found disappointing was the fact that the Declaration of Independence was rather forgotten and neglected for a century and a half. I'm quite saddened by this fact, on top of the fact that today's generation have not learned about the documents that created the foundation of the United States of America.

I believe that Jefferson was inspired of God to frame the Declaration of Independence. It was said in the text of this book that Jefferson did not reference the words John Locke and George Mason when he was commissioned by Congress to create it.

Ron Tenney: i'm very drawn to the founding of our nation. The function of the announcement of Independence and the contribution of Thomas Jefferson are of specific curiosity to me. i love this ebook a great deal since it information the emergence of the assertion shape prior files and constitutions of the thirteen colonies. Jefferson borrowed from his past writings in addition to these of George Mason. Contributions of Franklin and Adams are often overlooked. And the masterful enhancing of the Congress used to be info that i used to be no longer widespread with. the simplest a part of the publication is the ultimate chapters that aspect the altering which means of the assertion over time. I loved examining approximately how the statement trained Lincoln's thinking. it's a reliable learn for these of comparable pursuits within the Revolution, American History, Jefferson and Lincoln.

John Maniscalco: Pauline Maier elegantly info the heritage of the assertion of Independence in what appears an try and knock it off its pedestal. This booklet has major elements to it. the 1st part, and the majority of the book, is worried with the necessity for a statement of independence, its construction, and the aim it served. Maier offers a wealth of excellent details that clears up a few universal misconceptions that serve to offer the assertion and nearly holy status. To sum up, in accordance with Maier, colonists grew to become to revolution merely whilst the King declared them out of his protection, now not through the arguments of republican ideology; kingdom governments had first made their declarations which made more desirable instances opposed to the king than had Jefferson's; and Jefferson was once the drafter, now not writer of the announcement of Independence, who may be to blame of plagiarism. whereas i don't believe Maier's attempt to minimize the Declaration's ancient significance (she may say "mythological status"), the quantity of knowledge given during this part is worthy a learn and doubtless 4 stars. however the final 30 pages of the book, however, are dedicated to the Declaration's lasting impact and harps at the contradiction of a slave-holding country founding at the trust that every one males are created equal. rather than arguing that the recognition of slavery used to be an important evil to maintain the federal union intact, Maier argues that the assertion is a "living document" that completed its precise promise via Lincoln's new use of it within the Gettysburg Address. She concludes through pointing out that the Declaration's

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message will be altered to slot with the days of the day, which in essence is to nation the the statement has no that means at all. this can be indicative of a grimy behavior between historians to minimize all the Founders to their place at the factor of slavery. by no means brain that the Founders, Jefferson in particular, had tested a country that for the 1st time rejected the concept that a few everyone is no longer born to serve whereas others are born to rule and was once dedicated to the thought that males are equivalent less than the law, that they're born with traditional rights, that governments are instituted to guard those rights, and finally, that once a central authority fails to safe those rights or abuses them, the folk have the perfect of revolution to institute a sound government. As he was once dying, Jefferson famous that the area was once commencing its eyes to freedom and to the foundations espoused within the statement of Independents. He himself knew that the realm he lived in didn't dwell as much as his personal republican standards. Lincoln had safely used the phrases of the Declaration, he hadn't mangled or reinvented them, to deal with the problems of the day. and that's the aspect of the statement of Independence. it's an everlasting rfile that advances historical and perpetual truths. as the global lagged at the back of the record within the 18th and nineteenth centuries doesn't suggest that it's a "living" document. It signifies that the march in the direction of freedom, started by means of the assertion of Independence, flowing from Jefferson's pen, continues.

Heather: a truly extensive examine the a number of members to the assertion of Independence. The publication strains the roots of many recommendations to British documents, and exhibits how the innovations in the rfile effect different international locations of that time. Also, the rfile turns into hugely contested as already present rifts within the US are exacerbated within the lead-up to the Civil War.

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