

## **Quotes from the Founding Fathers**

### **George Washington**

Washington's own step granddaughter "Nelly" Custis saw him as a religious man. She wrote this to one of Washington's early biographers:

It was his custom to retire to his library at nine or ten o'clock, where he remained an hour before he went to his chamber. He always rose before the sun, and remained in his library until called to breakfast. I never witnessed his private devotions. I never inquired about them. I should have thought it the greatest heresy to doubt his firm belief in Christianity. His life, his writings, prove that he was a Christian. He was not one of those who act or pray, "that they may be seen of men." He communed with his God in secret.<sup>i</sup>

### **October 3, 1789 – Proclamation in New York**

Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor--and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.<sup>ii</sup>

### **Washington grew even more explicit as the Revolutionary War dragged on. This is a general order from May 2, 1778:**

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 a Christian.<sup>iii</sup>

### **Personal Prayer Book:**

Direct my thoughts, words and work, wash away my sins in the immaculate blood of the lamb, and purge my heart by thy holy spirit...daily frame me more and more into the likeness of thy Son, Jesus Christ, that living in thy fear, and dying in thy favor, I may in thy appointed time obtain the resurrection of the just unto eternal life...bless the whole race of mankind and let the world be filled with the knowledge of...thy Son, Jesus Christ.<sup>iv</sup>

## **John Adams**

**American Founding Father and the second President of the United States**

### **Diary Excerpts:**

#### **FEBRUARY 22, 1756**

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! Every member would be obliged, in conscience, to temperance and frugality and industry; to justice and kindness and charity towards his fellow men; and to piety, love and reverence towards Almighty God. In this commonwealth, no man would impair his health by gluttony, drunkenness, or lust; no man would sacrifice his most precious time to cards or any other trifling and mean amusement; no man would steal, or lie, or in any way defraud his neighbor, but would live in peace and good will with all men; no man would blaspheme his Maker or profane his worship; but a rational and manly, a sincere and unaffected piety and devotion would reign in all hearts. What a Utopia; what a Paradise would this region be<sup>v</sup>

#### **MARCH 2, 1756**

Began this afternoon my third quarter. The great and Almighty author of nature, who at first established those rules which regulate the world, can as easily suspend those laws whenever his providence sees sufficient reason for such suspension. This can be no objection, then, to the miracles of Jesus Christ. Although some very thoughtful and contemplative men among the heathen attained a strong persuasion of the great principles of religion, yet the far greater number, having little time for speculation, gradually sunk into the grossest opinions and the grossest practices. These, therefore, could not be made to embrace the true religion till their attention was roused by some astonishing and miraculous appearances. The reasoning of philosophers, having nothing surprising in them, could not overcome the force of prejudice, custom, passion, and bigotry. But when wise and virtuous men commissioned from heaven, by miracles awakened men's attention to their reasoning's, the force of truth made its way with ease to their minds.<sup>vi</sup>

## **Thomas Jefferson**

**An American Founding Father, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, and the third President of the United States.**

**This is written on Panel 3 of the Jefferson Memorial.** The first line comes from his work *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, but the majority was originally written in 1781 in *Query XVIII* of his *Notes on that State of Virginia*:

God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can 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.<sup>vii</sup>

**April 21, 1803 in a letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush:**

My views...are the result of a life of inquiry and reflection, and very different from the anti-Christian system imputed to me by those who know nothing of my opinions. 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...<sup>viii</sup>

**The following is thought to be written in his personal Bible:**

I am a real Christian, that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus. I have little doubt that our whole country will soon be rallied to the unity of our Creator and, I hope, to the pure doctrine of Jesus also.

**In a letter to Charles Thomson on January 9, 1816**

I am a real Christian, that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus.<sup>ix</sup>

**In a letter to Timothy Pickering on February 27, 1821**

I have little doubt that our whole country will soon be rallied to the unity of our Creator and, I hope, to the pure doctrine of Jesus also.<sup>x</sup>

**Benjamin Franklin**

**Signer of the Declaration of Independence and United States Constitution**

- Keep in mind that the following quote comes near the time of his death. His earlier views regarding religion are contested.

