

Lesson 3

American War for Independence (1765-1785)

America's Liberty and Independence: Based on Principles of the Christian Faith

The positive influence of Christianity so evident in the colonization of America (presented in Lessons 1 and 2) was also plainly visible throughout the American War for Independence. In fact, the historical story of America's quest for freedom reveals there would be no America as we have come to know it—no “land of liberty”—without the Bible and Christianity.

George Washington frequently acknowledged God's hand in the birth of America, openly affirming that *“the liberties of America are the object of Divine protection.”*¹ In fact, he had strong words for those who refused to see the obvious and believed otherwise.

For example, in 1778, he wrote General Thomas Nelson (who had signed the Declaration of Independence two years earlier) that *“The hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all of this [i.e., the events of the first three years of the war], that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more than wicked that has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his*

*obligations.”*² In other words, in Washington's view, if someone had seen all the miraculous Divine interventions so frequent and apparent throughout the War and did not feel compelled to thank God as a result, then that person must indeed be callous and wicked.

The train of events that led to the American War for Independence actually began more than a decade before the Declaration of Independence was penned. In 1765, England imposed a Stamp Act tax upon the colonists. This required that all printed materials in America (books, newspapers, documents, and so forth) be printed only on paper that bore an embossed royal stamp, meaning that a tax had been paid on those materials. The colonists were not opposed to paying taxes, but they were opposed to paying taxes when they had no voice in the decision—they objected to Parliament taxing them without their input. In their view, the Stamp Act tax violated the principle of private property: the British were taking their private property (their money) without their permission, or the permission of those they themselves had chosen to represent them.³

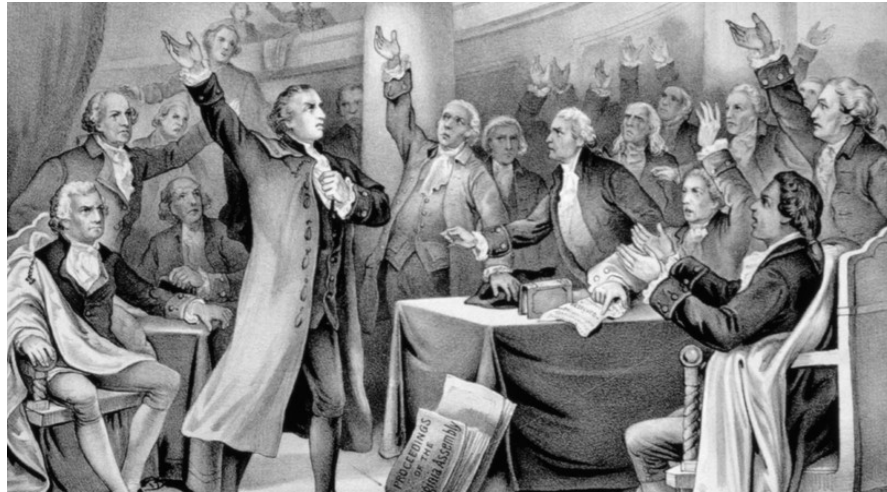


Stamp Act 1765

Many leaders spoke out against the Stamp Act, including Christian ministers such as the Rev. George Whitefield and the Rev. Charles Chauncy, as well as political leaders such as James Otis and Samuel Adams in Massachusetts, and Patrick Henry in Virginia.

Henry had become a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses (the state legislature) shortly after the Stamp Act Tax had been imposed.⁴ He was new in the state assembly, but when he found no one willing to stand publicly and oppose the tax, he felt compelled to take action. He therefore penned resolutions against the Stamp Act and introduced them in the legislature. Because several members were staunchly pro-British and therefore supported whatever the British did, Henry reported, “*Upon offering them [the resolutions] to the house, violent debates ensued. Many threats were uttered, and much abuse cast on me.*”⁵ Those debates were intense and highly emotional.

At one point in the discussions, Henry brought up lessons from history he felt were applicable. He invoked ancient Roman history and noted that when Caesar (the Roman Emperor and leader) disregarded the wishes of the people, Brutus rose up to kill him for the



Patrick Henry: “*If this be treason, make the most of it.*”

good of the country. He similarly noted that in England’s own history, when King Charles I had similarly disregarded the people, Oliver Cromwell had him executed for the good of the people and the country. Henry then brought his lesson home to the current British ruler, King George III, noting, “*Caesar had his Brutus; Charles the First, his Cromwell; and George the Third...*” but before he could finish his sentence, the shout of “*Treason! Treason!*” erupted from every part of the room. They believed he was calling for the murder of King George III, but, as one historian recorded, without any hesitation Henry “*finished his sentence with the firmest emphasis, ‘may profit by their example. If this be treason, make the most of it’.*”⁶ In an instant he turned the debate in an unexpected direction, and had refused to back down.

Henry’s speech had a significant impact in rallying the patriots in the Virginia legislature. He reported the outcome:



Patrick Henry

After a long and warm contest, the resolutions [against the Stamp Act] passed by a very small majority....The alarm spread throughout America with astonishing quickness, and the ministerial party [the pro-British] were overwhelmed. The great point of resistance to British taxation was universally established in the colonies. This brought on the war, which finally separated the two countries, and gave independence to ours.

Whether this will prove a blessing or a curse will depend upon the use our people make of the blessings which a gracious God hath bestowed on us. If they are wise, they will be great and happy. If they are of a contrary character, they will be

miserable. Righteousness alone can exalt them as a nation [Proverbs 14:34]. Reader: whoever thou art, remember this!—and in thy sphere practice virtue thyself, and encourage it in others.⁷

Henry’s passionate speech had turned the tide. One early historian records that Henry “*was hailed as the leader raised up by Providence for the occasion,*”⁸ and further explained:

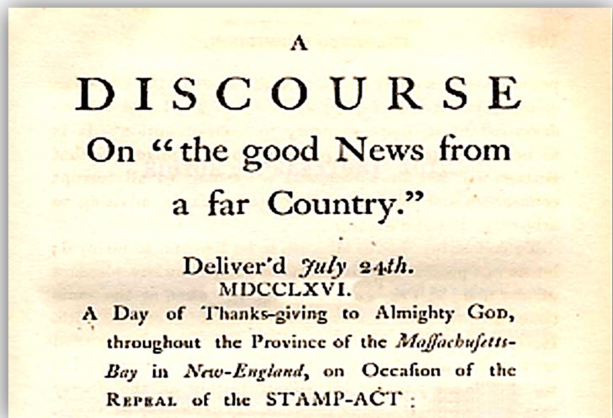
America was filled with Mr. Henry’s fame, and he was recognized on both sides of the Atlantic as the man who rang the alarm bell which had aroused the continent. His wonderful powers of oratory engaged the attention and excited the admiration of men, and the more so as they were not considered the result of laborious training but as the direct gift of Heaven.⁹

Of Henry’s speech, Thomas Jefferson reported:

I attended the debate....and heard the splendid display of Mr. Henry’s talents as a popular orator. They were great indeed—such as I have never heard from any other man. He appeared to me to speak as Homer wrote [a brilliant Greek writer from the 7th century BC].¹⁰

(Recall from Lesson 2 that Henry had learned his remarkable oratorical skills at the feet of the Rev. Samuel Davies.)

Due to the efforts of Henry in Virginia and patriots in other states, the British decided to repeal the Stamp Act. When those rumors reached America, many pastors began preaching happy sermons in commemoration of the anticipated news.¹¹ Then when official word of the repeal actually arrived, the Massachusetts legislature responded by setting aside a day of prayer and thanksgiving to Almighty God.¹² On that state-designated day, noted minister Charles Chauncy (a Massachusetts pastor who had openly opposed the Stamp Act) delivered a famous sermon commemorating the glorious event¹³ (as did numerous other ministers¹⁴). Chauncy chose his text from Proverbs 25:25, and both the sermon and Chauncy were praised by John Adams.¹⁵



Dr. Charles Chauncy’s sermon delivered on July 24, 1766, in response to the repeal of the Stamp Act.

The Committees of Correspondence

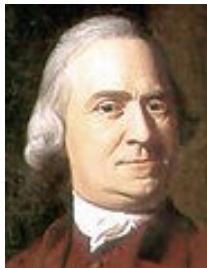
Before American independence, the thirteen colonies were highly independent from each other, with no reliable system of intercommunication between them. Recall from Lesson 2 that the Rev. Jonathan Mayhew of Massachusetts proposed the use of circular letters—that is, messages to be circulated widely (their form of social media) throughout the various colonies in

order to unite them in thinking and action.¹⁶ Mayhew died before his proposal could be implemented, but his idea was eventually brought to reality by Founding Father Samuel Adams, who became known as the “Father of the American Revolution.”¹⁷

Like most of the other Founding Fathers, Adams was a strong Christian. As famous historian George Bancroft affirmed:

Adams...was a member of the church...Evening and morning, his house was a house of prayer; and no one more revered the Christian Sabbath. The austere purity of his life witnessed the sincerity of his profession [of Christianity].¹⁸

Adams fully understood that the conflict between the colonies and England was not just an economic and political struggle but also a spiritual one. He believed that the British government had violated the colonists’ rights not only as men and subjects but also as Christians. He realized that for independence to be achieved, a knowledge of their rights in each of these three areas



Samuel Adams

must be widely appreciated. Adams understood that for the colonies to “*be united*” would require “*time and patience to remove old prejudices, to instruct the unenlightened, convince the doubting, and fortify the timid.*”¹⁹ If the various colonies could be taught and then embrace a consensus of ideas and principles, it would promote solidarity and help them become the *United States of America*.

To help achieve this unity, in 1772 Adams proposed that “Committees of Correspondence” be established in each colony.²⁰ These committees would set up communication with the others, reporting what was occurring in each state/colony. The Committees would also provide materials that could be shared to help educate and alert the colonists in every state to the principles for which they were all fighting, and the actions each should take.

The response of other colonies to Adams’ proposal for “Committees of Correspondence” was enthusiastic. Of course, there were some naysayers, including one patriot who predicted that most people would not join in the effort because “*they are dead and the dead can’t be raised without a miracle.*”²¹ But Adams disagreed, replying, “*All are not dead!—and where there is a spark of patriotic fire, we will rekindle it!*”²²

Adams’ plan moved forward, and in 1772, he himself wrote the first letter circulated among the colonists. It was called *the Rights of the Colonists*, and in it Adams explained:

The rights of the colonists as Christians...may be best understood by reading and carefully studying the institutes of the great Law Giver and Head of the Christian Church, which are to be found clearly written and promulgated in the New Testament.²³

Adams thus openly affirmed that the important principles and rights for which they were contending came from the Bible.

We often hear that the reason America separated from the British was “taxation without representation.” This is partially correct, but that was only one of the twenty-seven grievances

listed in the Declaration of Independence. Another very real concern (rarely mentioned today) was the direct threat against religious liberties. Britain was threatening to control the religious beliefs and expressions of Americans by placing a state-established church over them, just as they had already done in England. This would destroy not only religious tolerance but also their individual rights of religious conscience. As John Adams warned: “*if Parliament could tax us, they could establish the Church of England (with all its creeds, articles, tests, ceremonies, and tithes) and prohibit all other churches.*”²⁴

Significantly, several of the Founding Fathers specifically joined the effort for independence in order to secure complete freedom of religion. As signer of the Declaration Charles Carroll openly acknowledged:

To obtain religious as well as civil liberty I entered jealously into the Revolution, and observing the Christian religion divided into many sects, I founded the hope that no one would be so predominant as to become the religion of the State. That hope was thus early entertained because all of them joined in the same cause, with few exceptions of individuals.²⁵

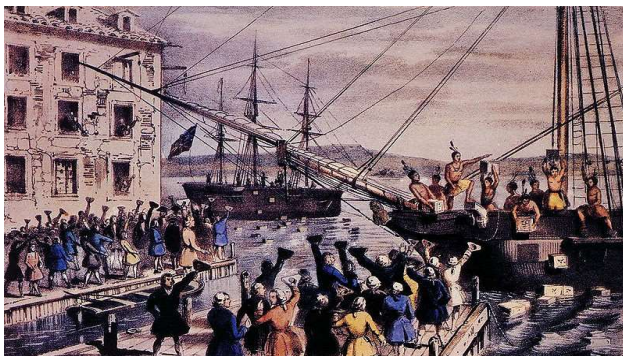
The Boston Tea Party

Although Great Britain had repealed the Stamp Act, the relief was short-lived. England continued to insist on taxing the colonies without their consent, and did so again through measures such as the Townsend Act of 1767 (taxes intended to show the colonists that Great Britain could tax them at will) and then the Tea Act of 1773 (which placed a tax on tea—one of the most popular drinks in America at the time). The Americans still didn’t want to pay these unjust taxes, so in the case of the Tea Act, they simply refused to buy any tea upon which the tax had been placed. As a result of this boycott, tea began to pile up in warehouses in England.



