

# “The United States is (not) a Christian Nation?”

by Dr. Catherine Millard

In early April, 2009 the following statement was made by a top Executive Officer of this country to the International Media: “The United States not a Christian...nation.”

However, the founding fathers of The United States refute this statement. In the original *Documents of American History*, we find their affirmations to the contrary:

**George Washington,  
First U.S. President  
and father of the nation:**

**General Orders, Valley Forge,  
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 laud the more distinguished character of Christian.** The signal instances of Providential goodness which we have experienced and which have now almost crowned our labors with complete success, demand from us in a peculiar manner the warmest returns of gratitude and piety to the Supreme Author of all good.

**Journals of the First Continental Congress, Secretary of Congress, Charles Thomson:**

***Grievances against the Ruling Power, 10<sup>th</sup> Article***

10. That the late Act of Parliament for establishing the Roman Catholic Religion and the French Laws in that extensive country now called Quebec, is dangerous in an extreme degree to the Protestant Religion and to the civil rights and liberties of all America; **and therefore as men and protestant Christians**, we are indispensably obliged to take all proper measures for our security.

**John Adams, Second U.S. President**

*Philadelphia, 16 September, 1774*

*Letter to his wife, Abigail,*

*The First Prayer in Congress, 7 September, 1774*

Mr. Duchē, unexpected to everybody, struck out into an extemporary prayer, which filled the bosom of every man present. I must confess I never heard a better prayer, or one so well pronounced. Episcopalian as he is, Dr. Cooper himself (Dr. Samuel Cooper, well known as a zealous patriot and pastor of the church in Brattle Square, Boston) never prayed with such fervor, such earnestness and pathos, and in language so elegant and sublime – for America, for the Congress, for the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially the town of Boston. It has had an excellent effect upon everybody here. **I must beg you to read that Psalm (Psalm 35)**

...

**Text of the First Prayer in Congress  
(excerpted)**

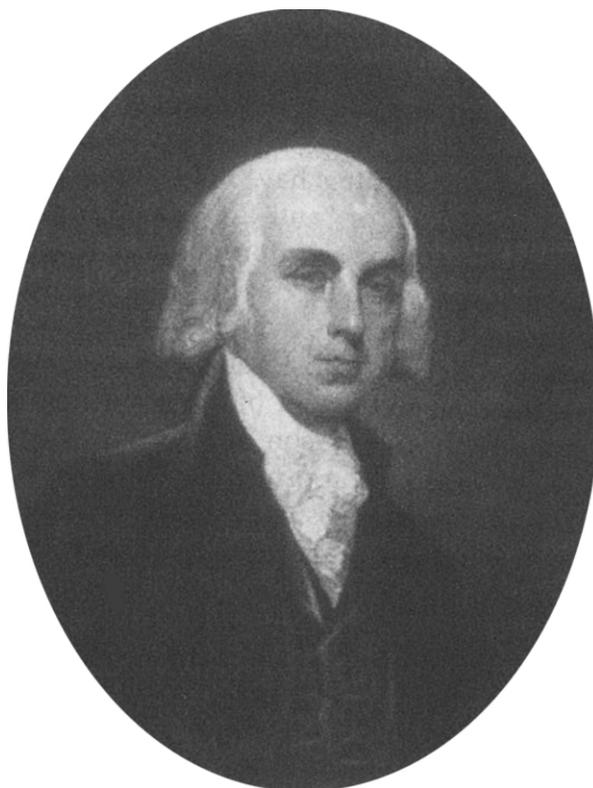
**O Lord, our Heavenly Father**, high and mighty King of kings, and Lord of lords, Who dost from Thy throne behold all the dwellers of the earth, and reignest with power supreme and uncontrolled over all kingdoms, empires, and governments, look down in mercy, we beseech Thee on these American States, who have fled to Thee from the rod of the oppressor, and thrown themselves on Thy gracious protection, desiring to be henceforth dependent only on Thee. To Thee they have appeared for the righteousness of our cause; to Thee do they now look up for that countenance and support which Thou alone canst give. Take them, therefore, Heavenly Father, under Thy nurtur-

ing care. Give them wisdom in council and valor in the field... Be Thou present, O God of Wisdom, and direct the councils of this honorable assemblage... **All this we ask, in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Saviour, Amen.**

**Thomas Jefferson, Third U.S. President,  
Author of The Declaration of Independence:**

*Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803*

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 the genuine precepts of Jesus himself.



