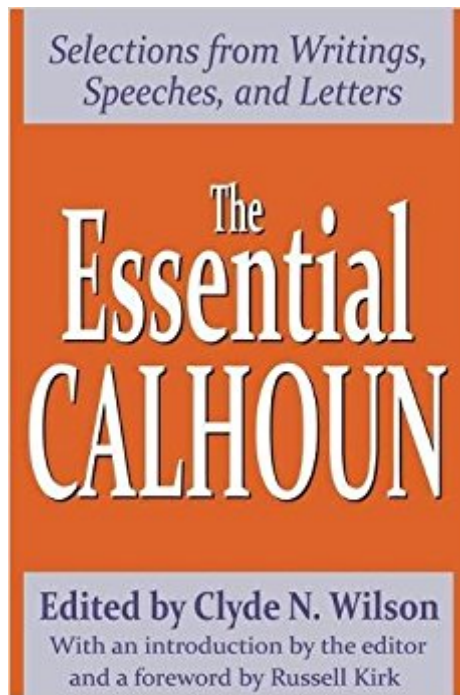




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The Essential Calhoun



Synopsis

John C. Calhoun was a major actor in the political history of nineteenth-century America. His dramatic career will always be of interest. However, Calhoun is equally important as a political thinker who continues to elicit widespread interest from the most diverse points of the ideological spectrum. The Essential Calhoun presents a full-fledged selection of speeches and writings taken from the entire forty-year span of Calhoun's public career and from many varieties of occasions, public and private. For the first time, it is possible to appreciate Calhoun fully and to consider his thought within the compass of a single volume. Calhoun is known to posterity as the premier defender of the Old South and slavery and as the theorist of the concurrent majority. His contemporaries knew him as much else, including a political economist and foreign policy authority. As the range of writings shows, he was a valuable and often prophetic commentator. Calhoun's thought testifies to a deep and abiding concern with moral and ethical issues that confront a government resting on the consent of the people. The fundamental question with which he wrestles in all his works is how to achieve and maintain a proper balance between power and liberty in a democratic society. By providing the most representative compendium of his thought, The Essential Calhoun invites the reader to engage in this exercise of applying the moral imagination realistically to the public business of America. Historians, American studies specialists, economists, and political scientists will find this volume indispensable.

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Customer Reviews

Calhoun was one of the giants of 19th-century American history. In the years prior to the Civil War, he served as both a theorist and an active politician on behalf of states rights and as a foreign policy expert in Washington. Conservatives, particularly those with a libertarian bent, have long lauded Calhoun for his political philosophy, elucidated in speeches, letters, and thousands of published documents. Editor Wilson, who also serves as editor of *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* (Univ. of South Carolina Pr., ten volumes, 20 projected), here has taken what he considers the most vital of Calhoun's massive production and presented it in a single volume. For those who care only for Calhoun's political philosophy stripped of its historical context or those who know his life and times extremely well, this collection may be useful. However, Wilson provides virtually no historic context for the documents. There are no footnotes to explain references within the text. The result is a disappointing historic edition of the best of Calhoun.- Charles K. Piehl, Mankato State Univ., Minn. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Wilson... presents a thoughtful and well-organized appeal to historians to go beyond what he considers simplistic views of Calhoun repeated in the past and to general readers to consider Calhoun's positions in light of present-day events. . . . General readers will find Calhoun's comments on the Constitution and the American political process enlightening." — Harold Campbell, *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* — "Wilson" [provides a] portrait of the man, both through correspondence to friends and family and in the final section, Calhoun "on himself." [Most satisfying and interesting.] — Eric H. Walther, *Journal of the Early Republic* — "Professor Clyde Wilson. . . has compiled a magnificent anthology which will endure as long as Americans are interested in close reasoning about the nature of government and society. He has drawn on a rich lode of documents from Calhoun's hand, including several thousand surviving letters. . . . The *Essential Calhoun* is likely to have a strong and lasting impact on students of politics and society who are truly dedicated to underlying truth, who genuinely endeavor to understand why American society has become a collapsing society and why American government no longer serves the interests of the American people." — Anthony Harrigan, *Humanitas* "A marvelous collection, put together by the foremost authority on John C. Calhoun, and an absolutely essential book for the study of the great South Carolina statesman and political philosopher! Professor Wilson's extraordinary introduction and selection of materials reflect his vast knowledge of the history of the scholarship on Calhoun and the various ways in which he is still oversimplified by those who have passionate opinion about his work but have never read him. Also a valuable introduction to the great

debates which foreshadow the War between the States. As much of Calhoun as may be usefully gathered in one volume!"

—M.E. Bradford, University of Dallas

"It seems incredible that we had to wait so long for a book like this. . . . Only Wilson could have provided the inspired selection and organization of the materials."

—Eugene D. Genovese, The University Center in Georgia

"In the riches of the expertly edited collection, the reader encounters perhaps the greatest mind among America's statesmen. . . . Wilson merits high praise for a varied and well-rounded selection, complete with illuminating introductory comments."

—Claes G. Ryn, The Catholic University of America

"Few figures in American political history have displayed the broad learning and creative imagination of John C. Calhoun, and few remain as relevant today to enduring questions of power and freedom, law and democracy, diplomacy and war, economy and culture. Clyde Wilson's anthology of Calhoun's writings admirably captures his genius and makes his teaching available once more to a modern generation."

—Samuel T. Francis, The Washington Times

"The Essential Calhoun is the broadest and most widely ranging selection of John Caldwell Calhoun's writings that has ever appeared between two covers. There are many discoveries and surprises here for the professional as well as the student."

—Guy S. Brown, Perspectives on Political Science

"In compiling The Essential Calhoun, Clyde N. Wilson has done a masterful job. As we might expect of the man who has devoted much of his career to editing The Papers of John C. Calhoun, Wilson has presented us with a fine set of selections, making easily available to us the most important features of Calhoun's thought."

—Michael Bordelon, South Carolina Historical Review

"The Essential Calhoun" purchased for my husband, David A. Long, III from .com. Dr. Long will write this review. I have often believed that John C. Calhoun was a man whose writings were so real in today's world. John Calhoun had three fears. One, was that his government under President Jackson was becoming democratic. John Calhoun believed that we were founded as a republic and that President Jackson was exceeding his authority. His second fear was that the newly recognized states would have Two Senators. With this, the South would be outnumbered in the Senate and that those in the majority would rule the minority, the South. And third, John C. Calhoun did not want the Negroes to have the vote. In South Carolina at the start of the "war of Northern Aggression" the population of the Negroes was more than that of the whites. That was the case in much of the South. There was a great financial investment and the slaves were needed in agricultural states. The North, which was industrialized did not understand this. This collection of the writings of John C. Calhoun, edited by Clyde N. Wilson, ought to be in everyone's library.

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