**March 9, 1790 to Ezra Stiles, the President of Yale University:**

You desire to know something of my religion. It is the first time I have been questioned upon it. But I cannot take your curiosity amiss, and shall endeavor in a few words to gratify it. Here is my creed. I believe in one God, the creator of the universe. That he governs by his providence. That he ought to be worshiped. That the most acceptable service we render to him is doing good to his other children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental points in all sound religion, and I regard them as you do in whatever sect I meet with them. . .<sup>xi</sup>

## **Samuel Adams**

### **Signer of the Declaration of Independence and Father of the American Revolution**

#### **In his will:**

I . . . recommend my Soul to that Almighty Being who gave it, and my body I commit to the dust, relying upon the merits of **Jesus Christ** for a pardon of all my sins.<sup>xii</sup>

#### **Proclamation by His Excellency Governor Adams (a.k.a. Proclamation For a Day of Solemn Fasting and Prayer), March 20, 1797**

And as it is our duty to extend our wishes to the happiness of the great family of man, I conceive that we cannot better express ourselves than by humbly supplicating the Supreme Ruler of the world that the rod of tyrants may be broken to pieces, and the oppressed made free again; that wars may cease in all the earth, and that the confusions that are and have been among nations may be overruled by promoting and speedily bringing on that holy and happy period when the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be everywhere established, and all people everywhere willingly bow to the scepter of Him who is Prince of Peace.<sup>xiii</sup>

## **James Monroe**

### **5<sup>th</sup> US President**

#### **He made this statement in his 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Message to Congress, November 16, 1818:**

When we view the blessings with which our country has been favored, those which we now enjoy, and the means which we possess of handing them down unimpaired to our latest posterity, our attention is irresistibly drawn to the source from whence they flow. Let us then, unite in offering our most grateful acknowledgments for these blessings to the Divine Author of All Good.<sup>xiv</sup>

## **John Quincy Adams**

### **6<sup>th</sup> US President**

#### **John Quincy Adams to John Adams, January 3, 1817:**

My hopes of a future life are all founded upon the Gospel of Christ and I cannot cavil or quibble away [evade or object to]. . . . the whole tenor of His conduct by which He sometimes positively asserted and at others countenances [permits] His disciples in asserting that He was God.<sup>xv</sup>

**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 4, 1837:**

In the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birthday of the Savior. The Declaration of Independence laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity.<sup>xvi</sup>

**Roger Sherman**

**Signer of the Declaration of Independence and United States Constitution**

**An excerpt from his personal creed of faith.** It was written in his handwriting and was doubtless prepared by him at the time of the formation of White Haven Church's creed of 1788; and seems to have been used by the person or committee who drew up that creed.

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.<sup>xvii</sup>

**Benjamin Rush**

**Signer of the Declaration of Independence and Ratifier of the Constitution**

**The Following are Excerpts from his work, *The Defence of the Use of the Bible as a School Book*, written March 10, 1791 to Rev. Jeremy Belknap of Boston:**

1-

I shall assume the five following propositions:

1. That Christianity is the only true and perfect religion; and that in proportion as mankind adopt its principles and obey its precepts they will be wise and happy.
2. That a better knowledge of this religion is to be acquired by reading the Bible than in any other way.
3. That the Bible contains more knowledge necessary to man in his present state than any other book in the world.
4. That knowledge is most durable, and religious instruction most useful, when imparted in early life.
5. That the Bible, when not read in schools, is seldom read in any subsequent period of life.<sup>xviii</sup>

2-

But passing by all other considerations, and contemplating merely the political institutions of the United States, I lament that we waste so much time and money in punishing crimes and take so little pains to prevent them. We profess to be republicans, and yet we neglect the only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government; that is, the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity by means of the Bible; for this divine book, above all others, favors that

equality among mankind, that respect for just laws, and all those sober and frugal virtues which constitute the soul of republicanism.<sup>xix</sup>

3-

I know there is an objection among many people to teaching children doctrines of any kind, because they are liable to be controverted... But let us not be wiser than our Maker. If moral precepts alone could have reformed mankind, the mission of the Son of God into our world would have been unnecessary. He came to promulgate a system of doctrines, as well as a system of morals. The perfect morality of the Gospel rests upon a doctrine which, though often controverted, has never been refuted; I mean the vicarious life and death of the Son of God.<sup>xx</sup>

### **John Witherspoon**

**Signer of the Declaration of Independence, Clergyman, and President of Princeton University**

**This is an excerpt of a sermon he preached at Princeton on May 17, 1776:**

While we give praise to God, the Supreme Disposer of all events, for His interposition on our behalf, let us guard against the dangerous error of trusting in, or boasting of, an arm of flesh ... If your cause is just, if your principles are pure, and if your conduct is prudent, you need not fear the multitude of opposing hosts... What follows from this? That he is the best friend to American liberty, who is 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 scruple not to call him an enemy of his country.<sup>xxi</sup>

