

## Thomas Jefferson

You selected some statements intended to show Thomas Jefferson's dislike for religion and the Bible, but you neglected to mention:

- On July 4, 1776 as a delegate to the Continental Congress, after the vote to approve the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson was placed on a three-man committee to draft a seal for the new American government; Jefferson recommended that America's first official seal depict "The children of Israel in the wilderness, led by a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night" [1] - clearly a story from the Bible.
- In 1779, as Governor of the State of Virginia, Jefferson called his fellow Virginians to a time of prayer and thanksgiving. His proclamation asked the people to give thanks "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." [2] Jefferson's call further asked Virginians to pray that "He would grant to His church the plentiful effusions of Divine grace and pour out his Holy Spirit on all ministers on the Gospel; that He would bless and prosper the means of education and spread the light of Christian knowledge through the remotest corners of the earth." [3]
- In 1779, Jefferson rewrote the legal code of Virginia and personally introduced "A Bill for Saving the Property of the Church Heretofore by Law Established," "A Bill for Punishing Disturbers of Religious Worship and Sabbath Breakers," "A Bill for Appointing Days of Public Fasting and Thanksgiving," and "A Bill Annuling Marriages Prohibited by the Levitical Law and Appointing the Mode of Solemnizing Lawful Marriage." [4]
- On November 22, 1800, Congress moved into the new Capitol. On December 4, 1800, Congress (with Vice President Thomas Jefferson presiding over the U. S. Senate) approved a plan whereby Christian church services would be held each Sunday in the Capitol, specifically in the Hall of the House of Representatives (the largest room in the building). [5] As Vice President Jefferson attended church in the Capitol each Sunday [6] - a practice he continued throughout his two terms as President. [7] Jefferson contributed to the worship atmosphere of the Capitol church by having the Marine Band play at the services. [8] Under President Jefferson, Sunday church services were also started at the War Department and the Treasury Department [9] - the two government office buildings under his direct control. Why was Jefferson such a faithful participant at the Capitol church? He once explained to a friend while they were walking to church together: "No nation has ever existed or been governed without religion - nor can be. The Christian religion is the best

religion that has been given to man and I, as Chief Magistrate of this nation, am bound to give it the sanction of my example." [10]

- In 1801, Jefferson urged local governments to make land available specifically for Christian purposes. [11]

- On Friday January 1, 1802, Jefferson penned his famous "separation of church and state" letter; [12] only two days later on Sunday, January 3, 1802, he attended church at the Capitol (his normal practice) to hear his close friend, the Rev. John Leland preach the sermon that day. [13] On numerous occasions Jefferson expressed his belief that separation was to prevent the government from stopping public religious activities, [14] not vice versa (as has become the practice today).

- In 1802 (and again in 1803 and 1804), Jefferson signed federal acts setting aside government lands so that missionaries might be assisted in "promoting Christianity" among the Indians. [15]

- In 1803, Jefferson negotiated and signed a treaty with the Kaskaskia Indians that directly funded Christian missionaries to the Indians as well as provided federal funding to erect a church building in which they might worship. [16]

- In 1804, Jefferson assured a Christian school in the newly purchased Louisiana Territory that it would receive "the patronage of the government." [17]

- While other Presidents closed their presidential documents invoking the Christian appellation of Article VII in the Constitution ("In the year of our Lord"), Jefferson closed his presidential documents with the much stronger appellation, "In the year of our Lord Christ" [18] (see inset).

- In 1804, Jefferson read a sermon by the Rev. William Bennet which recommended teaching Indians the simple teachings of Jesus (in Jesus' own words), avoiding the many doctrines over which groups of Christians so often fought. [19] Jefferson was inspired by that concept and as President, he took two Bibles that he had in the White House, cut the words of Jesus from those Bibles, and then pasted Jesus' words into a separate folio, arranging them so that Indians could read the teaching of Jesus in a non-stop, end-to-end fashion. He titled that work "The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth, being Extracted from the Account of His Life and Doctrines given by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; Being an Abridgement of the New Testament for the Use of the Indians . . ." (Today, this has been wrongly "The Jefferson Bible," it is not; Jefferson's words on what the work is speak plainly for themselves.)

- In 1807, President Jefferson stated that religion is "deemed I other countries incompatible with good government and yet proved by our experience to be its best support." [20]

- Jefferson became a generous contributor to the Virginia Bible Society, [21] explaining: "I had not supposed there was a family in this State not possessing a Bible." [22]

When Jefferson founded the University of Virginia in 1818, he:

- Directed the University's Professor of Ethics to teach "the proofs of the being of a God - the Creator, Preserver, and Supreme Ruler of the Universe - the Author of all the relations of morality and of the laws and obligations these infer." [23]

- Directed the Professor of Ancient Languages to teach Biblical Greek, Hebrew, and Latin to students so that they would be equipped to read and study the "earliest and most respected authorities of the Christian Faith," [24] and he took steps to ensure that the writings of those Christian authorities and "the writings of the most respected authorities of every sect [denomination]" [25] be placed in the university library. [26]

- Declared that he had personally arranged the curriculum so that religious study would also be an inseparable part of the study of law and political science. [27]

- Invited several denominations to establish seminaries at the University and to participate in student instruction, [28] making clear that University students would be expected to participate in the various denominational schools. [29]

- Stipulated "that a building...in the middle of the grounds may be called for . . . in which may be rooms for religious worship" [30] and specifically ordered that in the University Rotunda, "one of its large elliptical rooms on its middle floor shall be used for . . . religious worship" and that "the students of the University will be free and expected to attend." [31]

There simply is no basis to show in any of Jefferson's actions that he was irreligious or hostile to Christian public policy. Does this therefore mean that Jefferson was himself a Christian? No; in fact, there is much evidence that indicates that Jefferson was not a Christian under the traditional orthodox definition.

Nevertheless, Jefferson definitely and unequivocally called himself a Christian. For example, to Secretary of Congress, Charles Thomson, Jefferson declared:

I am a real Christian, that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus. [32]

And to fellow signer of the Declaration, Dr. Benjamin Rush, he similarly announced:

To the corruptions of Christianity I am indeed opposed; but not to the genuine precepts of Jesus himself. I am a Christian in the only sense in which He wished any one to be; sincerely attached to His doctrines in preference to all others. [33]

But such unequivocal declarations are not the end of the story, for Jefferson's definition of being a Christian does not comport with an orthodox understanding of what it means to be a Christian. For example, although Jefferson calls himself a Christian there are times when he clearly says that he rejects the divinity of Christ and questions the inspiration of the Scriptures. Scholars point out that of Jefferson's more than 19,000 personal letters, only half-a-dozen raise any objections to Christian doctrines; yet, these are the ones that critics choose to use today, ignoring the thousands of his other letters. Nevertheless, while these may be his personal theological beliefs, in his public actions, you find no pattern of secularization or anti-Christian behavior or rhetoric.

In fact, none of Jefferson's religious writings from any period of his life reveal anything less than his strong conviction in a personal God [34] and that every individual would stand before God to be judged by Him. [35] In fact, one of his clear declarations on this subject became so famous that it was engraved inside the Jefferson Memorial:

[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 of the gift of God? - that they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever. [36]

Jefferson not only believed in a personal God and individual accountability to Him, but he often expressed his personal affinity for the teachings of Jesus [37] and frequently referenced the Bible in his own writings. [38] In fact, when Jefferson's grandson was asked of his grandfather's religious opinions and beliefs after his death, he reported:

In his contemplative moments, his mind turned to religion, which he studied thoroughly. He had seen and read much of the abuses and perversions of Christianity; he abhorred those abuses and their authors and denounced them without reserve. He was regular in his attendance on church, taking his prayer-book with him. He drew the plan of the Episcopal Church in Charlottesville, was one of the largest contributors to its erection, and contributed regularly to the support of its minister. I paid, after his death, his subscription of \$200 to the erection of the Presbyterian Church in the same village. A gentleman of some distinction calling on him, and expressing his disbelief in the truths of the Bible, his reply was, "Then, sir, you have studied it to little purpose." He was guilty of no profanity himself, and did not tolerate it in others - he detested impiety, and his favorite quotation for his young friends as a basis for their morals was the XV Psalm of David. [39]

The condition of Jefferson's private personal faith might be questioned, but what cannot be questioned is the fact that Jefferson was not secular-minded but was instead very pro-Christian in his public demeanor and endeavors.

