This book emphasizes the centrality of nationhood to Thomas Jefferson’s thought and politics, envisioning Jefferson as a cultural nationalist whose political project sought the alignment of the American state system with the will and character of the nation. Jefferson believed that America was the one nation on earth able to realize in practice universal ideals to which other peoples could only aspire. He appears in the book as the narrator of what he once called “American Story”: as the historian, the sociologist, and the ethnographer; the political theorist of the nation; the most successful practitioner of its politics; and its most enthusiastic champion. The book argues that reorienting Jefferson around the concept of American nationhood recovers an otherwise easily missed coherence to his political career and helps make sense of a number of conundrums in his thought and practice.

Brian Steele is assistant professor of history at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. His work has appeared in the *Journal of American History* and the *Journal of Southern History*. 
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Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood

BRIAN STEELE

University of Alabama, Birmingham
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“All this was given to you...”

This book has its earliest roots in a paper written for an inspired senior seminar with Lawrence Cress at the University of Tulsa and a dissertation written at the University of North Carolina under the direction of Don Higginbotham. Neither man lived to see the book; both shaped it in fundamental ways, and, I might add, altered the course of my life.

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“May I prove to be deserving of that high company.”
Key to Brief Citations

AHR  American Historical Review
JAH  Journal of American History
JER  Journal of the Early Republic
JSH  Journal of Southern History
LC  Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress
PJM  William T. Hutchinson et al., eds., The Papers of James Madison (Chicago and Charlottesville, 1962–)
WMQ  William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series