Benjamin Franklin

With the resulting dramatic drop in tea sales, tea merchants in England asked the British government to intervene and do something. Parliament therefore voted to subsidize (that is, underwrite) the tea. This action would greatly lower the price of tea, and Great Britain believed the colonists could be induced to buy the tea if it was cheap. But Benjamin Franklin pointed out



The Boston Tea Party

that the Americans were concerned by the principles of unjust taxation, not the price of the tea; so even if the tea were cheap but still had the tax, the Americans would stand steadfastly by their principles and not buy it.²⁶ Franklin was right, and Americans refused to purchase even the inexpensive tea.

King George III of Great Britain decided he would force the colonists to buy the tea. He therefore ordered it to be sent to America. He

would make the Americans use it—and they were going to pay for it as well!

The patriots in the various ports across the colonies where the ships with the tea were scheduled to arrive held town meetings to decide what to do. At four cities, the ships were turned back—flatly denied entry into the ports.²⁷ But in Boston, one ship did dock. The patriots, however, didn't want the tea unloaded so they put a guard on the ship. But that decision put Mr. Rotch, the owner of the ship, in a very difficult situation.

Almost 7,000 people gathered at Boston's Old South Meeting House to hear Rotch explain his dilemma. If he attempted to sail back to England without unloading the tea, both his life and business would be in danger, for the British had promised they would seize and confiscate his ships unless the tea was offloaded by a certain date.

The colonists came up with a solution to deal with the hard-fisted British policy and at the same time protect Mr. Rotch's ships and business. The Americans would board the ships and throw the tea overboard; the ship could therefore return to England without the tea, and so his ship would be safe. But at the same time, the Americans still would not be compromising their principles by buying the tea. In their eyes, it would be a win-win situation for both.²⁸

To protect the Americans from British punishment, those specifically chosen to board Mr. Rotch's ship and throw the tea overboard disguised themselves as Indians. Early historian Richard Frothingham reported:

The party in disguise,...whooping like Indians, went on board the vessels; and warning their officers and those of the customhouse to keep out of the way, unlaid the hatches, hoisted the chests of tea on deck, cut them open, and hove [dumped] the tea overboard. They proved quiet and systematic workers. No one interfered with them. No other property was injured; no person was harmed; no tea was allowed to be carried away; and the silence of the crowd on shore was such that the breaking of the chests was distinctly heard by them. "The whole," [Governor] Hutchinson wrote, "was done with very little tumult."²⁹

This event became sarcastically known as the "Boston Tea Party."

Boston Port Bill

When King George III and the English government learned what the colonists had done, they were furious and retaliated by passing the Boston Port Bill. Starting on June 1, 1774, the British Navy would blockade and

Ordered, therefore, that the Members of this Houfe do attend in their Places at the Hour of ten in the Forenoon, on the faid 1st Day of June next, in Order to proceed with the Speaker and the Mace to the Church in this City for the Purpofes aforefaid; and that the Reverend Mr. Price be appointed to read Prayers, and the Reverend Mr. Gwatkin to preach a Sermon fuitable to the Occafion.

Ordered, that this Order be forthwith printed and published.

By the HOUSE of BURGESSSES.

GEORGE WYTHE, C. H. B.

The Virginia proclamation, authored by Thomas Jefferson and the Members of the Virginia House, set apart June 1 "as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer," instructing the Members of the Virginia House to attend church to pray and hear a sermon.

completely close the port of Boston, thus shutting down all commerce to and from one of America's busiest ports.³⁰ They intended to cut off the Bostonians' supplies and starve the townspeople into submission.

When the Committees of Correspondence informed the other colonies what was happening, wagon loads of food and supplies began rolling into Boston from across the country.³¹ Additionally, several colonies (including Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Virginia) responded by calling for days of fasting and prayer, with the citizens of those states fervently asking God to intervene on behalf of their oppressed brethren. Early historian Richard Frothingham described the day the Act went into effect:

The day was widely observed as a day of fasting and prayer. The manifestations of sympathy were general. Business was suspended. Bells were muffled and tolled from morning to night; flags were kept at half-mast; streets were dressed in mourning; public buildings and shops were draped in black; large congregations filled the churches.³²

Thomas Jefferson had penned Virginia's prayer resolve in support of the Massachusetts brethren. It called on the legislature and the people "to implore the Divine Interposition...to give us one heart and one mind firmly to oppose, by all just and proper means, every injury to American rights."³³ Frothingham reported the official Virginia response:

The members of the House of Burgesses assembled at their place of meeting and went in procession—with the speaker at their head—to the church and listened to a discourse [sermon]. "Never," a lady wrote, "since my residence in Virginia have I seen so large a congregation as was this day assembled to hear Divine service." The preacher selected for his text the words: "Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee. He will not fail thee nor forsake thee [Deuteronomy 31:6]." "The people," Jefferson says, "met generally with anxiety and alarm in their countenances [i.e., their faces], and the effect of the day through the whole colony was like a shock of electricity, arousing every man and placing him erect and solidly on his center." These words describe the effect of the Port Act throughout the thirteen colonies.³⁴



Members of the Virginia House gathered with a large assembly at Bruton Parish Church in the State Capitol of Williamsburg to observe the Day of Prayer.



Our national seal declares *E Pluribus Unum* (out of many, comes one), reflecting the principle of Christian union.

For the first time, all thirteen colonies came together in joint action—a deep cooperation had finally been achieved on a national level. John Adams spoke of the miraculous nature of this new unity, explaining: “*Thirteen clocks were made to strike together, a perfection of mechanism which no artist had ever before effected.*”³⁵ (An old clock shop filled with various wind-up clocks never sounds all the bells and chimes together at the same time; but this time it was different.)

The external union of the colonies came about because of an internal unity of ideas and key Biblical principles sown into the hearts of the American people by leaders, families, and churches. The Latin phrase on our National Seal reflects this Christian union: *E Pluribus Unum* (out of many, comes one).

The First Continental Congress

Further evidence of America’s new unity was apparent when our first national Congress met in Philadelphia in September, 1774. One of its earliest acts was “*that the Reverend Mr. Duché be desired to open the Congress tomorrow morning with prayers, at the Carpenter’s Hall, at nine o’clock.*”³⁶ Significantly, the delegates from the various colonies—many of whom had never met each other—agreed to open that important meeting with an appeal to God in prayer. The records of Congress thus reported:

Agreeable to the resolve of yesterday, the meeting was opened with prayers by the Reverend Mr. Duché. Voted: that the thanks of the Congress be given to Mr. Duché...for performing Divine Service, and for the excellent prayer which he composed and delivered on the occasion.³⁷

Delegate Silas Deane wrote that “*Mr. Duché...prayed without book about ten minutes so pertinently, with such fervency, purity, and sublimity [simplicity] of style and sentiment...that even Quakers shed tears.*”³⁸ He further declared that Duché’s prayer “*was worth riding one hundred mile to hear*”³⁹—that is, it was worth traveling two or three days on horseback just to be there for that remarkable prayer.

But the Rev. Duché did more than just pray; he also spent time in reading and teaching the Bible. As John Adams affirmed to his wife, Abigail:



George Washington, Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, John Adams, and the other members of the First Continental Congress joined with the Rev. Jacob Duché in prayer.

Duché...read several prayers in the established form, and then read the collect [the Bible lesson] for the seventh day of September, which was the thirty-fifth Psalm....I never saw a greater effect upon an audience. It seemed as if Heaven had ordained that Psalm to be

read on that morning. After this, Mr. Duché, unexpected to everybody, struck out into an extemporary [spontaneous heartfelt] prayer which filled the bosom of every man present. I must confess I never heard a better prayer...with such fervor, such ardor [passion], such earnestness and pathos [emotion], and in language so elegant and sublime, for America, for the Congress, for the province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially the town of Boston. It has had an excellent effect upon everybody here.⁴⁰

(Significantly, Duché covered not just Psalm 35, but also Amos 9, Matthew 8, and Psalm 36.)

The Colonies Begin to Think and Feel Together

Back in Virginia as legislative opposition to the British became more widespread and unified, many members argued that although the British were in the wrong, the colonies were too weak to take on the mighty British. Henry nevertheless urged decisive action (just as he had ten years earlier), telling the other members:

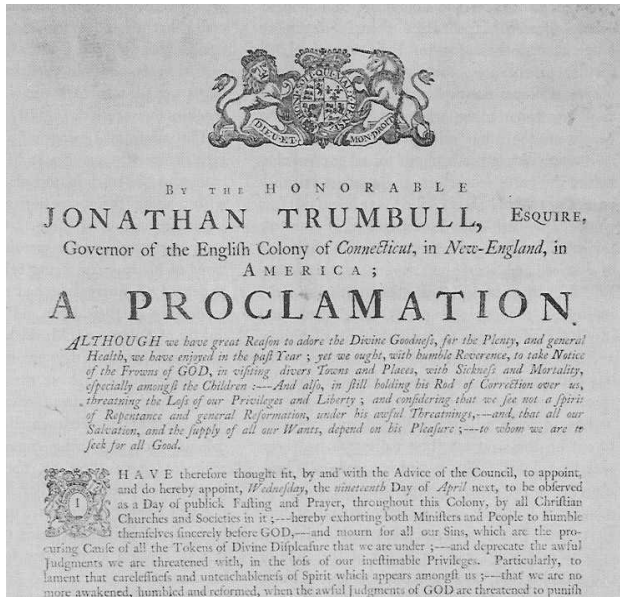
Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people armed in the holy cause of liberty and in such a country as that which we possess are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. [2 Chronicles 32:8] There is a just God [Deuteronomy 32:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:6] Who presides over the destinies of nations [Psalm 75:7; Daniel 4:17], and Who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; [Ecclesiastes 9:11] it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave....Gentlemen may cry, "Peace, Peace," but there is no peace. [Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11] The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms [Jeremiah 50:22]! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle [Matthew 20:6]? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!⁴¹

Henry knew that the time for words had passed. The time for action had arrived.

The Battle of Lexington

The situation between America and England continued to deteriorate, and this was especially apparent in New England. Henry had warned Virginians that "*the next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms,*"⁴² and he was right. Just seven months after the national Congress first met in Philadelphia, Paul Revere set out on his famous ride to alert colonists of the British forces being sent out from Boston against them. But on that ride Revere did more than just issue random alerts; he was specifically riding to find and warn Samuel Adams and John Hancock, whom the British had ordered to be seized and killed.⁴³ Revere headed directly to where he knew they would be staying: the home of the Rev. Jonas Clark, pastor in the small town of Lexington.

The Rev. Clark had been teaching the Biblical principles of liberty to his church (as well as the prominent men of Massachusetts), and had prepared his church members to defend themselves if



Gov. Jonathan Trumbull's Prayer Proclamation

necessary. After being informed that British troops were on their way to Lexington, the Rev. Clark was asked if the people would fight; he acknowledged that he had trained them for that very hour.⁴⁴

What is often called “*the shot heard around the world*” (that is, the first battle of the American War for Independence) took place the next morning, April 19, 1775.