### **John Jay**

**1<sup>st</sup> Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court**

**To Peter Augustus Jay on April 8, 1784:**

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. Continue therefore to read it and to regulate your life by its precepts.<sup>xxii</sup>

**From his Address at the Annual Meeting of the American Bible Society, May 13, 1824:**

By conveying the Bible to people . . . we certainly do them a most interesting act of kindness. We thereby enable them to learn that man was originally created and placed in a state of happiness, but, becoming disobedient, was subjected to the degradation and evils which he and his posterity have since experienced. The Bible will also inform them that our gracious Creator has provided for us a Redeemer in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed – that this Redeemer has made atonement “for the sins of the whole world,” and thereby reconciling the Divine justice with the Divine mercy, has

opened a way for our redemption and salvation; and that these inestimable benefits are of the free gift and grace of God, not of our deserving, nor in our power to deserve.<sup>xxiii</sup>

## **Congress**

### **Resolution on October 25, 1780:**

That it be recommended to such of the States who may think it convenient for them that they take proper measures to procure one or more new and correct editions of the Old and New Testament to be printed and that such states regulate their printers by law so as to secure effectually the said books from being misprinted.<sup>xxiv</sup>

**The war with Britain cut off the supply of Bibles to the United States with the result that on Sept. 11, 1777, Congress instructed its Committee of Commerce to import 20,000 Bibles from "Scotland, Holland or elsewhere."<sup>xxv</sup>**

**There were 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence and 43 of the signatories were either religious or a member of a Christian church. - 77%<sup>xxvi</sup>**

## End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington*. Vol XII. Jared Sparks, ed. Boston: Ferdinand Andrews, Publisher, 1838. 399-411.

<sup>ii</sup> George Washington, *Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation, New York, 3 October 1789*. Proclamation. From Library of Congress, *The Washington Papers*.  
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/GW/gw004.html> (accessed 21 June 2012).

<sup>iii</sup> George Washington, *George Washington, May 2, 1778, General Orders*. General Order. From the Library of Congress, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*. John C. Fitzpatrick, ed. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mgw:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28gw110335%29%29> (accessed 21 June 2012).

<sup>iv</sup> William Jackson Johnstone, *George Washington, the Christian*. New York: The Abingdon Press, 1919. 27-29.

<sup>v</sup> John Adams, *John Adams diary 1, 18 November 1755 – 29 August 1756*. From the Massachusetts Historical Society, *Adams Family Papers*.  
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=D1&numrecs=12&archive=all&hi=on&mode=&query=Bible&queryid=&rec=4&start=1&tag=text#firstmatch> (accessed 21 June 2012).

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vii</sup> *Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Quotations on the Jefferson Memorial,"  
[http://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/quotations-jefferson-memorial#\\_note-4](http://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/quotations-jefferson-memorial#_note-4) (accessed 21 June 2012).

<sup>viii</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, 1803 April 21*. Letter. From *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. Lipscomb, Andrew A. and Albert E. Bergh, eds. Washington, D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association of the United States, 1903-04. 20 vols. 10:380.  
[http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/jeffersons-religious-beliefs#footnote10\\_unbheun](http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/jeffersons-religious-beliefs#footnote10_unbheun) (accessed 21 June 2012).

<sup>ix</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson to Charles Thomson, 1816 January 9*. Letter. From *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels: "The Philosophy of Jesus" and "The Life and Morals of Jesus"*. Adams, Dickinson W. and Ruth W. Lester, eds. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983. 364-5. [http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/jeffersons-religious-beliefs#footnote10\\_unbheun](http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/jeffersons-religious-beliefs#footnote10_unbheun) (accessed 21 June 2012).

<sup>x</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson to Timothy Pickering, 1821 February 27*. Letter. From *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels: "The Philosophy of Jesus" and "The Life and Morals of Jesus"*. Adams, Dickinson W. and Ruth W. Lester, eds. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983. 403. [http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/jeffersons-religious-beliefs#footnote10\\_unbheun](http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/jeffersons-religious-beliefs#footnote10_unbheun) (accessed 21 June 2012).