James Madison – a portrait of the founding father  
by Charles Willson Peale.

From, *The Rewriting of America's History* © 1991 by Catherine Millard

I am a Christian in the only sense in which he wished anyone to be, sincerely attached to His doctrines in preference to all others...

### *Thomas Jefferson's Personal Bible*

Jefferson's well-worn, beautifully leather-bound, four-volume personal Bible holds preeminence in his collection. Housed in the Rare Book Collection of the Library of Congress, its card catalog entry describes Jefferson's Bible as:

**Bible.** English. 1808. Thomson

**The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Covenant,** commonly called **the Old and New Testament.** Translated from the Greek by Charles Thomson, late Secretary to the Congress of the United States. Philadelphia. Printed by J. Aitken, 1808. The Bible on which Librarian of Congress took the oath of office as the 12<sup>th</sup> Librarian of Congress, November 12, 1975.

### *Other entries in Jefferson's Collection include:*

- Greek New Testament, 1583.
- Greek and Latin New Testament, 1578.
- Latin New Testament, 1735.
- Bible – New Testament Greek, 1880.
- Hammond's New Testament – A Paraphrase and annotation upon all the Books of the New Testament, briefly explaining all the difficult places therein.
- **The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**, translated out of the original Greek, 1802.
- **The History of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ:** with the Lives of the Holy Apostles, and their successors for three hundred years after the crucifixion.
- Newman's Concordance to the Bible, 1650.
- Cruden's Concordance, 1738.
- Clarke's Concordance to the Holy Bible, 1696.
- Brown's Dictionary of the Holy Bible
- **The Truth of the Christian Religion** by Hugo Grotius in six books, written in Latin by Grotius, and now translated into English, with an addition of a seventh book against the present Roman Church, 1694. (Editor's note: Hugo Grotius was the father of International Law. Jefferson underlined several Scriptures undergirding Law).

### **Signers of the Declaration of Independence:**

Of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, **55 were Protestant Christians;** only one was a Catholic.

### **Benjamin Franklin, signer of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution:**

*Founder of Pennsylvania Hospital in 1751. Composer of its Cornerstone Inscription:*

**In the year of Christ, 1755:**...This building, by the bounty of the Government and of many private persons, was piously founded, for the relief of the sick and miserable. **May the God of mercies bless the undertaking!**

### *Franklin's 1787 Speech to the Constitutional Convention framing the U.S. Constitution (excerpted):*

...And have we now forgotten that powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs the affairs of men. **And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice,** is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? (*see Matthew 10:29*) We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings that **"except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."** (*see Psalm 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...I therefore beg leave to move – that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in the assembly every morning before we proceed to business...

### *Benjamin Franklin's Family Pew in Christ Church, Philadelphia – "the nation's church"*

A bronze plaque on Franklin's family pew, states the following:

**Here worshipped Benjamin Franklin.** Member of the Committee which drafted the Declaration of Independence. Negotiator of the French Alliance of the Revolutionary War. Negotiator of the Treaty of Peace by which George III recognized the Independence of America. Member of the Convention which framed the Constitution of the United States. Member of the Committee which erected the Spire of this Church. Interred according to the terms of his will in **Christ Church** churchyard.

### **George Mason, Author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, Forerunner to the U.S. Bill of Rights:**

George Mason, together with George Washington and William Fairfax were on the building committee for their 1774 parish church – **Pohick Episcopal Church.** Their family pews are designated with plaques. George Washington and William Fairfax gave the gold leaf for *The Ten Commandments, The Lord's Prayer* and *the Apostle's Creed*, calligraphed on the wall behind the altar.

### *The Virginia Declaration of Rights, 16<sup>th</sup> Article (excerpted):*

...that it is the mutual Duty of *all* to practice **Christian forbearance, love and Charity,** towards each other.