Approximately 70 members⁴⁵ of Rev. Clark’s congregation (both black and white parishioners) gathered on the lawn of the church to face 800 British.⁴⁶ At the end of the skirmish, eighteen Americans—both white and black—lay dead or wounded on the ground, all of them from his church.⁴⁷ Upon seeing the

slain, The Rev. Clark declared, “*From this day will be dated the liberty of the world!*”⁴⁸

Interestingly, in March, 1775 (which was a month *before* the battle at Lexington), Governor Jonathan Trumbull of neighboring Connecticut had called for...

a day of public fasting and prayer...that God would graciously pour out His Holy Spirit on us, to bring us to a thorough repentance and effectual reformation...That He would restore, preserve, and secure the liberties of this and all the other American colonies, and make this land a mountain of holiness and habitation of righteousness forever.⁴⁹

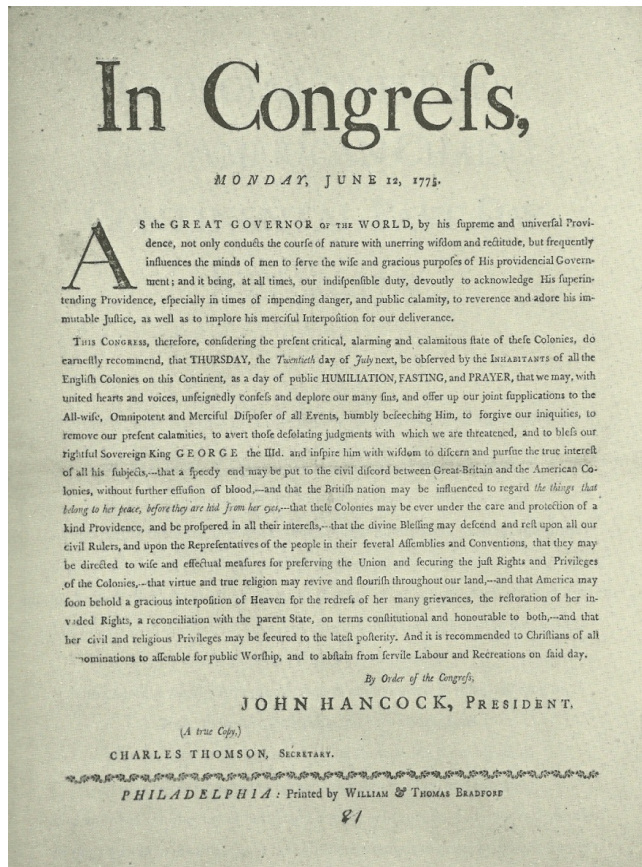
Governor Trumbull had decided back in March, 1775, that the particular day of prayer and fasting he had called would be observed, of all days, on “*Wednesday, the nineteenth day of April*”⁵⁰—the day on which (unknown to them at the time) the Battle of Lexington would occur! So God had an entire state praying on the very day that the fighting began.

The Battle of Lexington was quickly followed later the same day by the Battle of Concord, and then by armed conflict along the road to Boston. (And just a few days later in Virginia, Patrick Henry led several hundred men against British forces then who had tried to seize the colonists’ weaponry.)

With the escalation of hostilities in Massachusetts, the British ordered it be placed under martial law. On the day martial law went into effect, Congress called for a day of fasting and prayer. In that call to prayer, Congress appealed to “*the Great Governor of the world*” Who



Statue of Connecticut Governor Jonathan Trumbull in the US Capitol



Proclamation for a day of fasting and prayer issued by the Continental Congress (John Hancock was its president), July 20, 1775, to be observed on the British imposition of martial law.

“frequently influences the minds of men to serve the wise and gracious purposes of His Providential government,” recommending “to Christians of all denominations to assemble for public...humiliation, fasting, and prayer.”⁵¹

The Declaration of Independence

The armed fighting had begun, but it would still be another fourteen months before the colonists would finally declare their independence. They still considered themselves British citizens and sought all means possible to settle the conflict without a total break from England. For eleven years (from 1765 until 1776), the Americans worked hard to achieve reconciliation. In fact, in late 1775, the Americans had sent the Olive Branch Petition to the king, seeking to settle their differences, but the king refused even to consider the document—he flatly negated it out of hand.⁵²

By July 1776, the delegates to Congress had concluded that a settlement was not possible and that it was time to declare independence.

The Continental Congress spent several days first in debating and approving independence, and then in finalizing the wording of the Declaration of Independence, which fifty-six individuals eventually signed. From Great Britain’s perspective, that act marked those fifty-six as traitors, making them all subject to the death penalty.

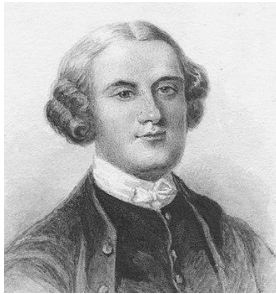
Faith of the Signers

Sadly, too little is known by the general public today about these Founding Fathers who risked so much. In fact, they are often wrongly presented as self-serving and largely irreligious—as atheists and secularists, or at best deists.⁵³ But in reality they were almost all Christians; in fact, twenty-nine of the fifty-six signers held degrees from what in their day were considered seminaries or Bible schools.⁵⁴

Reading the voluminous writings of the individual Founders who signed the Declaration of Independence reveals the strong Christian faith that characterized so many of them. Here are a few representative examples:

RICHARD STOCKTON: [I] subscribe to the entire belief of the great and leading doctrines

of the Christian religion, such as the being of God; the universal defection and depravity of human nature; the Divinity of the person and the completeness of the redemption



Richard Stockton

purchased by the blessed Savior; the necessity of the operations of the Divine Spirit; of Divine faith accompanied with an habitual virtuous life; and the universality of the Divine Providence.

[I]...exhort and charge [my children] that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, that the way of life held up in the Christian system is calculated for the most complete happiness that can be enjoyed in this mortal state, [and] that all occasions of vice and immorality is injurious either immediately or consequentially—even in this life.⁵⁵

CHARLES CARROLL: On the mercy of my Redeemer I rely for salvation and on His merits, not on the works I have done in obedience to His precepts.⁵⁶ [I am] grateful to Almighty God for the blessings which, through Jesus Christ Our Lord, He has conferred on my beloved country.⁵⁷ I give and bequeath my soul to God who gave it, my body to the earth, hoping that through and by the merits, sufferings, and mediation of my only Savior and Jesus Christ, I may be admitted into the Kingdom prepared by God for those who love, fear and truly serve Him.⁵⁸

BENJAMIN RUSH: The Gospel of Jesus Christ prescribes the wisest rules for just conduct in every situation of life. Happy they who are enabled to obey them in all situations! . . . My only hope of salvation is in the infinite transcendent love of God manifested to the world by the death of His Son upon the Cross. Nothing but His blood will wash away my sins [Acts 22:16]. I rely exclusively upon it. Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly! [Revelation 22:20].⁵⁹ The great enemy of the salvation of man, in my opinion, never invented a more effective means of limiting Christianity from the world than by persuading mankind that it was improper to read the Bible at schools.⁶⁰ [C]hristianity is the only true and perfect religion; and...in proportion as mankind adopt its principles and obey its precepts, they will be wise and happy.⁶¹ [T]he Bible contains more knowledge necessary to man in his present state than any other book in the world.⁶²

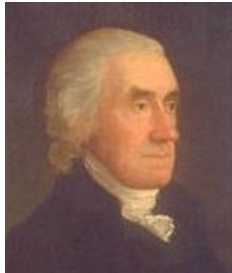


Benjamin Rush

JOHN WITHERSPOON: Christ Jesus—the promise of old made unto the fathers, the hope of Israel [Acts 28:20], the light of the world [John 8:12], and the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth [Romans 10:4]—is the only Savior of sinners, in opposition to all false religions and every uninstituted rite. as He Himself says (John 14:6): “I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.”⁶³ [N]o man, whatever be his character or whatever be his hope, shall enter into rest unless he be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.⁶⁴ [T]here is no salvation in any other than in Jesus Christ of Nazareth.⁶⁵ [I]f you are not reconciled to God through Jesus

Christ—if you are not clothed with the spotless robe of His righteousness—you must forever perish.⁶⁶ Whoever is an avowed enemy to God, I scruple not to call him an enemy to his country.⁶⁷

ROBERT TREAT PAINE: I believe the Bible to be the written word of God and to contain in it the whole rule of faith and manners.⁶⁸ I desire to bless and praise the name of God



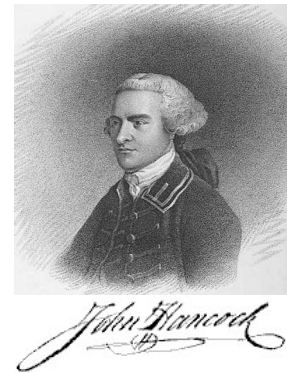
Robert Treat Paine

most high for appointing me my birth in a land of Gospel Light where the glorious tidings of a Savior and of pardon and salvation through Him have been continually sounding in mine ears.⁶⁹ I am constrained to express my adoration of the Supreme Being, the Author of my existence, in full belief of His Providential goodness and His forgiving mercy revealed to the world through Jesus Christ, through whom I hope for never ending happiness in a future state.⁷⁰

SAMUEL ADAMS: I...[rely] upon the merits of Jesus Christ for a pardon of all my sins.⁷¹

JOHN HANCOCK officially called the State of Massachusetts to prayer on twenty-two occasions. Typical of his requests, he asked the state to pray:

- [T]hat all may bow to the scepter of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the whole earth be filled with His glory.⁷²
- [T]hat the spiritual kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be continually increasing until the whole earth shall be filled with His glory.⁷³
- [T]hat the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be established in peace and righteousness among all the nations of the earth.⁷⁴



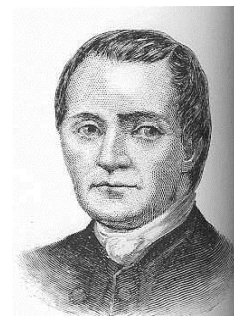
THOMAS MCKEAN was chief judge in Pennsylvania. In the case *Respublica v. John Roberts*,⁷⁵ after a jury sentenced John Roberts to death for treason, McKean then told Roberts:

You will probably have but a short time to live. Before you launch into eternity, it behooves you...to repent of your evil deeds; to be incessant in prayers to the great and merciful God to forgive your manifold transgressions and sins; to teach you to rely upon the merit and passion of a dear Redeemer, and thereby to avoid those regions of sorrow—those doleful shades where peace and rest can never dwell, where even hope cannot enter....May you, reflecting upon these things, and pursuing the will of the great Father of light and life, be received into [the] company and society of angels and archangels and the spirits of just men made perfect; and may you be qualified to enter into the joys of Heaven—joys unspeakable and full of glory!⁷⁶

OLIVER WOLCOTT: Through various scenes of life, God has sustained me. May He ever be my unfailing friend; may His love cherish my soul; may my heart with gratitude acknowledge His goodness; and may my desires be to Him and to the remembrance of His name....May we then turn our eyes to the bright objects above, and may God give us strength to travel the upward road. May the Divine Redeemer conduct us to that seat of bliss which He himself has prepared....It is most evident that this land is under the protection of the Almighty, and that we shall be saved not by our wisdom nor by our might, but by the Lord of Host Who is wonderful in counsel and Almighty in all His operations.⁷⁷

ROGER SHERMAN: I believe that there is one only living and true God, existing in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are a revelation from God, and a complete rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him....I believe that God...did send His own Son to become man, die in the room and stead of sinners, and thus to lay a foundation for the offer of pardon and salvation to all mankind, so as all may be saved who are willing to accept the Gospel offer.⁷⁸

God commands all men everywhere to repent. He also commands them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and has assured us that all who do repent and believe shall be saved....in a way of free grace through the atonement. "Ask and ye shall receive [John 16:24]. Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely [Revelation 22:17]. Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" [John 6:37].⁷⁹



Roger Sherman

Many additional declarations of Christian faith were made by other signers of the Declaration. Similar affirmations can likewise be found among signers of the Constitution, presidents of Congress, supreme court justices, military generals, early presidents, and many others. With such an abundance of pronouncements of strong Christian faith from so many leaders, it was quite obvious to those of previous generations that our Founding Fathers, with only a few individual exceptions, were collectively a group of largely Christian men.

One such confirmation of this comes from the writings of Richard Henry Lee (signer of the Declaration, President of the Continental Congress, and a framer of the Bill of Rights). Following his death in 1794, his papers and correspondence, including numerous original handwritten letters from other patriots (such as George Washington, Benjamin Rush, John Dickinson, and so forth), were passed on to his grandson, who compiled those documents into a two-volume work published in 1825. After having studied those personal letters of America's greatest Founders and statesmen, the grandson described the great body of men who founded the nation in these words:

The wise and great men of those days were not ashamed publicly to confess the name of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! In behalf of the people, as their representatives and rulers, they acknowledged the sublime doctrine of his mediation!⁸⁰

Similarly, John Quincy Adams (the son of a signer of the Declaration, he personally knew most of the Founders) also affirmed that they were predominantly Christian, declaring:

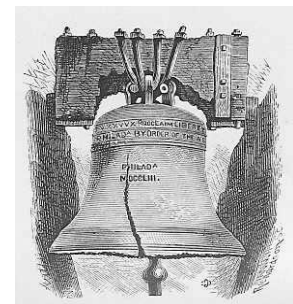
From the day of the Declaration, the people of the North American Union and of its constituent states were associated bodies of civilized men and Christians....They were bound by the laws of God (which they all) and by the laws of the Gospel (which they nearly all) acknowledged as the rules of their conduct.⁸¹

And in 1854, the US House Judiciary Committee similarly declared:

Christianity....was the religion of the founders of the republic, and they expected it to remain the religion of their descendants.⁸²

The evidence is abundant that the Founders were predominantly Christians.