Benjamin Franklin

You also mentioned Benjamin Franklin, presenting him as anti-religious, but you seemed to have overlooked the following facts about Franklin.

- In 1740, Franklin had helped found the University of Pennsylvania for the explicitly declared purpose of instructing youth in the knowledge of the Christian religion. [40]
- In 1747, Franklin personally drafted a statewide prayer proclamation for his own State of Pennsylvania. [41]
- In 1749, Franklin authored the famous piece entitled Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania in which he explained the academic curriculum of the University of Pennsylvania (the school of which he had been a primary founder), noting that in its history classes: "History will . . . afford frequent opportunities of showing the necessity of a public religion from its usefulness to the public [and] the advantage of a religious character among private persons . . . and the excellency of the Christian religion above all others, ancient or modern." [42]
- In 1756, Franklin proposed to evangelist George Whitefield that the two of them start a Christian colony in Ohio (a territory at that time occupied by the French) in order to "facilitate the introduction of pure religion among the heathen" and to show the Indians "a better sample of Christians than they

commonly see in our [French] Indian traders." Franklin enthused, "In such an enterprise I could spend the remainder of life with pleasure, and I firmly believe God would bless us with success." [43]

- In 1768, Franklin worked to help start a series of schools for black Americans [44] that would train students both in academics and in the principles of Christianity. [45]

- In 1776, Franklin (like Jefferson above) was appointed by Congress Benjamin Franklin as part of the three-man committee to draft the seal to characterize the spirit of the new nation. Franklin proposed: "Moses lifting up his wand and dividing the Red Sea, and Pharaoh in his chariot overwhelmed with the waters. This motto: 'Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God.' " [46]

- In 1776, Benjamin Franklin helped write the 1776 Pennsylvania constitution, [47] which stipulated: "And each member [of the legislature] before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe the following declaration, viz: 'I do believe in one God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, the Rewarder of the good, and the Punisher of the wicked; and I acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be given by Divine inspiration.' " [48]

- In 1783, Franklin was one of three Americans to sign the Treaty of Paris formally ending the American Revolution. The title that he, John Adams, and John Jay placed on that document - a title that was not usual for documents in that day, but a title which they deliberately placed atop that document - openly declares: "In the name of the most holy and undivided Trinity." [49]

- In 1785 after being elected Governor of Pennsylvania, Franklin introduced a plan to raise church attendance in the State. [50]

- In 1787, it was Franklin who offered a compelling, Bible-based call for daily prayer at the Constitutional Convention and the establishment of chaplains:

Mr. President [speaking to George Washington]:

The small progress we have made after four or five weeks close attendance and continual reasonings with each other - our different sentiments on almost every question - . . . is methinks a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the human understanding. We indeed seem to feel our own want of political wisdom, since we have been running about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of government and examined the different forms of those republics which . . . now no longer exist. And we have viewed modern states all round Europe but find none of their constitutions suitable to our

circumstances. In this situation of this Assembly - groping, as it were, in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us - how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights [James 1:17] to illuminate our understandings?

In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful Friend?

I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice [Matthew 10:29], is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that "except the Lord build the House they labor in vain that build it" [Psalms 127:1]. I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel [Genesis 11:3-9]. . . .

I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business. [51]

· In 1787, following the close of the Constitutional Convention, Franklin openly declared that he had seen God's hand in the final product and attributed the final result to Him, explaining: "I beg I may not be understood to infer that our general Convention was Divinely inspired [i.e., as the Bible] when it formed the new federal Constitution . . . yet I must own I have so much faith in the general government of the world by Providence that I can hardly conceive a transaction of such momentous importance to the welfare of millions now existing (and to exist in the posterity of a great nation) should be suffered to pass without being in some degree influenced, guided, and governed by that omnipotent, omnipresent, and beneficent Ruler in Whom all inferior spirits 'live and move and have their being' [Acts 17:28]." [52]

· In 1790 as Thomas Paine was preparing to reveal his religious views in his *Age of Reason* - an attack on Christianity and religion - he sent a manuscript of his ideas to Franklin, seeking Franklin's candid opinion. (Franklin was a long time friend of Paine, first having helped Paine emigrate from England to

America in 1772 and then having established Paine in the printing business). After reading Paine's work, Franklin responded with a sharp rebuke:

I have read your manuscript with some attention. By the argument it contains against a particular Providence (though you allow a general Providence), you strike at the foundations of all religion. For without the belief of a Providence that takes cognizance of, guards, and guides, and may favor particular persons, there is no motive to worship a Deity, to fear His displeasure, or to pray for His protection. I will not enter into any discussion of your principles, though you seem to desire it. At present I shall only give you my opinion, that . . . the consequence of printing this piece will be a great deal of odium drawn upon yourself, mischief to you, and no benefit to others. He that spits against the wind, spits in his own face. But, were you to succeed, do you imagine any good would be done by it? . . . But think how great a portion of mankind . . . have need of the motives of religion to restrain them from vice, to support their virtue, and retain them in the practice of it till it becomes habitual, which is the great point for its security. . . . I would advise you, therefore, not to attempt unchaining the tiger, but to burn this piece before it is seen by any other person. . . . If men are so wicked with religion, what would they be if without it? [53]

While Franklin certainly questioned the Divinity of Jesus Christ, his life actions soundly refute any notion that he was a public secularist; in fact, he was quite the opposite. (There are many other actions and writings of Franklin that could also be shown to further demonstrate what has already been proved.)

Thomas Paine

You did invoke Thomas Paine, but hopefully you know just how far out of Thomas Paine's religious views were with the other Founders (you just saw Franklin's stern rebuke of Paine's religious views.) In fact, after Paine published his Age of Reason, he became the object of direct repudiation by numbers of America's prominent Founding Fathers.

For example, of Paine's views about religion, John Adams wrote:

The Christian religion is, above all the religions that ever prevailed or existed in ancient or modern times, the religion of wisdom, virtue, equity and humanity, let the blackguard [scoundrel, rogue] Paine say what he will. [54]

In fact, when asked about several of Thomas Paine's disciples coming to America, Adams replied:

The German letter proposing to introduce into this country a company of schoolmasters, painters, poets, &c., all of them disciples of Mr. Thomas Paine, will require no answer. I had rather countenance [allow] the introduction of Ariel and Caliban [two evil spirits in Shakespearean plays] with a troop of spirits. [55]

Samuel Adams wrote Paine a stiff rebuke, telling him:

[W]hen I heard you had turned your mind to a defense of infidelity, I felt myself much astonished and more grieved that you had attempted a measure so injurious to the feelings and so repugnant to the true interest of so great a part of the citizens of the United States. The people of New England, if you will allow me to use a Scripture phrase, are fast returning to their first love. Will you excite among them the spirit of angry controversy at a time when they are hastening to amity and peace? I am told that some of our newspapers have announced your intention to publish an additional pamphlet upon the principles of your Age of Reason. Do you think that your pen, or the pen of any other man, can unChristianize the mass of our citizens, or have you hopes of converting a few of them to assist you in so bad a cause? [56]

Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration, wrote to his friend and signer of the Constitution John Dickinson that Paine's Age of Reason was "absurd and impious"; [57] Charles Carroll, a signer of the Declaration, described Paine's work as "blasphemous writings against the Christian religion"; [58] John Witherspoon said that Paine was "ignorant of human nature as well as an enemy to the Christian faith"; [59] John Quincy Adams declared that "Mr. Paine has departed altogether from the principles of the Revolution"; [60] and Elias Boudinot, President of Congress, even published the Age of Revelation -a full-length rebuttal to Paine's work. In a letter to his daughter, Susan, Boudinot described his motivations for writing that rebuttal:

I confess that I was much mortified to find the whole force of this vain man's genius and art pointed at the youth of America. . . . This awful consequence created some alarm in my mind lest at any future day, you, my beloved child, might take up this plausible address of infidelity; and for want of an answer at hand to his subtle insinuations might suffer even a doubt of the truth, as it is in Jesus, to penetrate into your mind. . . . I therefore determined . . . to put my thoughts on the subject of this pamphlet on paper for your edification and information, when I shall be no more. I chose to confine myself to the leading and essential facts of the Gospel which are contradicted or attempted to be turned into ridicule by this writer. I have endeavored to detect his falsehoods and misrepresentations and to show his extreme ignorance of the Divine Scriptures which he makes the subject of his animadversions [criticisms]-not

knowing that "they are the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth [Romans 1:16]." [61]

Patrick Henry, too, wrote a refutation of Paine's work which he described as "the puny efforts of Paine." [62] However, after reading Bishop Richard Watson's Apology for the Bible written against Paine, Henry deemed that work sufficient and decided not to publish his reply. [63] When William Paterson, signer of the Constitution and a Justice on the U. S. Supreme Court, learned that some Americans seemed to agree with Paine's work, he thundered:

Infatuated Americans, why renounce your country, your religion, and your God? Oh shame, where is thy blush? Is this the way to continue independent, and to render the 4th of July immortal in memory and song? [64]

Zephaniah Swift, author of America's first law book, noted:

[W]e cannot sufficiently reprobate the beliefs of Thomas Paine in his attack on Christianity by publishing his Age of Reason. . . . He has the impudence and effrontery [shameless boldness] to address to the citizens of the United States of America a paltry performance which is intended to shake their faith in the religion of their fathers. . . . No language can describe the wickedness of the man who will attempt to subvert a religion which is a source of comfort and consolation to its votaries [devout worshipers] merely for the purpose of eradicating all sentiments of religion. [65]

John Jay, an author of the Federalist Papers and the original Chief-Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court, was comforted by the fact that Christianity would prevail despite Paine's attack:

I have long been of the opinion that the evidence of the truth of Christianity requires only to be carefully examined to produce conviction in candid minds, and I think they who undertake that task will derive advantages. . . . As to The Age of Reason, it never appeared to me to have been written from a disinterested love of truth or of mankind. [66]

Many other similar writings could be cited, but these are sufficient to show that Paine's views were strongly rejected even by the least religious Founders. In fact, Paine's views caused such vehement public opposition that he spent his last years in New York as "an outcast" in "social ostracism" and was buried in a farm field because no American cemetery would accept his remains. [67] Paine certainly did not represent the mainstream views of any prominent Founding Father, even Jefferson or Franklin.

Nevertheless, even Paine stridently opposed the concept of secular education - particularly in the academic fields related to science. I recommend that you read his lecture to French Theophilanthropists (a French society that embraced the same principles that Paine had set forth in his Age of Reason [68]) in Paris in 1797. In that address, Paine attacked the French public school system because of the secular anti-religious manner in which it taught science. Paine protested:

It has been the error of the schools to teach . . . sciences and subjects of natural philosophy as accomplishments only whereas they should be taught . . . with reference to the Being who is the author of them: for all the principles of science are of Divine origin. . . . When we examine an extraordinary piece of machinery, an astonishing pile of architecture, a well executed statue or a highly finished painting . . . our ideas are naturally led to think of the extensive genius and talents of the artist. When we study the elements of geometry, we think of Euclid. When we speak of gravitation, we think of Newton. How then is it, that when we study the works of God in the creation, we stop short and do not think of God? It is from the error of the schools. . . . [T]he evil that has resulted . . . has been that of generating in the pupils a species of atheism. Instead of looking through the works of the creation to the Creator Himself, they stop short and employ the knowledge they acquire to create doubts of His existence. [69]

Not even Thomas Paine - probably the least religious among the American Founders - believed that public education should be so secular as to exclude religious and moral teachings. As Michael Medved, a prominent national Jewish author, columnist, and talkshow host, correctly observed:

Even the most radical of the Founders, pamphleteer Thomas Paine, would fit more comfortably with today's religious conservatives than with the secular militants who seek to claim his as one of their own. . . . [He] wanted to approach public education in a manner that would deeply offend today's uncompromising separationists, and those who ludicrously claim that the designers of our Constitution intended a "secular nation." [70]

The Constitution and Religion:

Article VI and the First Amendment

You also quoted the two religion clauses of the Constitution. The first is Article VI, Section 3:

[N]o religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.

The second is the First Amendment:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . .

Historically, courts and legal scholars examine both phrases when seeking the intent of either, for the understanding of each was made more complete through the examination of both. [71] So what have courts established as the purpose of those two clauses? They both sought to secure the same protections.

The purpose of the First Amendment is best established by examining the original proposals and the discussions that guided its development and led to its constitutional wording. Begin with the original proposal of George Mason for that Amendment (a member of the Constitutional Convention and "The Father of the Bill of Rights"):

[A]ll men have an equal, natural and unalienable right to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that no particular sect or society of Christians ought to be favored or established by law in preference to others. [72]

James Madison's proposal was similar, [73] as were others. Congress took the numerous proposals and began merging and reshaping them into the First Amendment. Significantly, the Annals of Congress from June 8, 1789, to September 25, 1789, contain the complete official records of those who drafted and approved the First Amendment. Notice the purpose of the Amendment from their discussions:

AUGUST 15, 1789. Mr. [Peter] Sylvester [of New York] had some doubts. . . . He feared it [the First Amendment] might be thought to have a tendency to abolish religion altogether. . . . Mr. [Elbridge] Gerry [of Massachusetts] said it would read better if it was that "no religious doctrine shall be established by law." . . . Mr. [James] Madison [of Virginia] said he apprehended the meaning of the words to be, that "Congress should not establish a religion, and enforce the legal observation of it by law." . . . [T]he State[s]. . . seemed to entertain an opinion that under the clause of the Constitution . . . it enabled them [Congress] to make laws of such a nature as might. . . establish a national religion; to prevent these effects he presumed the amendment was intended. . . . Mr. Madison thought if the word "national" was inserted before religion, it would

satisfy the minds of honorable gentlemen. . . . He thought if the word "national" was introduced, it would point the amendment directly to the object it was intended to prevent. [74]

In addition to the records of Congress surrounding the drafting of the First Amendment, the state debates surrounding the ratification of that Amendment also affirm that its objective was to prevent in American what colonists had experienced in Great Britain and Europe: the establishment by law of a single denomination of Christianity, whether Catholic, Anglican, or any other. Notice, for example, Governor Samuel Johnston's comments on this point during North Carolina's convention to ratify the Constitution:

I know but two or three States where there is the least chance of establishing any particular religion. The people of Massachusetts and Connecticut are mostly Presbyterians. In every other State, the people are divided into a great number of sects. In Rhode Island, the tenets of the Baptists, I believe, prevail. In New York, they are divided very much: the most numerous are the Episcopalians and the Baptists. In New Jersey, they are as much divided as we are. In Pennsylvania, if any sect prevails more than others, it is that of the Quakers. In Maryland, the Episcopalians are most numerous, though there are other sects. In Virginia, there are many sects; you all know what their religious sentiments are. So in all the Southern States they differ; as also in New Hampshire. I hope, therefore, that gentlemen will see there is no cause of fear that any one religion shall be exclusively established. [75]

In that same convention, Henry Abbot further explained:

Many wish to know what religion shall be established. I believe a majority of the community are Presbyterians. I am, for my part, against any exclusive establishment; but if there were any, I would prefer the Episcopal. [76]

The records are succinct and they clearly document that the First Amendment was written to prevent the establishment of a single national denomination, not to restrain public religious expressions of faith. In fact, public expressions of religious faith are specifically protected by the First Amendment's provision for the free exercise of religion as well as its free speech clause - two clauses that apply to me as a legislator as well as to every other citizen.

