REWRITING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The Andrew Browning Lectures 1989

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The French Revolution continues to generate historical controversy. During the last thirty years, consensus on its meaning has disappeared. Scholarship and debate constantly reinterpret both the event as a whole and its constituent parts, changing our perceptions and understanding of it. Today the French Revolution is still being rewritten as history. In this volume, eight of the most distinguished scholars in the field present new interpretations of major themes in the history of the French Revolution. They explore areas of intellectual, political, religious, and social development. Two hundred years ago, we are often told, reconstructs the past in its own image. In the case of the French Revolution, this is an understatement. In the second half of this century the scholarship has seemed to be in a state of almost permanent revolution as historians have taken up one interpretative or methodological approach after another. Some of the story of this historiographical roller-coaster ride may be known to readers, thanks to William Doyle’s best-selling text book Origins of the French Revolution, which begins with a long and detailed survey “Writings on Revolutionary Origins since 193
The French Revolution was a period of social and political upheaval in France and its colonies beginning in 1789 and ending in 1799. The Revolution overthrew the monarchy; established a republic; catalyzed violent periods of political turmoil; and finally culminated in a dictatorship under Napoleon, who brought many of the revolution's principles to areas he conquered in Western Europe and beyond. Inspired by liberal and radical ideas such as equality before the law, the Revolution influenced the