On July 8, 1776, four days after the Declaration of Independence had been approved, the Liberty Bell rang out from the State House in Philadelphia, calling citizens together to hear the first public reading of the Declaration. It was appropriate that the Liberty Bell should be rung that day, for emblazoned around its top is a Bible verse which reads “*Leviticus 25:10: Proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof.*”



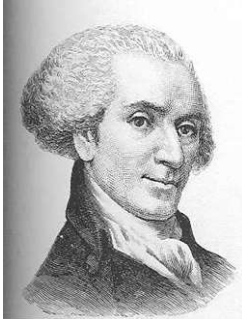
Leviticus 25:10 is engraved on the Liberty Bell.

The Cost They Paid

Returning to the great personal risk faced by those who signed the Declaration of Independence, they were not thinking they would someday be famous for what they had done; rather, they were thinking they would most likely be killed. Yet they did not cower in fear, nor were they ashamed of standing for their principles. In fact, it was just the opposite.

For example, John Hancock, the President of the Continental Congress, after signing the document with unusually large writing, purportedly declared: “*John Bull [King George] can read my name without spectacles and may now double his reward of £500 [\$100,000 today] for my head. That is my defiance!*”⁸³ He added, “*We must be unanimous. There must be no pulling different ways; we must all hang together.*”⁸⁴ Benjamin Franklin, responding with his characteristic wit, reportedly agreed, “*Yes, we must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately!*”⁸⁵

Years later, Benjamin Rush (one of the signers of the Declaration) reminisced to fellow-signer John Adams about what had occurred on the day they signed the Declaration, and the fact they might all be hanged for what they were doing. Rush reminded Adams:



Elbridge Gerry

Do you recollect the pensive and awful [deep and somber] silence which pervaded the house when we were called up, one after another, to the table of the President of Congress to subscribe [sign our names to] what was believed by many at that time to be our own death warrants? The silence and the gloom of the morning was interrupted, I well recollect, only for a moment by Colonel Harrison of Virginia [a very strong and big man], who said to Mr. Gerry [a very tiny man] at the table: “I shall have a great advantage over you, Mr. Gerry, when we are all hung for what we are now doing. From the size and weight of my body I shall die in a few minutes, but from the lightness of your body you will dance in the air an hour or two before you are dead!” The speech procured a transient [temporary] smile, but it was soon succeeded by the solemnity [seriousness] with which the whole business was conducted.⁸⁶

While this comment temporarily lightened the somber mood of the day, they all understood that because of what they had done, death was a very real likelihood for each of them. They clearly realized that, as one historian noted, “*history was strewn with the bones and blood of freedom fighters.*”⁸⁷ America would be fighting the mighty British Empire, which had the greatest military power on the earth. These men faced the very real possibility of losing everything they had; and in some way, they all suffered for their decision.

As noted historian T.R. Fehrenbach writes:

Nine signers died of wounds or hardships during the Revolutionary War. Five were captured or imprisoned, in some cases with brutal treatment. The wives, sons, and daughters of others were killed, jailed, mistreated, persecuted, or left penniless. One was driven from his wife’s deathbed and lost all his children. The houses of twelve signers were burned to the ground. Seventeen lost everything they owned. Every signer was proscribed as a traitor; every one was hunted. Most were driven into flight; most were at one time or another barred from their families or homes. Most were offered immunity, freedom, rewards, their property, or the lives and release of loved ones to break their pledged word or to take the King’s protection. Their fortunes were forfeited, but their honor was not. No Signer defected or changed his stand throughout the darkest hours. Their honor, like the nation, remained intact.⁸⁸



All but a very few signers of the Declaration were Christians. These leaders sacrificed much to secure liberty for all of us and for generations to come.

These signers have largely been forgotten today, along with the high price they paid for the liberty we possess (and that we too often take for granted). As John Adams reminded the younger generation of his day, the sacrifice made by the Founders should always be remembered and honored:

Posterity! You will never know how much it cost the present generation to preserve your freedom! I hope you will make a good use of it. If you do not, I shall repent in Heaven that I ever took half the pains to preserve it.⁸⁹

Celebrating Independence



John Dickinson

But our Founders not only wanted the high cost they paid for our liberty to be remembered, they also wanted us to recall that our liberty was the result of Biblical faith and dependence on God. In fact, John Adams declared that Independence Day should “*be celebrated by succeeding generations...as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty.*”⁹⁰ John Dickinson (a general in the War and later a signer of the Constitution) similarly declared, “*Our cause...is nothing less than to maintain the liberty with which Heaven itself ‘hath made us free’.*”⁹¹ And Thomas Jefferson likewise avowed:

“*God who gave us life gave us liberty.*”⁹² [C]an the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God?”⁹³

In subsequent years as American independence was celebrated, the Founders kept a remembrance of God at the forefront of their festivities. For example, on July 4, 1793, Founding Father Elias Boudinot (a President of the Continental Congress and a Framers of the Bill of Rights) reminded citizens:

Let us then, my friend and fellow-citizens, unite all our endeavors this day to remember with reverential gratitude to our Supreme Benefactor all the wonderful things He has done for us in a miraculous deliverance from a second Egypt [that is, God delivered America from Britain in the same way he delivered His people Israel from the Egyptians thousands of years earlier]—another house of bondage. “And thou shalt show thy son on this day, saying, this day is kept as a day of joy and gladness because of the great things the Lord has done for us when we were delivered from the threatening power of an invading foe” [Exodus 13:8]...[M]ay these great principles in the end become instrumental in bringing about that happy state of the world when from every human breast, joined by the grand chorus of the skies, shall arise with the profoundest reverence that Divinely celestial anthem of universal praise, “Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; good will towards men [Luke 2:14].”⁹⁴



Engraved in stone in the Jefferson Memorial are Jefferson’s words about the importance of relying on and openly acknowledging God.

The Founders knew and regularly reminded Americans that God was the Author of our liberties.

Congressional Actions Affirming America's Religious Faith

Shortly after the Continental Congress declared independence from Great Britain, it appointed multiple chaplains to open the daily meetings of Congress in prayer including the Rev. Jacob Duché (an Anglican), the Rev. Patrick Allison (a Baptist), and the Rev. William White (an Episcopalian).

Congress also made George Washington commanding general over the Continental Army. One of his first military orders established chaplains for each regiment, and he then told the soldiers:

The General hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier, defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country.⁹⁵

Prayer and Fasting

The American Congress frequently declared days of fasting and prayer to seek God for His aid and assistance in their struggle for freedom, followed later by days of thanksgiving to acknowledge the Hand of God after victories in battle and other significant events. In fact, they issued fifteen official calls for prayer during the War for Independence.⁹⁶ Publicly acknowledging God and seeking His help was indeed a central part of American public life. (See Appendix 1).

Bibles and Congress

By 1777, as a result of British blockades of American ports, America began experiencing a shortage of several important commodities, including Bibles. A request was therefore placed before the Continental Congress to print or import more, because *“unless timely care be used to prevent it, we shall not have Bibles for our schools and families and for the public worship of God in our churches”*⁹⁷ Congress recognized this need and announced: *“The Congress desire to have a Bible printed under their care and by their encouragement.”*⁹⁸ A special congressional committee investigated and found it would be cheaper and quicker to import the Bibles than print them here in America, so it therefore recommended:

[T]he use of the Bible is so universal and its importance so great,...your Committee recommend that Congress will order the Committee of Commerce to import 20,000 Bibles from Holland, Scotland, or elsewhere, into the different ports of the States of the Union.⁹⁹

Congress agreed, and ordered the Bibles imported.¹⁰⁰

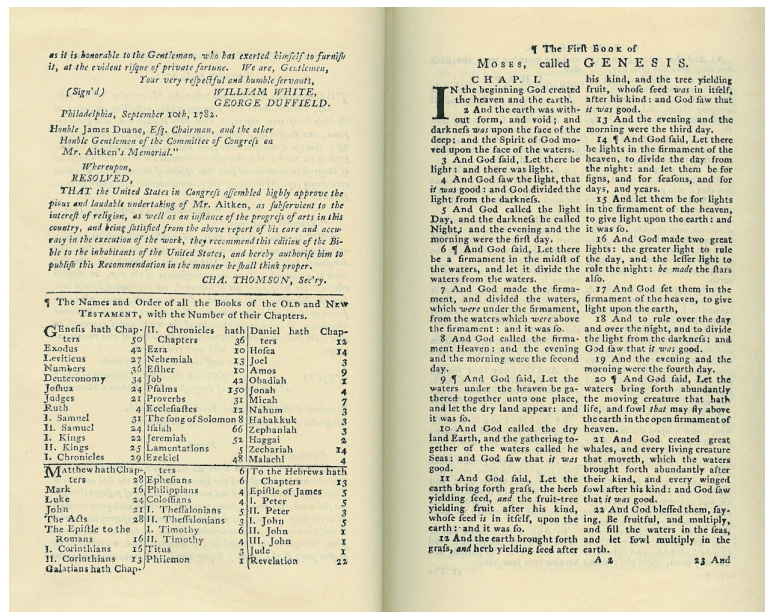
Interestingly, decades later in 1854 when a group claimed that the government was violating the so-called “separation of church and state” by allowing government-sponsored religious activities and funding in public, the Chairman of the US House Judiciary Committee responded

with a lengthy report refuting their claims. In so doing, he specifically cited that 1777 act of Congress, noting:

On the 11th of September, 1777, a committee, having consulted with Dr. Allison [an early congressional chaplain] about printing an edition of thirty thousand Bibles, and finding that they would be compelled to send abroad for type and paper with an advance of £10,272, 10s [over \$2 million in today's currency], Congress voted to instruct the Committee on Commerce to import twenty thousand Bibles from Scotland and Holland into the different ports of the Union. The reason assigned was that the use of the book was so universal and important. Now what was passing on that day? The army of Washington was fighting the battle of Brandywine; the gallant soldiers of the Revolution were displaying their heroic though unavailing valor; twelve hundred soldiers were stretched in death on that battlefield; Lafayette was bleeding; the booming of the cannon was heard in the hall where Congress was sitting [in Philadelphia]—in the hall from which Congress was soon to be a fugitive. At that important hour, Congress was passing an order for importing twenty thousand Bibles; and yet we have never heard that they were charged by their generation of any attempt to unite Church and State or surpassing their powers to legislate on religious matters.¹⁰¹

For whatever reason, those Bibles were not imported as Congress had ordered in 1777; and as the war prolonged, the shortage increased.

So in 1781, Robert Aitken, official printer of the Continental Congress, petitioned Congress for permission to print Bibles on his presses in Philadelphia, thus precluding the need to import them. Explaining that this Bible would be “a neat edition of the Holy Scriptures for the use of schools,”¹⁰² Congress approved his request and appointed a congressional committee to oversee the project.¹⁰³ On September 12, 1782, that Bible received the approval of the full Congress¹⁰⁴ and soon began rolling off the presses—with a congressional endorsement printed in front.¹⁰⁵ Known as “The Bible of the Revolution,” it was the first English-language Bible printed in America.



Front of Aitken Bible: “Whereupon, Resolved, That the United States in Congress assembled...recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States.”

God's Hand Visible

America eventually prevailed in its struggle for freedom, becoming an example to the world of a free nation that embraced Biblical principles. It had indeed become “*a city set upon a hill*” as long before envisioned by Puritan leader John Winthrop (see Lesson 1).

Throughout the American War for Independence, Americans believed God performed many miracles on behalf of the American army. Here are some examples of what they perceived to be God's direct intervention.

Long Island (August 1776)

In August 1776, fighting erupted on the western end of Long Island (in New York) between British and American forces. British General Howe and his army of 32,000 men inflicted great losses on the heavily outnumbered 8,000 troops of the American army. At Brooklyn Heights, General Howe prepared to capture or destroy the remaining Americans, thus ending the war only a month after America had declared independence.