The First Amendment (like the other Amendments in the Bill of Rights) was to restrain the federal government in the specific areas specified in the Amendments. As the U. S. Supreme Court has clearly explained:

In almost every convention by which the Constitution was adopted, amendments to guard against the abuse of power were recommended. These amendments demanded security against the apprehended encroachments of the general [federal] government, not against those of the local [State] governments. . . . These amendments contain no expression indicating an intention to apply them to the State governments. This Court cannot so apply them. [77]

The fact that the purpose of the constitutional prohibition against "an establishment of religion" was to forbid the federal establishment of a national Christian denomination was made abundantly clear in the classic three-volume Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States by Justice Joseph Story. (Story is a "Father of American Jurisprudence" and his famous commentary is a standard authority in federal and state courts, and federal and state legislatures.) The lengthy constitutional exegesis of the First Amendment affirms:

The real object of the [First A]mendment was not to countenance, much less to advance Mahometanism, or Judaism, or infidelity by prostrating Christianity, but to exclude all rivalry among Christian sects and to prevent any national ecclesiastical establishment which should give to a hierarchy the exclusive patronage of the national government. [78]

It further explained:

We are not to attribute this [First Amendment] prohibition of a national religious establishment to an indifference to religion in general, and especially to Christianity (which none could hold in more reverence than the framers of the Constitution), but to dread by the people of influence of ecclesiastical power [an established church hierarchy] in matters of government. . . . [A]t the time of the adoption of the Constitution, and of the Amendment to it now under consideration, the general if not the universal sentiment in America was that Christianity ought to receive encouragement. . . . An attempt to . . . hold all [religion] in utter indifference would have created universal disapprobation if not universal indignation. [79]

Notice, too, the similarly clear affirmations by the U. S. House and Senate Judiciary Committees:

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: The clause speaks of "an establishment of religion." What is meant by that expression? It referred, without doubt, to that establishment which existed in the mother-country. . . . [which was an] endowment, at the public expense, in exclusion of or in preference to any other,

by giving to its members exclusive political rights, and by compelling the attendance of those who rejected its communion upon its worship or religious observances. These three particulars constituted that union of church and state of which our ancestors were so justly jealous, and against which they so wisely and carefully provided. . . . They [the Founders] intended, by this Amendment, to prohibit "an establishment of religion" such as the English Church presented, or any thing like it. But they had no fear or jealousy of religion itself, nor did they wish to see us an irreligious people . . . they did not intend to spread over all the public authorities and the whole public action of the nation the dead and revolting spectacle of atheistical apathy. [80]

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: What is an establishment of religion? It must have a creed defining what a man must believe; it must have rites and ordinances which believers must observe; it must have ministers of defined qualifications to teach the doctrines and administer the rites; it must have tests for the submissive and penalties for the nonconformist. There never was an established religion without all these. . . . Had the people, during the Revolution, had a suspicion of any attempt to war against Christianity, that Revolution would have been strangled in its cradle. At the time of the adoption of the Constitution and the amendments, the universal sentiment was that Christianity should be encouraged, not any one sect [denomination]. Any attempt to level and discard all religion would have been viewed with universal indignation. . . . It [religion] must be considered as the foundation on which the whole structure rests. . . . Christianity was the religion of the founders of the republic, and they expected it to remain the religion of their descendents. [81]

The First Amendment's prohibition against "an establishment of religion" was designed to restrict neither religious beliefs nor religious activities but only the governmental establishment of a single national denomination.

The documentation surrounding Article VI's prohibition of a religious test was pointed at the same evil; it was to prohibit the federal government from examining the religious beliefs of any candidate, thereby precluding it from establishing a national denomination by requiring all officeholders to be Baptists, Catholics, Methodists, or any other belief. As a result, as Justice Story pointed out, it was because of Article VI that . . .

. . . the Catholic and the Protestant, the Calvinist and the Armenian, the Jew and the Infidel, may sit down at the common table of the national [federal] councils without any inquisition into their faith or mode of worship. [82]

Although Article VI prohibited any government inquiry into the religious views of a candidate, it was expected and encouraged that such investigation be

undertaken by the voters - a fact made clear during the constitutional ratification debates. For example, in the North Carolina ratifying convention, Governor Samuel Johnston explained:

It is apprehended that Jews, Mahometans, pagans, &c., may be elected to high offices under the government of the United States. Those who are Mahometans, or any others who are not professors of the Christian religion, can never be elected to the office of President or other high office, but in one of two cases. First, if the people of America lay aside the Christian religion altogether, it may happen. Should this unfortunately take place, the people will choose such men as think as they do themselves. Another case is if any persons of such descriptions should, notwithstanding their religion, acquire the confidence and esteem of the people of America by their good conduct and practice of virtue, they may be chosen. [83]

Signer of the Constitution Richard Dobbs Spaight also declared:

As to the subject of religion. . . . [n]o power is given to the general [federal] government to interfere with it at all. . . . No sect is preferred to another. Every man has a right to worship the Supreme Being in the manner he thinks proper. No test is required. All men of equal capacity and integrity are equally eligible to offices. . . . I do not suppose an infidel, or any such person, will ever be chosen to any office unless the people themselves be of the same opinion. [84]

Supreme Court Justice James Iredell (nominated to the Court by President Washington) similarly explained:

But it is objected that the people of America may perhaps choose representatives who have no religion at all, and that pagans and Mahometans may be admitted into offices. . . . But it is never to be supposed that the people of America will trust their dearest rights to persons who have no religion at all, or a religion materially different from their own. [85]

Therefore, while the federal government is explicitly prohibited from investigating one's religious views on an issue, it is completely constitutional for citizens to do so. As a court has explained:

The distinction is a sound one between a religion preferred by law, and a religion preferred by the people without the coercion of law - between a legal establishment (which the present Constitution expressly forbids) . . . and a religious creed freely chosen by the people for themselves. [86]

In short, Article VI simply reaffirmed the Founders' belief that any provisos on religion should remain beyond federal jurisdiction and inquiry. And the First Amendment was pointed solely at the official lawmaking actions of the federal government (which is why the Amendment states that Congress shall make no law establishing any such national denomination). The First Amendment was not directed at the actions or expressions of individuals, regardless of whether those individuals were in or out of government office.

Additionally, the philosophy of keeping the federal government limited and at arm's length on concerning the establishment of a national denomination was enshrined not only in the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment but also in its Free Exercise Clause ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"). The Establishment Clause prohibits the government from enforcing religious conformity, and the Free Exercise Clause ensures that the government will protect citizens' religious expression, whether public or private - including my own religious expression about Christmas which I made in the letter with which you take exception.