<sup>xi</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *Letter from Franklin to Ezra Stiles, 9 March 1790*. Letter. From *The private correspondence of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 1 (Google eBook). 277-8.  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=rTkwAAAAyAAJ&pg=PA276&lpg=PA276&dq=Franklin+to+Stiles+1790&source=bl&ots=6OWkVMgv4L&sig=ueY8ZliHdcUXkzdgvwKQDApDgY&hl=en&sa=X&ei=34TqT7r\\_L8bsqAGgy\\_DsBQ&ved=0CFkQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=Franklin%20to%20Stiles%201790&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=rTkwAAAAyAAJ&pg=PA276&lpg=PA276&dq=Franklin+to+Stiles+1790&source=bl&ots=6OWkVMgv4L&sig=ueY8ZliHdcUXkzdgvwKQDApDgY&hl=en&sa=X&ei=34TqT7r_L8bsqAGgy_DsBQ&ved=0CFkQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=Franklin%20to%20Stiles%201790&f=false) (accessed 21 June 2012).



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- <sup>xii</sup> Samuel Adams, *Last Will and Testament of Samuel Adams*. Will and Testament. Quoted in Wells, William Vincent, *The life and public services of Samuel Adams* (Google eBook). 379-381.  
[http://books.google.com/books/about/The\\_life\\_and\\_public\\_services\\_of\\_Samuel\\_A.html?id=wwQOAAAAIAAJ](http://books.google.com/books/about/The_life_and_public_services_of_Samuel_A.html?id=wwQOAAAAIAAJ)(accessed 21 June 2012).
- <sup>xiii</sup> Samuel Adams, *Proclamation, March 20, 1797*. Proclamation. From the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Independent Chronicle, March 30, 1797*. Quoted in Wells, W. V., *Life of Samuel Adams*, vol. iii., 365-6.
- <sup>xiv</sup> James Monroe, *November 16, 1818, Second Annual Message to Congress*. Speech. Quoted in United States Congress, *Abridgment of the Debates of Congress, from 1789 to 1856*, Vol. VI, New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1858. 183.
- <sup>xv</sup> John Quincy Adams, *John Quincy Adams to John Adams, January 3, 1817*. Letter. Quoted in John Adams and John Quincy Adams, *The Selected Writings of John and John Quincy Adams*, Adrienne Koch and William Peden, eds. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946. 292.
- <sup>xvi</sup> 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 4, 1837*. Speech. Newburyport: Charles Whipple, 1837. 5-6.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Roger Sherman, *Confession of Faith*. Writing. Quoted in Boutell, Lewis Henry, *The Life of Roger Sherman*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1896. 272.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Benjamin Rush, M.D., *A Defence of the Use of the Bible as a School Book*. Quoted in *Essays, Literary, Moral & Philosophical* by Benjamin Rush, M.D., 1798. 93-4.  
<http://deila.dickinson.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/ownwords&CISOPTR=19843>  
(accessed 21 June 2012).
- <sup>xix</sup> *Ibid.* 112-3.
- <sup>xx</sup> *Ibid.* 103, 105.
- <sup>xxi</sup> John Witherspoon, *The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men*. From *The Selected Writings of John Witherspoon*, Thomas Miller, ed. Illinois: Landmarks in Rhetoric and Public Address, 1990. 138, 140, 144.  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=6wjRNWv\\_iI8C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=6wjRNWv_iI8C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false) (accessed 21 June 2012).
- <sup>xxii</sup> John Jay, *to Peter Augustus Jay on April 8, 1784*. Letter. From *John Jay: The Winning of the Peace, Unpublished Papers 1780-1784*. Richard B. Morris, ed. Vol. II. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980. 709.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> John Jay. *Addresses to the American Bible Society, At the Annual Meeting, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1824*. Speech. Quoted in Jay, William. *The Life of John Jay with Selections from His Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers*. Vol. I. New York: J. & J. Harper, 1833. 507.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> United States Continental Congress. *Thursday, October 25, 1780*. Resolution. *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*. Vol. 18. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910. 979.
- <sup>xxv</sup> "Religion and the Congress of the Confederation, 1774-89." From the Library of Congress, *Religion and the Founding of the American Republic*.  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel04.html> (accessed 21 June 2012).
- <sup>xxvi</sup> "Signers of the Declaration of Independence." *U.S. Constitution Online*.  
<http://www.usconstitution.net/declarsigndata.html> (accessed 21 June 2012).

Quotes tagged as "founding-fathers" Showing 1-30 of 86. I was greatly inspired by the Utopian Tamanend Ideals of St. Tammany; the only Native American Saint. St. Tammany continues to inspire great leaders to this day and started the original Peace Movement together with William Penn. Society of St. Tammany(Tammany Hall) ran NYC and world politics up until the 1950s in his name. John Lennon. tags: founding-fathers, leadership, leadership-development, native-american, new-york-city, peace, peace-movement, politics, saints, william-penn. 596 likes. Like. One thing is clear: The Fou...