The Battle of Long Island

The British army had forced Washington's troops up against the nearly mile-wide East River and created a great semicircle around them, fully entrapping them. Washington realized that to stand and fight against such odds would mean defeat and the end of the war; but to surrender was unthinkable. Strangely, however, British General Howe—despite his superior position and numbers—for two days chose not to attack and end the war; had he struck, victory would have been certain due to overwhelming British numbers and superiority.

Meanwhile, Washington, with all land routes blocked by the British, decided to retreat across the East River. He issued orders for every rowboat, sailboat, and seagoing vessel in the area to be quietly collected and used for an escape. However, unknown to Washington, the British were planning to close that route by sailing their ships up the river, taking up position behind the Americans. But as Washington's men gathered the small craft, a heavy storm entered the region: rain began falling, and strong winds blowing, which kept the British ships from sailing up behind them and blocking their escape.

By that evening, the American fleet of little crafts had finally been gathered, and some boats began loading and departing on the rough waves, but the waters were so turbulent that the boats could only be partially loaded. By eleven o'clock, the raging winds stopped, at which time it was too dark for the British ships to make their advance up the river. A gentle breeze then began to blow from the south and southwest, which actually favored the Americans, allowing them to fully fill the rest of the boats and depart.

Washington's men crossed the river all night without being heard or seen. But as the sun began

to rise, not all the troops had been evacuated. The British would surely see what they were doing and stop them; death for the remaining Americans would be certain. But something else completely unexpected happened. American Major Benjamin Tallmadge, still with the remaining men on the island, reported:

As the dawn of the next day approached, those of us who remained in the trenches became very anxious for our own safety, and when the dawn appeared, there were several regiments still on duty. At this time a very dense fog began to rise and it seemed to settle in a peculiar manner over both encampments. I recollect this peculiar Providential occurrence perfectly well; and so very dense was the atmosphere that I could scarcely discern a man at six yards distance.¹⁰⁶

The fog hovered over the area until the last American boats left, carrying the remaining troops to safety. Providentially, Washington and the Americans had been miraculously preserved and kept alive to continue the fight for freedom.

But there was more to the story—another miraculous event had also occurred during the retreat.



The American retreat from Long Island

A family of British-sympathizers lived near the point where the American troops were being evacuated. The lady of the house, when she learned what the Americans were doing, sent a servant to alert the British. He safely slipped past the American guards, but upon reaching the British lines was stopped by German-speaking mercenaries serving with the British, with whom he was unable to communicate. They therefore put him under guard and held him until the next morning,

when a British officer finally questioned him. Upon learning the news of the American evacuation, British troops were immediately sent to confirm the report, only to find the Continental camp completely empty. The British then rushed toward the shore, arriving just as the fog lifted enough for them to see the last boats crossing the East River. Over eight thousand American soldiers and their supplies had miraculously escaped.¹⁰⁷

This extraordinary retreat was one of the many remarkable events of the war, and the outcome was attributed to the direct intervention of God. (By the way, notice that in this account and others to follow that many of these miraculous events often involved unusual and sudden changes in the weather. Such changes certainly cannot be summoned or controlled by any human hand but only by God Himself.)

Trenton and the Crossing of the Delaware (December 1776)

A few months after the retreat from Long Island, Washington found himself in another desperate situation that again threatened to end the War for Independence. The American army

was made up of citizen volunteers who enlisted for one year at a time. It was now December at the end of the first year of the conflict, so most of the men's one-year enlistments were up at the end of the month. Since few American military victories had been won, morale was low and re-enlistments were few. Washington's army was rapidly dwindling, and a defeat at the hands of the British would likely destroy all remaining hope. Washington knew he had to make a bold decision, so he went on the offensive.

In a desperate move, he decided to cross the treacherous Delaware River in pre-dawn hours in order to surprise the enemy. He chose the early morning of December 26 to attack the British German-Hessian garrison quartered at Trenton. (He knew that the German custom of drinking on Christmas would help assure their deep slumber the next morning.)



Washington crossing the Delaware

As the American troops prepared to cross the Delaware River, a violent snow and hailstorm suddenly began. This hardship, however, worked in their favor by reducing the visibility to near zero, thus causing the enemy's sentries to leave their posts and seek cover. The Americans entered Trenton so unexpectedly and with such surprise, that after only 45 minutes of fighting, some 1,000 Hessian prisoners were taken captive. Only three Americans were wounded in the battle. (Two others died, but not from the fighting; they froze to death on the harsh march.)

General Henry Knox reported: *"The hurry, fright, and confusion of the enemy was not unlike that which will be when the last trump will sound"*¹⁰⁸ (a reference to 1 Corinthians 15:52, describing the last trumpet sounding and Christ returning to earth, thus creating immense confusion among His enemies). General Knox affirmed, *"Providence seemed to have smiled upon every part of this enterprise."*¹⁰⁹ This victory raised American spirits, causing new enlistments. God once again was helping secure American liberty.

Battle of Saratoga (October 1777)

Despite the welcome victory at Trenton, the Americans were still losing more battles than they were winning. One of their more notable losses was at the Battle of Brandywine, where 1,200 American were killed in a great defeat. Following that tragic loss, Washington prayed fervently for a change—for a *"signal stroke of Providence."*¹¹⁰

The British leaders had been emboldened by that Brandywine victory and sought to crush the Americans as quickly as possible. So in a bold move of overwhelming force, Lord North of Great Britain made plans to send British General Howe with his 30,000+ men north from New York City to join General Burgoyne's 7,000 men at Saratoga in northern New York. Together, these nearly 40,000 soldiers would crush the American army of some 9,000 soldiers led by General Horatio Gates. It was an excellent plan—except that in Lord North's haste to leave London for a holiday, he forgot to sign the order for General Howe to move his thirty thousand troops. And unexpectedly adverse weather conditions in the Atlantic kept additional British

reinforcements from arriving on time. The result was a massive American victory. The British forces at Saratoga surrendered to General Gates in October 1777, with 5,000 British soldiers being taken prisoner.



Surrender of British General Burgoyne at Saratoga

(Incidentally, an indication of the generally just and honorable attitude of the Americans was seen in their treatment of those British prisoners. After receiving their pledge that they would no longer take up arms against the Americans, the British were allowed to keep their weapons; and three armed American officers then led the 5,000 armed prisoners back to Boston to put them on ships to send them back to England.¹¹¹ What an amazing sight that must have been!)

Following the victory, the Continental Congress proclaimed a day of thanksgiving and praise, explaining:

Forasmuch as it is the indispensable duty of all men to adore the Superintending Providence of Almighty God,...and it having pleased Him in His abundant mercy...to crown our arms with most signal success: It is therefore recommended...[a day] for solemn thanksgiving and praise.¹¹²

Congress further recommended that Americans take time to confess any of their own personal sins and humbly ask God “*through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of remembrance*” so that He would be able to continue pouring out His blessings upon the nation.¹¹³

That victory at Saratoga is considered one of the most significant battles in world history,¹¹⁴ and it certainly was a turning point in the American War for Independence. One consequence of this victory was that France realized their long-time enemy Britain might be defeated. They therefore decided to help the Americans, sending them much-needed French munitions, ships, and money, as well as highly experienced troops, all of which were invaluable to the American cause.

Benedict Arnold’s Treason (September 1780)

Late in the war, American general Benedict Arnold devised a treacherous secret plan to hand a key American fort and General George Washington over to the British. That treasonous plot was uncovered through what Washington described as “*a combination of extraordinary circumstances.*”¹¹⁵

British Major John André had secretly met with General Arnold at American-held West Point, New York. André obtained from Arnold vital information on how and when to capture that fort

and then either kill or capture General Washington. Dressed in civilian clothing, André returned from that meeting to a British-held region of the state to deliver the crucial information to his superiors. When he reached that British-controlled area, he encountered some folks he assumed to be British supporters, but who were actually American militiamen dressed as common citizens. André talked too freely to them, which aroused their suspicion. They searched him and found incriminating secret papers hidden in the bottom of his boot.



The American traitor General Benedict Arnold (sitting) plots his treasonous action with British Major André (standing).

André offered them large amounts of money to release him, but they refused. As Washington himself later affirmed, “*They [the American militiamen] were offered, I am informed, a large sum of money [by André] for his release, and as many goods as they would demand, but without effect. Their conduct gives them a just claim to the thanks of their country.*”¹¹⁶ Those American soldiers had refused to be bribed or bought, no matter what André offered.

The militiamen took André to the nearest American military outpost, where the commanding officer carried the news to his immediate superior, General Benedict Arnold, not realizing that Arnold was actually part of the plot. Arnold, now having been accidentally warned of André’s capture and the plan’s exposure, fled to British lines for safety. But had not Arnold’s treasonous plans been providentially uncovered, West Point and General Washington would surely have fallen into British hands, which would have been a defeat too great for the Americans to overcome.

God had once again intervened to save the American Army and its fight for freedom. As Washington affirmed to his troops:

Treason of the blackest dye was yesterday discovered! General Arnold, who commanded at West Point, lost to every sentiment of honor, of public and private obligation, was about to deliver up that important post into the hands of the enemy. Such an event must have given the American cause a deadly wound if not a fatal stab. Happily, the treason has been timely discovered to prevent the fatal misfortune. The Providential train of circumstances which led to it affords the most convincing proof that the liberties of America are the object of Divine protection.¹¹⁷

General Washington later told Colonel John Laurens, “*In no instance since the commencement of the War has the interposition of Providence appeared more conspicuous than in the rescue of the post and garrison of West Point from Arnold’s villainous perfidy [treachery].*”¹¹⁸

When the Continental Congress learned of the event, they, too, saw God’s hand in the affair

and therefore recommended the states set aside a day of public thanksgiving and prayer. Congress asked the people not only to praise and thank God for His direct intervention in uncovering the secret treason but also to ask Him to pardon their sins, smile upon their endeavors, and “*cause the knowledge of Christianity to spread over all the earth.*”¹¹⁹

The Battle of Yorktown (October 1781)

By late 1781, British General Cornwallis (the commander of all British forces in America) had moved his troops and stationed them at Yorktown, Virginia. George Washington therefore marched his army from New York down to Yorktown.



The Surrender of British Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown

Cornwallis was awaiting a British fleet to reinforce him and move his troops into winter quarters at a new location. But unknown to him, a French fleet under Admiral De Grasse had been sent, and it arrived just in time to stop the British fleet from reaching Cornwallis.

When Cornwallis learned that his forces were outnumbered and no help would be coming, he decided to retreat across the York River. At ten

o'clock on the night of October 17th, sixteen large boats were loaded with troops and sent out. The first few boats landed safely, but then Cornwallis reported: “[A]t this critical moment, the weather, from being moderate and calm, changed to a violent storm of wind and rain and drove all the boats, some of which had troops on board, down the river.”¹²⁰

Because of this unexpected, even miraculous change in the weather, Cornwallis was unable to complete the withdrawal of the rest of his troops. He now found his army divided, half on one side of the river and half on the other. At daybreak, Washington’s artillery opened up on the stranded Cornwallis, who ordered the troops across the river to come back and help him, but it was too late. Later that day, he surrendered his remaining forces to Washington, essentially marking the end of the American War for Independence.

Both Washington and the Continental Congress recognized God’s hand in the events at Yorktown, and wanted to thank Him. *The Journals of the Continental Congress* reports:

Resolved, that Congress will at two o’clock this day go in procession to the Dutch Lutheran Church and return thanks to Almighty God for crowning the allied arms of the United States and France with success by the surrender of the Earl of Cornwallis.¹²¹

Congress went to church together, *en masse*, to thank God for the victory. Then in Washington’s congratulatory order to the army the day after the surrender, he wrote:

The General congratulates the army upon the glorious event of yesterday....Divine service is to be performed tomorrow in the several brigades and divisions. The Commander-in-Chief recommends that the troops not on duty should universally attend

with that seriousness of deportment and gratitude of heart which the recognition of such reiterated and astonishing interpositions of Providence demand of us.¹²²

So not just Congress but also the American army gathered together in public religious services to thank God.