As Story's Commentary affirmed concerning the Establishment Clause:

The real object of the [First] Amendment was . . . to prevent any national ecclesiastical establishment which should give to an hierarchy the exclusive patronage of the national government. [87]

And then concerning the Free Exercise Clause, it correctly observed:

But this alone would have been an imperfect security if it had not been followed up by a declaration of the right of the free exercise of religion. [88]

In short, the First Amendment sought to prevent a "national ecclesiastical establishment" through both of its religious clauses: (1) a direct prohibition of any national church in the Establishment Clause, coupled with and (2) a guarantee for the free exercise of religion by all individuals and groups in the Free Exercise Clause, thereby securing sufficient diversity of religious expression to make the Congressional establishment of a national church politically impossible, since any such attempt would lack the unified support of the people. This is the same intent secured through Article VI's prohibition of any religious - or denominational - test by the federal government.

Therefore, no religion clauses in the Constitution were designed to limit religious expressions by citizens; instead, they were designed to protect religious expressions, whether uttered by elected citizens or non-elected

citizens. I am a citizen, and I receive the same protections of the First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause and Free Speech clause as does every other citizen - I do not lose, nor are my constitutional rights diminished by my election to office.

Why Just Three?

You selected Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Paine to make your point; unfortunately, you ignored the almost 200 other significant individuals who are termed Founding Fathers. Do you believe that the three you chose, as you have portrayed them (understanding that you did leave out the positive religious views of all three), accurately represent the views of the others? Hardly.

(By the way, a "Founding Father" is one who exerted significant influence in, provided prominent leadership for, or had a substantial impact upon the birth, development, and establishment of America as an independent, self-governing nation. This includes the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence, the fourteen Presidents of Congress during the Revolution, the two-dozen or so prominent Generals who secured independence, the fifty-five delegates to the federal Constitutional Convention who wrote the Constitution, the members of the first Congress who framed the First Amendment and the rest of the Bill of Rights, and the original members of the U. S. Supreme Court and Executive department who first applied the Constitution to office, thereby affirming and demonstrating the intent of the document they had just written.)

Let me provide just a sampling of what you did not mention about the others (and there are literally hundreds of similar quotes that I could have also provided):

The Holy Ghost carries on the whole Christian system in His truth. Not a baptism, not a marriage, not a sacrament can be administered but by the Holy Ghost. . . . There is no authority civil or religious - there can be no legitimate government - but what is administered by the Holy Ghost. [89] The Christian religion is, above all the religions that ever prevailed or existed in ancient or modern times, the religion of wisdom, virtue, equity and humanity. [90] I have examined all religions, and the result is that the Bible is the best book in the world. [91] The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity. I will avow that I then believed, and now believe, that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God. [92] Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited. . . . What a

Eutopia - what a Paradise would this region be! [93] John Adams, signer of the declaration, framer of the bill of rights

I rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ for a pardon of all my sins. [94] The name of the Lord (says the Scripture) is a strong tower; thither the righteous flee and are safe [Proverbs 18:10]. Let us secure His favor and He will lead us through the journey of this life and at length receive us to a better. [95] I conceive we cannot better express ourselves than by humbly supplicating the Supreme Ruler of the world . . . that the confusions that are and have been among the nations may be overruled by the promoting and speedily bringing in the holy and happy period when the kingdoms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be everywhere established, and the people willingly bow to the scepter of Him who is the Prince of Peace. [96] Samuel Adams, signer of the declaration

Confess before God [our] aggravated transgressions and implore His pardon and forgiveness through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ . . . [t]hat the knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ may be made known to all nations, pure and undefiled religion universally prevail, and the earth be fill with the glory of the Lord. [97] Josiah Bartlett, signer of the declaration

To the triune God - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost - be ascribed all honor and dominion forevermore - Amen. [98] Gunning Bedford, signer of the constitution

Let us enter on this important business under the idea that we are Christians on whom the eyes of the world are now turned. [L]et us earnestly call and beseech Him, for Christ's sake, to preside in our councils. . . . We can only depend on the all powerful influence of the Spirit of God, Whose Divine aid and assistance it becomes us as a Christian people most devoutly to implore. Therefore I move that some minister of the Gospel be requested to attend this Congress every morning . . . in order to open the meeting with prayer. [99] For nearly half a century have I anxiously and critically studied that invaluable treasure [the Bible]; and I still scarcely ever take it up that I do not find something new - that I do not receive some valuable addition to my stock of knowledge or perceive some instructive fact never observed before. In short, were you to ask me to recommend the most valuable book in the world, I should fix on the Bible as the most instructive both to the wise and ignorant. Were you to ask me for one affording the most rational and pleasing entertainment to the inquiring mind, I should repeat, it is the Bible; and should you renew the inquiry for the best philosophy or the most interesting history, I should still urge you to look into your Bible. I would make it, in short, the Alpha and Omega of knowledge. [100] To his daughter: You have been instructed from your childhood in the knowledge of your lost state by nature - the absolute

necessity of a change of heart and an entire renovation of soul to the image of Jesus Christ - of salvation through His meritorious righteousness only - and the indispensable necessity of personal holiness without which no man shall see the Lord [Hebrews 12:14]. [101] Elias Boudinot, president of the continental congress, framer of the bill of rights

[D]on't forget to be a Christian. I have said much to you on this head and I hope an indelible impression is made. [102] Jacob Broom, signer of the constitution (to his son)

On the mercy of my Redeemer I rely for salvation, and on His merits; not on the works that I have done in obedience to His precepts. [103] [T]hrough 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. [104] [I am] grateful to Almighty God for the blessings which, through Jesus Christ Our Lord, He had conferred on my beloved country. [105] Charles Carroll, signer of the declaration, framer of the bill of rights

Rendering thanks to my Creator for my existence and station among His works, for my birth in a country enlightened by the Gospel and enjoying freedom, and for all His other kindnesses, to Him I resign myself, humbly confiding in His goodness and in His mercy through Jesus Christ for the events of eternity. [106] Governments cannot give the rights essential to happiness. We claim them from a higher source: from the King of kings, and Lord of all the earth. [107] John Dickinson, signer of the constitution

[May we] with one heart and voice prostrate . . . present to our Great Benefactor sincere and unfeigned thanks for His infinite goodness and mercy towards us . . . for having above all things illuminated us by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, presenting to our view the happy prospect of a blessed immortality. [108] Deeply impressed with a scene of our unparalleled ingratitude, let us contemplate . . . that we are still permitted to enjoy the first of Heaven's blessings: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. [109] Elbridge Gerry, signer of the declaration, framer of the bill of rights

I have a tender reliance on the mercy of the Al mighty, through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. [110] Alexander Hamilton, signer of the constitution

Sensible of the importance of Christian piety and virtue to the order and happiness of a state, I cannot but earnestly commend to you every measure for their support and encouragement. [111] [May] universal happiness may be established in the world that all may bow to the scepter of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the whole earth be filled with His glory. [112] [May] all nations may

bow to the scepter of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the whole earth may be filled with his glory. [113] John Hancock, signer of the Declaration

Being a Christian. . . is a character which I prize far above all this world has or can boast. [114] 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. [115] The Bible. . . is a book worth more than all the other books that were ever printed. [116] Righteousness alone can exalt America as a nation [proverbs 14:34]. Whoever thou art, remember this; and in thy sphere practice virtue thyself, and encourage it in others. [117] The great pillars of all government and of social life are virtue, morality, and religion. This is the armor, my friend, and this alone, that renders us invincible. [118] Patrick Henry, governor