Ending the War for Independence

On February 4, 1783, sixteen months after the victory at Yorktown, England officially declared an end to hostilities. On September 8, the peace treaty was signed by John Adams, John Jay, and Benjamin Franklin and then approved by the full Congress. That final document, like so many others of the Revolution, contained explicitly Christian acknowledgements, with its opening line declaring:

In the name of the most holy and undivided Trinity.¹²³

The Christian spirit undergirding the American Founding was clear. And most Americans openly acknowledged (as did our military leaders and public officials) that God had directly influenced events leading to the birth of America and a new era of liberty in the world. They were unashamed in identifying Christian principles as the basis of what had been accomplished.

Without these Biblical principles, America would not have been born, nor would it have become a beacon of liberty for the world. Jedidiah Morse, who lived through the American War for Independence and wrote one of the early histories of the conflict, openly affirmed:

To the kindly influence of Christianity we owe that degree of civil freedom and political and social happiness which mankind now enjoy.¹²⁴ ■

Lesson 3: Appendix A

Public Prayer Proclamations

Early Americans were predominantly Christians, and they strongly embraced the doctrine of Divine Providence. The word “Providence” is sometimes difficult to fully grasp today because it is no longer a term used as commonly as it had been by previous generations.

A better understanding of the meaning of that word can be found by examining words or phrases used as synonyms for “Providence” in early Bible translations. Those terms include “tender mercies,” “loving kindness,” “compassion,” “watchfulness,” “preservation,” “favor,” and “protection.” They all convey the same meaning: “Providence” indicates (1) an active God, (2) Who is watching over His beloved with foresight, care, and protection. Founding Father Noah Webster, when defining this term in America’s first dictionary (1828), affirmed the same two meanings, noting that (1) “*by Divine providence is often understood God Himself,*” and that (2) “*Providence*” means “*the care and superintendence which God exercises over His creatures.*”¹²⁵

Earlier generations looked to the Scriptures as a source and guidebook for both personal and civil behavior. They firmly believed God’s blessings would come upon those who obeyed His commands, and curses would come upon the disobedient (see Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26). Consequently, whenever there were times of calamity or crisis, both church and civil authorities would proclaim days of fasting and prayer to seek God’s direct intervention; and then when God answered those prayers and responded with deliverance and blessing, the leaders would routinely proclaim days of prayer and thanksgiving to express their gratitude to God. Such days of direct appeal to God were a regular part of American life.

There are many examples illustrating this alternating pattern. For example, in October 1746, France sent a fleet to attack Boston. Governor Shirley of Massachusetts proclaimed a day of fasting to seek God’s intervention,¹²⁶ and people everywhere thronged to the churches to pray for deliverance. God then miraculously sent a storm that wiped out the French fleet.¹²⁷ God clearly had answered their prayers, so everyone gathered in a time of thanksgiving to God.¹²⁸

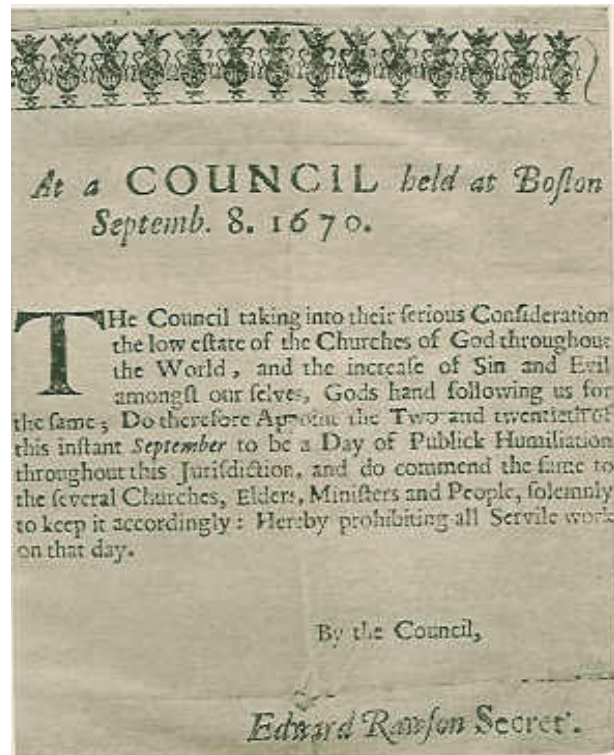
During the American War for Independence, the Continental Congress followed this pattern of alternating between days of prayer and fasting and days of prayer and thanksgiving. It issued at least eight different prayer and fasting day proclamations during the conflict, and seven intervening thanksgiving proclamations.¹²⁹ (As already seen, times of thanksgiving were called after events such as the victory of Saratoga, the discovery of the treason of Benedict Arnold, and the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.)

As has been evident throughout this lesson, the proclamations of the Continental Congress were not bland, vague, or deistic documents but rather explicitly Christian—as in March 1776, when the Founders asked the country to observe...

a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, that we may...appease His righteous displeasure, and through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ obtain His pardon and forgiveness.¹³⁰

Subsequent calls to prayer were just as forthright—as when they called the nation...

- to “join the penitent confession of their manifold sins...that it may please God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of



Proclamation by the Massachusetts government for a day of fasting, September 22, 1670—possibly the first printed broadside for a day of prayer. Before this, fast and thanksgiving proclamations were written by hand.

remembrance...and to prosper the means of religion for the promotion and enlargement of that kingdom which consisteth 'in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost' [Romans 14:17]."¹³¹ NOVEMBER 1, 1777

- to thank God that "*above all, that He hath diffused the glorious light of the Gospel, whereby, through the merits of our gracious Redeemer, we may become the heirs of His eternal glory,*" asking America also to pray "*that He would...spread the light of Christian knowledge through the remotest corners of the earth.*"¹³² OCTOBER 20, 1779
- "*to offer our fervent supplications to the God of all grace...to cause the knowledge of Christianity to spread over all the earth.*"¹³³ OCTOBER 18, 1780

Individual states also followed this alternating pattern of fasting and thanksgiving. During such times, people would gather at their local meeting houses and churches to hear a sermon. And there were also times when Congress as a body, or the full state assembly would go to church together on such days. State legislatures also regularly invited ministers to preach on these days, and many of those sermons were printed and distributed at state expense.¹³⁴

Significantly, in the period from 1620 to 1815, at least 1,400 official proclamations calling for either public days of fasting or thanksgiving were issued by civil government (including colonial, state, national, and federal governments).¹³⁵ Such proclamations continued regularly after 1815 as well, and on through the nineteenth century. Even today the practice endures, with thousands more official calls to prayer having been issued in the twentieth century.

The practice of publicly issuing official proclamations calling the nation, states, and cities to prayer now spans more than four centuries of American history. ■

¹ George Washington, *Revolutionary Orders of George Washington, Issued During the Years 1778, '80, '81, & '82*, Henry Whiting, editor (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1844), p. 109, General Order from September 26, 1780.

² George Washington, *The Writings of George*, Jared Sparks, editor (Boston: Ferdinand Andrews, 1840), Vol. VI, p. 36, to Brigadier General Nelson on August 20, 1778.

³ America's Founding Fathers believed that property rights are a foundational component of a free society. As Samuel Adams explained, "Among the natural rights of the colonists are these: first, a right to life; secondly, to liberty; thirdly, to property." (Samuel Adams, *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, Harry Alonzo Cushing, editor (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), Vol. II, p. 351, from "The Rights of the Colonists.") A person's property is whatever he has exclusive right to possess and control. We have God-given rights to both internal property (thoughts, opinions, conscience, ideas, mind, talents) and external property (land, money, possessions, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly). Signer of the Constitution John Dickinson reveals the Founders' view of how their right to property was being violated by the action of the English government, writing: "Men cannot be happy without freedom; nor free without security of property; nor so secure unless the sole power to dispose of it be lodged in themselves; therefore, no people can be free but where taxes are imposed upon them with their own consent." (John Dickinson, *The Life and Writings of John Dickinson*, Paul Leicester Ford, editor (Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Philadelphia, 1895), p. 202, "An Address to 'Friends and Countrymen' on the Stamp Act," November 1765.)

⁴ William Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (Philadelphia: James Webster, 1817), p. 51.

⁵ William Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (Philadelphia: James Webster, 1817), p. 58, later written by Patrick Henry on the back of the 1765 resolutions he presented relating to the Stamp Act.

⁶ William Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (Philadelphia: James Webster, 1817), p. 65.

⁷ William Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (Philadelphia: James Webster, 1817), p. 58, handwritten note by Patrick Henry on the back of resolutions he presented relating to the Stamp Act.

⁸ William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry, Life, Correspondence and Speeches* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), Vol. 1, p. 94. Patrick Henry's Christian faith was common among our Founders. An affirmation of that strong faith is seen in his last will and testament, dated November 20, 1798, in which, after distributing his estate among his descendants, he concluded: "This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family. The religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed." (Patrick Henry's Will. From a photocopy in the author's possession. The transcription can be found at *The Patrick Henry Memorial Foundation*, <https://www.redhill.org/biography/henry-will>.)

⁹ William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry, Life, Correspondence and Speeches* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), Vol. 1, p. 101.

¹⁰ Thomas Jefferson, *Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), p. 8.

¹¹ See, for example, Samuel Stillman, *Good News from a Far Country, A Sermon Preached at Boston, May 17, 1766, upon the Arrival of the Important News of the Repeal of the Stamp-Act* (Boston: Kneeland & Adams, 1766), Evans #10503; and Nathaniel Appleton, *A Thanksgiving Sermon on the Total Repeal of the Stamp-Act, Preached in Cambridge New-England, May 20th, in the Afternoon preceding the Public Rejoicings of the Evening upon that Great Occasion* (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1766), Evans #10230; and Jonathan Mayhew, *The Snare Broken, A Thanksgiving-Discourse, Preached at the Desire of the West Church in Boston, N.E. Friday May 23, 1766, Occasioned by the Repeal of the Stamp-Act* (Boston: R. & S. Draper, 1766), Evans #10389; and Elisha Fish, *Joy and Gladness: A Thanksgiving Discourse, Preached in Upton, Wednesday, May 28, 1766; Occasioned by the Repeal of the Stamp-Act* (Providence: Sarah Goddard and Co., 1767), Evans #10612; and David Sherman Rowland, *Divine Providence Illustrated and Improved, A Thanksgiving Discourse, Preached (By Desire) in the Presbyterian, or Congregational Church in Providence, N.E. Wednesday June 4, 1766, Being His Majesty's Birth Day, and Day of Rejoicing, occasioned by the Repeal of the Stamp-Act* (Providence: Sarah Goddard and Co., n.d.), Evans #10483; and John Joachim Zubly, *The Stamp-Act Repealed, A Sermon, Preached in the Meeting at Savannah in Georgia, June 25th, 1766* (Savannah, 1766), Evans #10531; and Benjamin Troop, *A Thanksgiving Sermon, upon the Occasion of the Glorious News of the Repeal of the Stamp Act; Preached in New-Concord, in Norwich, June 26, 1766* (New London: T. Green, 1766), Evans #10506.

¹² Francis Bernard, "A Proclamation for a Day of Public Thanksgiving," issued on July 4, 1766, to be observed on July 24, 1766. Evans #10380.

¹³ Charles Chauncy, *A Discourse on "The Good News from a Far Country." Delivered July 24th. A Day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God, throughout the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, on Occasion of the Repeal of the Stamp Act* (Boston: Kneeland and Adams, 1766) (at: <https://wallbuilders.com/sermon-stamp-act-repeal-1766/>). Evans #10255.

¹⁴ See, for example, Joseph Emerson, *Thanksgiving Sermon Preach'd at Pepperrell, July 24th 1766, A Day Set Apart by Public Authority as a Day of Thanksgiving on the Account of the Repeal of the Stamp-Act* (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1766), Evans #10293; and William Patten, *A Discourse Delivered at Hallifax in the County of Plymouth, July 24th 1766, on the Day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God, throughout the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New England, for the Repeal of the Stamp-Act* (Boston: D. Kneeland, 1766), Evans #10440.

¹⁵ John Adams, *The Works of John Adams*, Charles Francis Adams, editor (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1856), Vol. X, p. 191, to Dr. Jedediah Morse on December 5, 1815.

¹⁶ Alden Bradford, *Memoir of the Life and Writings of Rev. Jonathan Mayhew, D.D.* (Boston: C.C. Little & Co., 1838), pp. 427-430, to James Otis, June 8, 1766.

¹⁷ See, for example, Mark Puls, *Samuel Adams; Father of the American Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006).

¹⁸ George Bancroft, *History of the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1852), Vol. 5, pp. 194-195.

¹⁹ Samuel Adams, *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, Harry Alonzo Cushing, editor (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), Vol. III, pp. 304-305, to Benjamin Kent on July 27, 1776.

²⁰ William V. Wells, *The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1865), Vol. I, pp. 496-497.

²¹ Richard Frothingham, *Life and Times of Joseph Warren* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1865), p. 212, James Warren to Samuel Adams on December 8, 1772.

²² *Warren-Adams Letters* (The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1917), Vol. I, p. 14, Samuel Adams to James Warren, December 9, 1772.

²³ Samuel Adams, *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, Harry Alonzo Cushing, editor (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), Vol. II, p. 355, "The Rights of the Colonists, a List of Violations of Rights and a Letter of Correspondence," November 20, 1772.

²⁴ John Adams, *The Works of John Adams*, Charles Francis Adams, editor (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1856), Vol. X, p. 288, to Hezekiah Niles on February 13, 1818.

²⁵ Kate Mason Rowland, *The Life of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, 1737-1832, With His Correspondence and Public Papers* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1898), Vol. II, p. 358, to Rev. John Stanford on October 9, 1827.

²⁶ Benjamin Franklin, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia: William Duane, 1809), Vol. VI, p. 310, to Thomas Cushing on June 4, 1773, in which Franklin said, "They have no idea that any people can act from any other principle but that of interest; and they believe that three pence on a pound of tea, of which one does not perhaps drink ten pounds in a year, is sufficient to overcome all the patriotism of an American."

²⁷ For more about the ships that attempted to land with tea, see: George Bancroft, *History of the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1854), Vol. VI, pp. 488, 525.

²⁸ The events leading up the Boston Tea Party are covered in Richard Frothingham, *The Rise of the Republic of the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1872), pp. 306-308; and George Bancroft, *History of the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1854), Vol. VI, pp. 482-487.

²⁹ Richard Frothingham, *The Rise of the Republic of the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1872), p. 309.

³⁰ "Great Britain: Parliament—The Boston Port Act," March 31, 1774, *The Avalon Project* (at: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/boston_port_act.asp).

³¹ For information about specific shipments that came into Boston from across the American colonies, see: George Bancroft, *History of the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1858), Vol. VII, pp. 73-75.

³² Richard Frothingham, *The Rise of the Republic of the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1872), p. 324.

³³ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Julian P. Boyd, editor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), Vol. 1, pp. 105–107, "Resolution of the House of Burgesses Designating a Day of Fasting and Prayer, 24 May 1774."

³⁴ Richard Frothingham, *The Rise of the Republic of the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1872), p. 324.

³⁵ John Adams, *The Works of John Adams*, Charles Francis Adams, editor (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1856), Vol. X, p. 283, to Hezekiah Niles on February 13, 1818.

³⁶ *The Journals of the American Congress, from 1774 to 1788* (Washington, D. C.: Way and Gideon, 1823), Vol. I, p. 8, September 6, 1774.

³⁷ *The Journals of the American Congress, from 1774 to 1788* (Washington, D. C.: Way and Gideon, 1823), Vol. I, p. 8, September 7, 1774.

³⁸ Silas Deane, *The Silas Deane Papers* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1886), Vol. I, p. 20, to Elizabeth Deane on September 7, 1774. See also *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, Paul H. Smith, editor (Washington, D. C.: Library of Congress, 1976), Vol. I, p. 34, Silas Deane to Elizabeth Deane on September 7, 1774.

³⁹ Silas Deane, *The Silas Deane Papers* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1886), Vol. I, p. 20, to Elizabeth Deane on September 7, 1774. See also *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, Paul H. Smith, editor (Washington, D. C.: Library of Congress, 1976), Vol. I, p. 34, Silas Deane to Elizabeth Deane on September 7, 1774.

⁴⁰ John Adams, *Letters of John Adams, Addressed to His Wife*, Charles Francis Adams, editor (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1841), Vol. I, pp. 23-24, to Abigail Adams on September 16, 1774.

⁴¹ William Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (New York: M'Elrath, Bangs & Co., 1834), p. 141, speech on March 23, 1775.

⁴² William Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (New York: M'Elrath, Bangs & Co., 1834), p. 141, speech on March 23, 1775.

⁴³ *The London Chronicle* (June 15-June 17, 1775), Vol. XXXVII, No. 2890, p. 2, excerpts from a letter by a member of the British Army noting orders were given to "seize....the bodies of Mess. Hancock and Adams, who were both attained and were at that place enforcing by all their influence the rebellious spirit of the Provincial Congress."

⁴⁴ J.T. Headley, *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), pp. 78-79.

⁴⁵ Jonas Clark, *The Fate of Blood-Thirsty Oppressors and God's Tender care of His Distressed People. A Sermon, Preached at Lexington, April 19, 1776. To Commemorate the Murder, Bloodshed and Commencement of Hostilities Between Great-Britain and America in that Town, by a Brigade of Troops of George III under Command of Lieutenant-Colonel Smith, on the Nineteen of April 1775. To Which is Added A Brief Narrative of the Principal Transactions of That Day* (Boston: Powers and Willis, 1776), p. 5, "A Narrative & c.," where he says, "for 800 disciplined troops of *Great-Britain*, without notice or provocation, to fall upon 60 or 70 undisciplined Americans."

⁴⁶ Benson Lossing, *A History of the United States for Families and Libraries* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1860), p. 232.

⁴⁷ J.T. Headley, *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), p. 79.

⁴⁸ J.T. Headley, *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), p. 81.

⁴⁹ Governor Jonathan Trumbull, "A Proclamation" (for fasting and prayer), issued on March 22, 1775, to be observed on April 19, 1775. Evans #13879.

⁵⁰ Governor Jonathan Trumbull, "A Proclamation" (for fasting and prayer), issued on March 22, 1775, to be observed on April 19, 1775. Evans #13879.

⁵¹ *Journals of The Continental Congress* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1905), Vol. II, pp. 87-88, June 12, 1775 (a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer).

⁵² George Bancroft, *History of the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1860), Vol. VIII, pp. 130-132.

⁵³ There are countless scores of articles and books making this claim during the modern era, including Professor William Edelen, "Our founding presidents were not Christians," *Santa Barbara News-Press*, February 4, 2001, G-5; Dr. Steven Morris, "The Founding Fathers Were Not Christians," *Free Inquiry*, Fall 1995, p. 12; Rob Massey, "Authors of the Declaration were Enemies of Christ," *Sun Herald*, July 3, 1999, editorial; Dr. Steven Morris, "America's Unchristian Beginnings," *The Los Angeles Times*, August 3, 1995, p. B-9; and many others.

⁵⁴ All colleges up until this time were started by Christian denominations or by Christian leaders, all with a primary mission of training Godly ministers. The instruction in these seminary/colleges covered theological training and also a Biblical worldview on all spheres of life (law, science, history, etc.). Twenty-nine signers of the Declaration attended such colleges, including John Adams, Samuel Adams, Braxton Carter, Charles Carroll, William Ellery, Elbridge Gerry, Lyman Hall, John Hancock, Benjamin Harrison, Joseph Hewes, William Hooper, Francis Hopkinson, Thomas Jefferson, Francis Lewis, Philip Livingston, Thomas Lynch, Arthur Middleton, Lewis Morris, Thomas Nelson Jr, William Paca, Robert Treat Paine, Benjamin Rush, James Smith, Richard Stockton, William Williams, James Wilson, John Witherspoon, Oliver Wolcott, and George Wythe.

⁵⁵ From the Last Will & Testament of Richard Stockton, dated May 20, 1780, on file at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁵⁶ From an autograph letter in WallBuilders' possession written by Charles Carroll to Charles W. Wharton, Esq., September 27, 1825. See also, Lewis A. Leonard, *Life of Charles Carroll of Carrollton* (New York: Moffit, Yard & Co, 1918), p. 226.

⁵⁷ Lewis A. Leonard, *Life of Charles Carroll of Carrollton* (New York: Moffit, Yard & Co, 1918), pp. 256-257.

⁵⁸ Kate Mason Rowland, *Life of Charles Carroll of Carrollton* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1890), Vol. II, pp. 373-374, will of Charles Carroll, December 1, 1718 (later replaced by a subsequent will not containing this specific phrase, although he re-expressed this same sentiment on several subsequent occasions throughout the latter years of his life).

⁵⁹ Benjamin Rush, *A Memorial Containing Travels Through Life or Sundry Incidents in the Life of Dr. Benjamin Rush* (Lanoraie: 1905), p. 127, "An Account of the Sundry Incidents in the Life of Benjamin Rush, Written by Himself."

⁶⁰ Benjamin Rush, *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, L.H. Butterfield, editor (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), Vol. I, p. 521, to Jeremy Belknap on July 13, 1789.

⁶¹ Benjamin Rush, *Essays, Literary, Moral & Philosophical* (Philadelphia: Thomas & Samuel F. Bradford, 1798), p. 93, "A Defence of the Use of the Bible as a School Book."

⁶² Benjamin Rush, *Essays, Literary, Moral & Philosophical* (Philadelphia: Thomas & Samuel F. Bradford, 1798), p. 93, "A Defence of the Use of the Bible as a School Book."

⁶³ John Witherspoon, *The Works of the Rev. John Witherspoon* (Philadelphia: William Woodward, 1802), Vol. II, p. 349, "The Absolute Necessity of Salvation Through Christ," January 2, 1758.

⁶⁴ John Witherspoon, *The Works of the Rev. John Witherspoon* (Philadelphia: William Woodward, 1802), Vol. II, p. 342, "The Absolute Necessity of Salvation Through Christ," January 2, 1758.

⁶⁵ John Witherspoon, *The Works of the Rev. John Witherspoon* (Philadelphia: William Woodward, 1802), Vol. II, p. 344, "The Absolute Necessity of Salvation Through Christ," January 2, 1758.

-
- ⁶⁶ John Witherspoon, *The Works of the Rev. John Witherspoon* (Philadelphia: William Woodward, 1802), Vol. II, p. 366, “The Absolute Necessity of Salvation Through Christ,” January 2, 1758.
- ⁶⁷ John Witherspoon, *The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men. A Sermon Preached at Princeton on the 17th of May 1776* (Philadelphia: 1777), p. 33.
- ⁶⁸ Robert Treat Paine, *The Papers of Robert Treat Paine*, Stephen T. Riley and Edward W. Hanson, editors (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1992), Vol. I, p. 49, Robert Treat Paine’s Confession of Faith, 1749.
- ⁶⁹ Robert Treat Paine, *The Papers of Robert Treat Paine*, Stephen T. Riley and Edward W. Hanson, editors (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1992), Vol. I, p. 48, Robert Treat Paine’s Confession of Faith, 1749.
- ⁷⁰ From the Last Will & Testament of Robert Treat Paine, attested May 11, 1814.
- ⁷¹ From the Last Will & Testament of Samuel Adams, attested December 29, 1790. *See also* Samuel Adams, *Life & Public Services of Samuel Adams*, William V. Wells, editor (Boston: Little, Brown & Co, 1865), Vol. III, p. 379, Last Will and Testament of Samuel Adams.
- ⁷² John Hancock, “A Proclamation for a Day of Public Thanksgiving,” issued on October 5, 1791, to be observed on November 17, 1791.
- ⁷³ John Hancock, “A Proclamation for a Day of Public Thanksgiving,” issued on October 29, 1788, to be observed on November 27, 1788.
- ⁷⁴ John Hancock, “A Proclamation for a Day of Public Thanksgiving,” issued on October 25, 1792, to be observed on November 29, 1792.
- ⁷⁵ A.J. Dallas *Reports of Cases Ruled and Adjudged in the Courts of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: P. Byrne, 1806), p. 39, *Respublica v. John Roberts*, Pa. Sup. Ct. 1778.
- ⁷⁶ William B. Reed, *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1847), Vol. II, pp. 36-37.
- ⁷⁷ *Letters of Delegates to Congress: January 1, 1776-May 15, 1776*, Paul H. Smith, editor (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1978), Vol. 3, pp. 502-503, Oliver Wolcott to Laura Wolcott on April 10, 1776.
- ⁷⁸ Lewis Henry Boutell, *The Life of Roger Sherman* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1896), p. 272, “Confession of Faith,” handwritten by Roger Sherman, c. 1788.
- ⁷⁹ *Correspondence Between Roger Sherman and Samuel Hopkins* (Worcester, MA: Charles Hamilton, 1889), p. 9, from Roger Sherman to Samuel Hopkins, June 28, 1790.
- ⁸⁰ Richard Henry Lee, *Memoir of the Life of Richard Henry Lee, and His Correspondence*, Richard Henry Lee, editor (Philadelphia: H.C. Carey and I. Lea, 1825), Vol. I, p. 201.
- ⁸¹ John Quincy Adams, *An Address Delivered at the Request of the Committee of Arrangements for the Celebrating the Anniversary of Independence at the City of Washington on the Fourth of July 1821 upon the Occasion of Reading The Declaration of Independence* (Cambridge: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1821), p. 28. *See also*, John Quincy Adams, *An Oration Delivered Before the Inhabitants of the Town of Newburyport, at Their Request, on the Sixty-First Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, July 4th, 1837* (Newburyport: Charles Whipple, 1837), pp. 5-6.
- ⁸² *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives Made During the First Session of the Thirty-Third Congress* (Washington: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1854), pp. 8-9, “H. Rep. 124: Chaplains in Congress and in the Army and Navy,” March 27, 1854.
- ⁸³ This anecdote is reported by many sources, including John F. Watson, *The Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania in Olden Times, Being a Collection of Memoirs, Anecdotes, and Incidents of the City and Its Inhabitants, and of the Earliest Settlements of the Inland Part of Pennsylvania from the Days of the Founders* (Philadelphia: Elijah Thomas, 1857), Vol. I, p. 399n. This account has been repeated in numerous other sources over the decades.
- ⁸⁴ Benjamin Franklin, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin, with Notes and A Life of the Author*, Jared Sparks, editor (Boston: Tappan and Dennet, 1844), Vol. 1, p. 408.
- ⁸⁵ Benjamin Franklin, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin, with Notes and A Life of the Author*, Jared Sparks, editor (Boston: Tappan and Dennet, 1844), Vol. 1, p. 408.
- ⁸⁶ Benjamin Rush, *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, L.H. Butterfield, editor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), Vol. II, p. 1090, to John Adams on July 20, 1811.
- ⁸⁷ T.R. Fehrenbach, *Greatness to Spare* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1968), p. 23.
- ⁸⁸ T.R. Fehrenbach, *Greatness to Spare* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1968), p. 247.
- ⁸⁹ John Adams, *Letters of John Adams, Addressed to His Wife*, Charles Francis Adams, editor (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1841), Vol. I, p. 218, to Abigail Adams on April 26, 1777.