It becomes a people publicly to acknowledge the over-ruling hand of Divine Providence. . . and with becoming humility and sincere repentance to supplicate the pardon that we may obtain forgiveness through the merits and mediation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. [119] Samuel Huntington, signer of the declaration

I think the Christian religion is a Divine institution and I pray to God that I may never forget the precepts of His religion or suffer the appearance of an inconsistency in my principles and practice. [120] James Iredell, ratifier of the u. s. constitution, supreme court justice (appointed by president george washington)

Unto Him who is the author and giver of all good, I render sincere and humble thanks for His manifold and unmerited blessings and especially for our redemption and salvation by His beloved Son. . . Blessed be His holy name. [121] The Bible is the best of all books, for it is the word of God and teaches us the way to be happy in this world and in the next. [122] Condescend, merciful Father! to grant as far as proper these imperfect petitions, to accept these inadequate thanksgivings, and to pardon whatever of sin hath mingled in them for the sake of Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Savior; unto Whom, with Thee, and the blessed Spirit, ever one God, be rendered all honor and glory, now and forever. [123] Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation, to select and prefer Christians for their rulers. [124] John Jay, original chief justice of the u. s. supreme court, author of the federalist papers

I . . . am endeavoring . . . to attend to my own duty only as a Christian. . . let us take care that our Christianity, though put to the test . . . be not shaken, and that our love for things really good wax not cold. [125] Your first great duties, you are sensible, are those you owe to Heaven, to your Creator and Redeemer.

Let these be ever present to your minds, and exemplified in your lives and conduct. Imprint deep upon your minds the principles of piety towards God, and a reverence and fear of His holy name. . . . Remember, too, that you are the redeemed of the Lord, that you are bought with a price, even the inestimable price of the precious blood of the Son of God. Adore Jehovah, therefore, as your God and your Judge. Love, fear, and serve Him as your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Acquaint yourselves with Him in His word and holy ordinances. [126] William Samuel Johnson, signer of the constitution, framer of the bill of rights

A watchful eye must be kept on ourselves lest, while we are building ideal monuments of renown and bliss here, we neglect to have our names enrolled in the Annals of Heaven. [127] I have sometimes thought there could not be a stronger testimony in favor of religion or against temporal enjoyments, even the most rational and manly, than for men who occupy the most honorable and gainful departments and [who] are rising in reputation and wealth, publicly to declare their unsatisfactoriness by becoming fervent advocates in the cause of Christ; and I wish you may give in your evidence in this way. [128] James Madison, signer of the constitution, framer of the bill of rights, u. s. president

Bibles are strong protections. Where they abound, men cannot pursue wicked courses and at the same time enjoy quiet conscience. [129] Public utility pleads most forcibly for the general distribution of the Holy Scriptures. Without the Bible, in vain do we increase penal laws and draw entrenchments around our institutions. [130] James McHenry, signer of the constitution

You will probably have but a short time to live. Before you launch into eternity, it behooves you to improve the time that may be allowed you in this world: it behooves you most seriously to reflect upon your past conduct; 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. It behooves you to seek the [fellowship], advice, and prayers of pious and good men; to be [persistent] at the Throne of Grace, and to learn the way that leadeth to happiness. 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! [131] Thomas McKean, signer of the declaration (addressing a defendant just sentenced to death by a jury)

There must be religion. When that ligament is torn, society is disjointed and its members perish. The most important of all lessons is the denunciation of ruin

to every state that rejects the precepts of religion. [132] Religion is the only solid basis of good morals; therefore education should teach the precepts of religion and the duties of man towards God. [133] Gouverneur Morris, signer of the constitution

I desire to bless and praise the name of God 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. [134] 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. [135] I believe the Bible to be the written word of God and to contain in it the whole rule of faith and manners. [136] Robert Treat Paine, signer of the declaration, judge

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] [137] The only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government is the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity by means of the Bible. [138] The Bible should be read in our schools in preference to all other books. [139] Christianity is the only true and perfect religion; and in proportion as mankind adopts its principles and obeys its precepts, they will be wise and happy. [140] The Bible contains more knowledge necessary to man in his present state than any other book in the world. [141] By renouncing the Bible, philosophers swing from their moorings upon all moral subjects. It is the only correct map of the human heart that ever has been published. [142] Benjamin Rush, signer of the declaration

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. . . . that at the end of this world there will be a resurrection of the dead and a final judgment of all mankind when the righteous shall be publicly acquitted by Christ the Judge and admitted to everlasting life and glory, and the wicked be sentenced to everlasting punishment. [143] 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. [144] Roger Sherman, signer of the declaration, signer of the constitution, framer of the bill of rights

[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 purchased by the blessed Savior; the necessity of the operations of the Divine Spirit; of Divine faith accompanied with an habitual virtuous life. . . . [I] exhort and charge 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. [145] Richard Stockton, signer of the declaration, judge

I am a Christian. I believe only in the Scriptures, and in Jesus Christ my Savior. [146] Charles Thomson, secretary of the continental congress; along with John Hancock, Thomson was one of only two founders to sign the original draft of the declaration of independence

You do well to wish to learn our arts and ways of life, and above all, the religion of Jesus Christ. These will make you a greater and happier people than you are. [147] While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of Christian. [148] The blessing and protection of Heaven are at all times necessary but especially so in times of public distress and danger. 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. [149] I now make it my earnest prayer that God would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that love, humility, and peacefulness of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion. [150] Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness. . . . The mere politician equal with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them. [151] George Washington, signer of the constitution

[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. . . [T]here is no salvation in any other than in Jesus Christ of Nazareth. . . . [C]hrist 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." . . . [I] entreat[] you in the most earnest manner to believe in Jesus Christ, for "there is no salvation in any other" [acts 4:12]. . . . [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. [152] He is the best friend to American liberty who is the most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion, and who sets himself with the greatest firmness to bear down profanity and immorality of every kind. Whoever is an avowed enemy of God, I hesitate not to call him an enemy to his country. [153] John Witherspoon, signer of the declaration

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 the Divine Redeemer conduct us to that seat of bliss which He himself has prepared for His friends. [154] Oliver Wolcott, signer of the declaration

There are many other similar declarations. Additionally, numerous Framers took specific care to avow their unvarnished faith in God to all posterity through unequivocal declarations in their last wills and testaments, including:

[T]hanks be given unto Almighty God therefore, and knowing that it is appointed for all men once to die and after that the judgment [Hebrews 9:27] . . . principally, I give and recommend my soul into the hands of Almighty God who gave it and my body to the earth to be buried in a decent and Christian like manner . . . to receive the same again at the general resurrection by the mighty power of God. John Hart, signer of the declaration

My soul I resign into the hands of my Almighty Creator, Whose tender mercies are all over His works, . . . humbly hoping from His unbounded mercy and benevolence through the merits of my blessed Savior, a remission of my sins. [155] George Mason, delegate to the constitutional convention, "father of the bill of rights"

To the eternal and only true God be all honor and glory now and forever. Amen!  
Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, signer of the constitution

Furthermore, Declaration signer Thomas McKean delivered Gospel messages in the courtroom; [156] Constitution signer Abraham Baldwin was considered one of America's youngest theologian (being offered a Professorship of Divinity at Yale at the age of 21) and served as a military chaplain during the American Revolution; [157] Declaration signer John Witherspoon was responsible for two American translations of the Bible, including America's first family Bible; [158] Charles Thomson (one of only two Founders who originally signed the Declaration on July 4th) was responsible for Thomson's Bible, the first translation of the Greek Septuagint into English; [159] Declaration signer Benjamin Rush was responsible for the first mass-produced stereotyped Bible in America [160] and also founded the first Bible Society [161] as well as started the Sunday School movement in America; [162] Francis Hopkinson, a church music director, produced the first purely American hymn book, setting the entire Book of Psalms to music; [163] and many other signers were responsible for similarly strong Christian works.

Additionally, the American Bible Society was formed by signers of the Constitution John Langdon and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, president of the Continental Congress Elias Boudinot, Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court John Jay, and Supreme Court Justices Smith Thompson and Bushrod Washington, Constitutional Convention delegate Caleb Strong, and U. S. Attorney General William Wirt; [164] and Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall and U. S. President John Quincy Adams also served as its officers. [165] Constitution signer Rufus King was a founder of the New York Bible Common Prayer Book Society; [166] Constitution signer James McHenry founded the Maryland Bible Society; [167] Constitution signer Alexander Hamilton formed the Christian Constitutional Society to elect people to office who would support the Christian religion and the Constitution of the United States; [168] John Quincy Adams was a leader in the Massachusetts Bible Society; [169] Elias Boudinot was president of the New Jersey Bible Society; [170] leaders in the American Sunday School Union included Chief Justice John Marshall and Francis Scott Key; [171] and there are many other examples.

Perhaps you omitted mentioning these individuals because you were unaware of their beliefs and faith - perhaps this is why you cited only three individuals. By the way, I must respectfully point out that Thomas Paine, unlike so many of those I just cited, was directly involved in no founding document - neither the Declaration, the Constitution, or the Bill of Rights. He was an excellent writer, but so were hundreds of other active citizens at the time. The names mentioned above have much more claim to an influence in government than Thomas Paine, although he is worthy to be noted as an able writer - as were Jonathan Mayhew, James Otis, Noah Webster, and many others during the time who also influenced citizen thinking concerning the direction of government.

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Again, I appreciate your thoughtful letter and respect your strongly held opinions. However, I, too, have opinions that have come (as you can see) as the result of very extensive studies of original historical documents rather than just reading the summary writings and superficial editorials of today's so-called historical experts. The original writings speak for themselves, and for this reason I have inserted footnotes throughout my response to you. I encourage you to check these writings for yourself; you will also find that as a result of today's wonderful technology, you can actually see many of these original documents posted online at reputable sources such as the Library and Congress, Yale, Rutgers, and numbers of other educational institutions.

As I noted at the beginning, we may continue to respectfully disagree on this issue, but hopefully there are many other areas where we do agree and can cooperate. It remains my honor to represent and serve you at the Capitol.

Dr. Michael Ritz

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[1] Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Julian P. Boyd, editor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), Vol. I, pp. 494-497, from "Report on a Seal for the United States, with Related Papers," August 20, 1776; see also John Adams, *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 152, to Abigail Adams on August 14, 1776.

[2] *Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia*, Vol. II, pp. 64-66, November 11, 1799; Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Julian P. Boyd, editor (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), Vol. 3, p. 178, "Proclamation Appointing a Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer," November 11, 1779; see also Jefferson's encouragement of a day for fasting and prayer for June 1, 1774, when the British blockaded Boston (Jefferson, *Writings*, Vol. I, pp. 9-10).

[3] Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Julian P. Boyd, editor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), Vol. 3, p. 178, "Proclamation Appointing a Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer," November 11, 1779.

[4] James Madison, *The Papers of James Madison*, Robert A. Rutland, editor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), Vol. VIII, pp. 396.

[5] *Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States* (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1851) p. 797.

[6] Bishop Claggett's (Episcopal Bishop of Maryland) letter of February 18, 1801, reveals that, as vice-President, Jefferson went to church services in the House. Available in the Maryland Diocesan Archives.

[7] *The First Forty Years of Washington Society*, Galliard Hunt, editor (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 13; see also James Hutson, *Religion and the Founding of the American Republic* (Washington, D. C.: Library of Congress, 1998), p. 84.

[8] James Hutson, *Religion and the Founding of the American Republic* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1998), p. 89.

[9] James Hutson, *Religion and the Founding of the American Republic* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1998), p. 89.

[10] James Hutson, *Religion and the Founding of the American Republic* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1998), p. 96, quoting from a handwritten history in possession of the Library of Congress, "Washington Parish, Washington City," by Rev. Ethan Allen.

[11] Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Bishop John Carroll (Sept. 3, 1801) (on file with the Library of Congress, #19,966; at: <http://memory.loc.gov/master/mss/mtj/mtj1/024/0700/0706.jpg>).

[12] Jefferson, *Writings*, Vol. XVI, pp. 281-282.

[13] William Parker Cutler and Julia Perkins Cutler, *Life, Journal, and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler* (Cincinnati: Colin Robert Clarke & Co., 1888), Vol. II, p. 66, 119, letter to Joseph Torrey, January 4, 1802. Cutler meant that Jefferson attended church on January 3, 1802, for the first time as President. Bishop Claggett's letter of February 18, 1801, already revealed that as Vice-President, Jefferson went to church services in the House.

[14] See, for example, *The Jeffersonian Encyclopedia*, John P. Foley, editor (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900), p. 977; see also *Documents of American History*, Henry S. Commager, editor

(NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948), p. 179; Annals of the Congress of the United States (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1852), Eighth Congress, Second Session, p. 78, March 4, 1805; see also James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897 (Published by Authority of Congress, 1899), Vol. I, p. 379, March 4, 1805; Jefferson, Writings, Vol. XVI, p. 325, to the Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church on December 9, 1808; Thomas Jefferson, Memoir, Correspondence, and Miscellanies, From the Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, editor (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1830), Vol. IV, pp. 103-104, to the Rev. Samuel Millar on January 23, 1808; Jefferson, Writings, Vol. 16, pp. 281-282, letter to the Danbury Baptists on January 1, 1802; Jefferson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 459, "Kentucky Resolutions."

[15] Debates and Proceedings, p. 1332, 7th Cong., "An Act in Addition to an Act, Entitled, 'An Act in Addition to an Act Regulating the Grants of Land Appropriated for Military Services, and for the Society of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen' " (April 26, 1802); Debates and Proceedings, p. 1602, 7th Cong., 2nd Sess., "An Act to Revive and Continue in Force An Act in Addition to an Act, Entitled, 'An Act in Addition to an Act Regulating the Grants of Land Appropriated for Military Services, and for the Society of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen,' and for Other Purposes" (March 3, 1803); Debates and Proceedings, p. 1279, 8th Cong., "An Act Granting Further Time for Locating Military Land Warrants, and for Other Purposes" (March 19, 1804).

[16] American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States (Walter Lowrie & Matthew St. Claire Clarke eds., Washington, D. C.: Gales and Seaton 1832), Vol. IV, p. 687, "The Kaskaskia and Other Tribes."

[17] Letter from Thomas Jefferson to the Nuns of the Order of St. Ursula at New Orleans on May 15, 1804, original on file with the New Orleans Parish.

[18] For example, see his presidential act of October 18, 1804.

[19] The Rev. William Bennet, The Excellence of Christian Morality, A Sermon Preached before the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, at their Anniversary Meeting, Thursday, 6th June 1799 (Edinburgh, 1800).

[20] Jefferson, Writings, Vol. XVI, p. 291, to Captain John Thomas on November 18, 1807.

[21] Letter of Jefferson to Samuel Greenhow (January 31, 1814), in 14 Jefferson, Writings 81; see also letter of Jefferson to Samuel H. Smith (September 21, 1814) in 16 Jefferson, Writings 190-194.

[22] Letter of Jefferson to Samuel Greenhow (January 31, 1814), in 14 Jefferson, Writings 81.

[23] Thomas Jefferson, "Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia," August 4, 1818 [The Rockfish Gap Report], from The University of Virginia (at: <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new?id=JefRock.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=1&division=div1>).