⁹⁰ John Adams, *Letters of John Adams, Addressed to His Wife*, Charles Francis Adams, editor (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1841), Vol. I, p. 128, to Abigail Adams on July 3, 1776.

⁹¹ *Warren-Adams Letters* (Massachusetts Historical Society, 1917), Vol. 1, p. 4, John Dickinson to James Otis on December 5, 1767. See also Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution, Interspersed with Biographical, Political, and Moral Observations* (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1805), Vol. I, p. 414.

⁹² Thomas Jefferson, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America Set Forth in Some Resolutions Intended for the Inspection of the Present Delegates of the People of Virginia Now in Convention* (Williamsburg: Clementina Rind, 1774), p. 43.

⁹³ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1794), p. 237, "Query XVIII."

⁹⁴ *The Life, Public Services, Addresses, and Letters of Elias Boudinot, L.L.D. President of the Continental Congress*, J.J. Boudinot, editor (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1896), Vol. II, pp. 358-359, 378, "Oration Before the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of New Jersey," July 4, 1793.

⁹⁵ George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscripts*, John C. Fitzpatrick, editor (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1932), Vol. 5, pp. 244-245, General Orders, July 9, 1776.

⁹⁶ *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905-1922), Vol. II, pp. 87-88, day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, June 12, 1775; Vol. IV, pp. 208-209, day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, March 16, 1776; Vol. VI, p. 1022, day of fasting and humiliation, December 11, 1776; Vol. IX, pp. 854-855, day of thanksgiving and praise, November 1, 1777; Vol. X, p. 229-230, day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, March 7, 1778; Vol. XII, p. 1139, day of thanksgiving and praise, November 17, 1778; Vol. XIII, pp. 343-344, day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, March 20, 1779; Vol. XV, pp. 1191-1193, day of thanksgiving, October 20, 1779; Vol. XVI, pp. 252-253, day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, March 11, 1780; Vol. XVIII, pp. 950-951, day of thanksgiving and prayer, October 18, 1780; Vol. XIX, pp. 284-286, day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, March 20, 1781; Vol. XXI, pp. 1074-1076, day of thanksgiving and prayer, October 26, 1781; Vol. XXII, pp. 137-138, day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, March 19, 1782; Vol. XXIII, p. 647, day of thanksgiving, October 11, 1782; Vol. XXV, pp. 699-701, day of thanksgiving, October 18, 1783.

⁹⁷ *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, Paul H. Smith, editor (Washington: Library of Congress, 1981), Vol. 7, p. 311, n1.

⁹⁸ *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, Paul H. Smith, editor (Washington: Library of Congress, 1981), Vol. 7, p. 311, "Committee on Publishing a Bible to Sundry Philadelphia Printers," on July 7, 1777.

⁹⁹ *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), Vol. VIII, p. 734, September 11, 1777.

¹⁰⁰ *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), Vol. VIII, p. 735, September 11, 1777.

¹⁰¹ *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives Made During the First Session of the Thirty-Third Congress* (Washington: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1854), p. 3.

¹⁰² Memorial of Robert Aitken to Congress, 21 January 1781, obtained from the National Archives, Washington, DC. See also the introduction to the *Holy Bible As Printed by Robert Aitken and Approved & Recommended by the Congress of the United States of America in 1782* (Philadelphia: R. Aitken, 1782; reprinted New York: Arno Press, 1968).

¹⁰³ *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), Vol. XXIII, p. 572, September 12, 1782.

¹⁰⁴ *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), Vol. XXIII, pp. 572-573, September 12, 1782.

¹⁰⁵ *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), Vol. XXIII, p. 574, September 12, 1782.

¹⁰⁶ Benjamin Talmadge, *Memoir of Col. Benjamin Tallmadge, Prepared by Himself at the Request of His Children* (New York: Thomas Holman, 1858), pp. 10-11.

¹⁰⁷ Washington Irving, *Life of George Washington* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Co., 1856), Vol. II, pp. 334-335.

¹⁰⁸ Francis Drake, *Life and Correspondence of Henry Knox, Major-General in the American Revolutionary War* (Boston: Samuel G. Drake, 1873), p. 36, to Mrs. Knox, December 28, 1776.

¹⁰⁹ Francis Drake, *Life and Correspondence of Henry Knox, Major-General in the American Revolutionary War* (Boston: Samuel G. Drake, 1873), p. 37, to Mrs. Knox, December 28, 1776.

-
- ¹¹⁰ George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington*, Jared Sparks, editor (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Metcalf, 1834), Vol. V, p. 104n, to John A. Washington on October 18, 1777.
- ¹¹¹ Paul Allen, *A History of the American Revolution* (Baltimore: William Woody Jr, 1822), Vol. I, pp. 107-111.
- ¹¹² *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), Vol. IX, pp. 854-855, day of thanksgiving and praise, November 1, 1777.
- ¹¹³ *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), Vol. IX, pp. 854-855, day of thanksgiving and praise, November 1, 1777.
- ¹¹⁴ Sir Edward Creasy, *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World from Marathon to Waterloo* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1918), pp. 298-326.
- ¹¹⁵ George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington*, Jared Sparks, editor (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Metcalf, 1835), Vol. VII, p. 256, to John Laurens on October 13, 1780.
- ¹¹⁶ George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington*, Jared Sparks, editor (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Metcalf, 1835), Vol. VII, p. 220, to the President of Congress on September 26, 1780.
- ¹¹⁷ *Revolutionary Orders of General Washington, Issued During the Years 1778, '80, '81, & '82*, Henry Whiting, editor (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1844), p. 109, September 26, 1780.
- ¹¹⁸ George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington*, Jared Sparks, editor (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Metcalf, 1835), Vol. VII, p. 256, to John Laurens on October 13, 1780.
- ¹¹⁹ *Journals of The American Congress: from 1774 to 1788* (Washington: Way and Gideon, 1823), Vol. III, pp. 537-538, October 18, 1780.
- ¹²⁰ *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, Charles Ross, editor (London: John Murray, 1859), p. 129, Earl Cornwallis to Sir Henry Clinton, October 20, 1781.
- ¹²¹ *Journals of the American Congress: from 1774 to 1788* (Washington: Way and Gideon, 1823), Vol. III, p. 679, October 24, 1781.
- ¹²² George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscripts*, John C. Fitzpatrick, editor (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1937), Vol. 23, pp. 245, 247, After-Orders attached to General Orders, October 20, 1781.
- ¹²³ *The New Annual Register or General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1783* (London: G. Robinson, 1784), p. 113, "The Definitive Treaty of Peace and Friendship Between His Brittanic Majesty and the United States of America, Signed at Paris the 3rd Day of September, 1783."
- ¹²⁴ Jedidiah Morse, *A Sermon, Exhibiting the Present Dangers and Consequent Duties of the Citizens of the United States of America. Delivered at Charlestown. April 25, 1799, The Day of the National Fast* (MA: Printed by Samuel Etheridge, 1799), p. 9. Evans #35838.
- ¹²⁵ Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828), s.v., "providence."
- ¹²⁶ William Shirley, "A Proclamation for a Public Fast," proclaimed on October 6, 1746, for a fast day on October 16, 1764. Evans #5807.
- ¹²⁷ *Narrative and Critical History of America*, Justin Windsor, editor (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1887), Vol. V, Part 1, p. 147.
- ¹²⁸ William Shirley, "A Proclamation for a General Thanksgiving," proclaimed on November 7, 1746 for a day of Thanksgiving on November 27, 1764, Evans #5809.
- ¹²⁹ *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905-1922), Vol. II, pp. 87-88, day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, June 12, 1775; Vol. IV, pp. 208-209, day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, March 16, 1776; Vol. VI, p. 1022, day of fasting and humiliation, December 11, 1776; Vol. IX, pp. 854-855, day of thanksgiving and praise, November 1, 1777; Vol. X, p. 229-230, day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, March 7, 1778; Vol. XII, p. 1139, day of thanksgiving and praise, November 17, 1778; Vol. XIII, pp. 343-344, day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, March 20, 1779; Vol. XV, pp. 1191-1193, day of thanksgiving, October 20, 1779; Vol. XVI, pp. 252-253, day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, March 11, 1780; Vol. XVIII, pp. 950-951, day of thanksgiving and prayer, October 18, 1780; Vol. XIX, pp. 284-286, day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, March 20, 1781; Vol. XXI, pp. 1074-1076, day of thanksgiving and prayer, October 26, 1781; Vol. XXII, pp. 137-138, day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, March 19, 1782; Vol. XXIII, p. 647, day of thanksgiving, October 11, 1782; Vol. XXV, pp. 699-701, day of thanksgiving, October 18, 1783.
- ¹³⁰ *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), Vol. IV, p. 209, March 16, 1776.
- ¹³¹ *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), Vol. IX, p. 855, November 1, 1777.

¹³² *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), Vol. XV, p. 1192, October 20, 1779.

¹³³ *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), Vol. XVIII, pp. 950-951, October 18, 1780.

¹³⁴ See, for example, Samuel West, *A Sermon Preached Before the Honorable House of the Massachusetts Bay, in New England, May 29, 1776* (Boston: John Gill, 1776), inside information page, Evans #15217; and Samuel Webster, *A Sermon Preached Before the Honorable Council, and the Honorable House of Representatives of the State of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England. At Boston, May 28, 1777* (Boston: Edes & Gill, 1777), inside front cover, Evans #15703; and Jonas Clark, *A Sermon Preached Before His Excellency John Hancock, Esq; Governor; His Honor Thomas Cushing, Esq; Lieutenant-Governor; The Honorable Council, and the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives, of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, May 30, 1781* (Boston: John Gill, 1781), inside information page, Evans #17114.

¹³⁵ DeLoss Love, *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1895), pp. 464-514. DeLoss Love lists some 1,735 proclamations issued between 1620 and 1815, in a non-exclusive list. Of those, 284 were issued by churches and 1,451 by civil authorities. These, however, are only a part of what were issued; for example, WallBuilders owns hundreds of additional proclamations not listed in Love's work. While the exact number of government-issued prayer proclamations is unknown, it is certain that they number in the thousands.