[24] Thomas Jefferson, "Report to the President and Directors of the Literary Fund," The Avalon Project, October 7, 1822 (at: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/jeffrep3.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/jeffrep3.asp)). Thomas Jefferson, "Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia," August 4, 1818 [The Rockfish Gap Report], from The University of Virginia (at: <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new?id=JefRock.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=1&division=div1>).

[25] Thomas Jefferson, "Report to the President and Directors of the Literary Fund," The Avalon Project, October 7, 1822 (at: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/jeffrep3.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/jeffrep3.asp)).

[26] See his letter on August 8, 1824, Jefferson said "I have undertaken to make out a catalogue of books for our library, being encouraged to it by the possession of a collection of yellowed catalogues; and, knowing no one capable to whom we could refer the task, it has been laborious far beyond my expectation, having already devoted 4 hours a day to it for upwards of two months and the whole day for some time past and not yet in sight of the end. It will enable us to judge what the object will cost. The chapter in which I am most at a loss is that of divinity, and knowing that in your early days you bestowed attention on this subject, I wish you could suggest to me any works really worthy of place in the catalogue." Thomas Jefferson, "The Papers of Thomas Jefferson," Library of Congress, letter to James Madison, August 8, 1824 (at: [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mtj1&fileName=mtj1page054.db&recNum=725&itemLink=/ammem/collections/jefferson\\_papers/mtjser1.html&linkText=7&tempFile=/temp/~ammem\\_kF9i&filecode=mtj&itemnum=1&ndocs=1](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mtj1&fileName=mtj1page054.db&recNum=725&itemLink=/ammem/collections/jefferson_papers/mtjser1.html&linkText=7&tempFile=/temp/~ammem_kF9i&filecode=mtj&itemnum=1&ndocs=1)); see also James Madison, *The Writings of James Madison*, Gaillard Hunt, editor (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), Vol. IX, pp. 203-207, letter to Thomas Jefferson, September 10, 1824.

[27] Jefferson, *Writings* (1904), Vol. XVI, p. 19, letter to Judge Augustus B. Woodward, March 24, 1824.

[28] Jefferson, *Writings* (1904), Vol. XIX, pp. 405-406, letter to Dr. Thomas Cooper, November 2, 1822.

[29] Jefferson, *Writings* (1904), Vol. XIX, pp. 449-450, A Meeting of the Visitors of the University of Virginia on Monday the 4th of October, 1824.

[30] Thomas Jefferson, "Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia," August 4, 1818 [The Rockfish Gap Report], from *The University of Virginia* (at: <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new?id=JefRock.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=1&division=div1>) called for this building and the stated purpose of religious worship in it; the subsequent reports Jefferson, *Writings* (1904), Vol. XIX, p. 394, Board of Visitors, Minutes, October 2-3, 1820; Jefferson, *Writings*, Vol. XIX, pp. 411-412, Board of Visitors, Minutes, October 7, 1822; and Jefferson, *Writings*, Vol. XIX, pp. 449-450, Board of Visitors, Minutes, October 4, 1824 reaffirmed that purpose.

[31] Jefferson, *Writings* (1904), Vol. XIX, pp. 449-450, "A Meeting of the Visitors of the University of Virginia on Monday the 4th of October, 1824."

[32] Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, Vol. 14, p. 385, to Charles Thompson on January 9, 1816.

[33] Letter of Jefferson to Benjamin Rush (April 21, 1803), in 3 Jefferson, *Memoir* 506.

[34] See, for example, Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* 236-237 (Query XVIII); letter of Jefferson to Edward Coles (August 25, 1814), in 11 Jefferson, *Works* 416-420, letter of Jefferson to David Barrow (May 1, 1815), in 11 Jefferson, *Works* 470-471; and others.

[35] Letter of Jefferson to Abigail Adams (July 22, 1804), in 11 Jefferson, *Writings* 44; see also letter of Jefferson to William Duane (March 22, 1806), in 11 Jefferson, *Writings* 94, letter of Jefferson to Henry Lee (May 15, 1826), in 12 Jefferson, *Works* 474, and letter of Jefferson to Uriah Gregory (August 13, 1800), in 10 Jefferson, *Works* 171.

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[40] Benjamin Franklin, Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931 reprint of 1749), p. vii, from the Introduction.

[41] Benjamin Franklin, The Papers of Benjamin Franklin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), Vol. 3, pp. 226-227, n, Proclamation for a General Fast on December 9, 1747, written by Franklin (see also Benjamin Franklin, The Works of Benjamin Franklin (Boston: Tappan, Whittemore, and Mason, 1840), Vol. I, pp. 148-149).

[42] Benjamin Franklin, Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931 reprint of 1749), p. 22.

[43] Franklin, Papers (1963), Vol. 6, p. 469, to George Whitefield on July 2, 1756.

[44] See, for example, Franklin, Papers (1972), Vol. 15, p. 30, letter from Benjamin Franklin to Francis Hopkinson on January 24, 1768, and Vol. 14, p. 340, letter from Benjamin Franklin to Francis Hopkinson on December 16, 1767.

[45] See, for example, Franklin, Papers (1963), Vol. 7, pp. 100-101, letter from John Waring to Benjamin Franklin on January 24, 1757; p. 356, letter from Benjamin Franklin to John Waring on January 3, 1758; pp. 377-378, letter from Benjamin Franklin to John Waring on February 17, 1758; Vol. 9, pp. 12-13, letter from John Waring to Benjamin Franklin on January 4, 1760, also n1; pp. 20-21, "Minutes of the Associates of the Late Dr. Bray" on January 17, 1760; Vol. 10, pp. 298-300, letter from Benjamin Franklin to John Waring on June 27, 1763; pp. 395-396, letter from Benjamin Franklin to John Waring on December 17, 1763; Vol. 13, p. 442, letter from Benjamin Franklin to Abbot Upcher on October 4, 1766; and others.

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[48] Constitutions (1785), p. 81, Pennsylvania, 1776, Article II, Section 10.

[49] Annual Register for the Year 1783, (London: G. Robinson, 1784), p. 113.

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[69] Thomas Paine, *The Complete Religious and Theological Works of Thomas Paine* (New York: Peter Eckler, 1892), pp. 301-302, "A Discourse Delivered to the Society of Theophilanthropists in Paris," January 16, 1797.

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[73] *The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States* (Washington, D. C.: Gales and Seaton, 1834), Vol. I, p. 451, James Madison, June 8, 1789.

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- [151] George Washington, *Address of George Washington, President of the United States . . . Preparatory to His Declination* (Baltimore: George and Henry S. Keatinge, 1796), pp. 22-23.
- [152] Witherspoon, *Works* (1815), Vol. V, pp. 276, 278, "The Absolute Necessity of Salvation Through Christ," January 2, 1758. John Witherspoon, *The Works of John Witherspoon*

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[154] *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.

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[157] Parker C. Thompson, *The United States Army Chaplaincy: from its European Antecedents to 1791* (Washington: D. C.: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army, 1978), Vol. I, p. 246.

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[160] *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments Translated Out of the Original Tongues and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised* (London: Stereotyped for the Bible Society at Philadelphia, 1812).

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[163] *The Psalms of David, with the Ten Commandments, Creed, Lord's Prayer, &c. In Metre. Also, the Catechism, Confession of Faith, Liturgy, &c. Translated from the Dutch*, Francis Hopkinson, editor (New York: James Parker, 1767); see also Benjamin Franklin, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Leonard W. Labaree, editor (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), Vol. 12, p. 402, in a letter from Francis Hopkinson to Benjamin Franklin on December 13, 1765; George Everett Hastings, *The Life and Works of Francis Hopkinson* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1926), pp. 76-78.

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