### *George Mason's Last Will and Testament:*

I, George Mason, of "Gunston Hall," in the parish of Truro and county of Fairfax, being of perfect and sound mind and memory and in good health, but mindful of the uncertainty of human life and the imprudence of man's leaving his affairs to be settled upon a death-bed, do make and appoint this my last Will and Testament. My soul, I resign into the hands of **my Almighty Creator,** whose tender mercies are over all His works, who hateth nothing that He hath made and to the Justice and Wisdom

of whose dispensation I willingly and cheerfully submit, humbly hoping **from His unbounded mercy and benevolence, through the merits of my blessed Savior, a remission of my sins.**

**James Madison, Fourth U.S. President,  
“Father of the U.S. Constitution”**

*Madison’s 1785 Memorial and Remonstrance  
(excerpted):*

...it is known that **this religion (the Christian Religion)** both existed and flourished, not only without the support of human laws, but in spite of every opposition from them; and not only during the period of miraculous aid, but long after it had been left to its own evidence and the ordinary care of Providence...**the diffusion of the light of Christianity.** The first wish of those, who ought to enjoy **this precious gift,** ought to be, that it may be imparted to the whole race of mankind...

*James Madison’s Formation:*

Founding father James Madison’s character was greatly influenced by his teacher, Reverend Thomas Martin, who lived with the family after becoming pastor of “the Brick Church,” Saint Thomas parish. In 1769, **James Madison** enrolled in the College of New Jersey at Princeton, **studying under a dynamic Christian patriot – the Reverend John Witherspoon, Doctor of Divinity,** President of the college, and **only preacher to sign The Declaration of Independence.** Madison mastered the writings of the Great Revival in Scotland and listened to Witherspoon’s biblical sermons. Reverend Witherspoon told Thomas Jefferson “that in the whole career of Mr. Madison at Princeton, he had never known him to do or say any indiscreet thing.” **James Madison was trained to be a minister and preacher of the Gospel.** However, he took up the call to serve his country during the American Revolution. He is rightly called “the father of the United States Constitution,” as he played a key role in its framing.

*The U.S. Constitution Signed by 39 Founding Fathers:*

The United States Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787; George Washington being the President of the Constitutional Convention. It was signed “**In the Year of our Lord**” – translated from Latin – **A.D. (Anno Domini),** meaning “**The Year of our Lord, (Jesus Christ),**” denoting the Christian calendar. “Before Christ” – B.C.

**Patrick Henry “Give my Liberty, or Give me Death!”**

*Delegate in the House of Burgesses, Capitol of Williamsburg, Virginia:*

Patrick Henry was a delegate to the House of Burgesses, with other founding fathers, deliberating independence from the tyrannical, ruling power. The House of Burgesses was instrumental in passing resolves in speaking out against taxation without representation as early as 1765.

On the back of the resolves passed in the House of Burgesses in May, 1765, Henry wrote his summary of this pivotal point of history. He quotes a portion of **Proverbs 14:34: “Righteousness alone can exalt a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people,”** which summarizes his beliefs that Americans must be willing to stand for righteousness, whatever the cost.

**The Christian Identity of the United States of America:**

Patrick Henry worshipped the Lord at Bruton Parish Episcopal Church, in Williamsburg, Virginia, the founding fathers’ church. Above George Mason’s and George Wythe’s marked pews, we read the following account of the United States of America’s Christian identity:

To the glory of God and in memory of the members of the House of Burgesses who, while representing the people of Virginia, worshipped in this part of Bruton Parish Church. Built by order of the House in 1713, and provided with pews for the Governor, his council and the members of the House of Burgesses. With grateful devotion, Virginia here recalls the memory of the life and services of that noble band of patriots who consecrated themselves to the defense and preservation of the inalienable rights and Charter liberties of the English Colony in Virginia. **The offspring of the Church, and the heirs of her teaching,** these statesmen and warriors came here to find clearer vision and nobler courage, and to invoke upon their cause the blessing of their God and the God of their fathers. As the Church at Jamestown ministered to the men who first permanently established English civilization in America, **so Bruton ministered to those who, through the State Constitution, and the Declaration of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence, by Congress, helped to establish upon a firm and lasting foundation, the Government of the Federal Republic.**

*Pews of the Founding Fathers of The United States in Bruton Parish Church:*

The founding fathers’ original family pews are designated with their names upon them, showing forth where their allegiance lay. Following are a few: **Front Row, (right)** Gen. George Washington, Pew 16. Patrick Henry, Pew 18. **Front Row (left)** Thomas Jefferson, Pew 17. Thomas Nelson Jr. and Edmund Pendleton, Pew 19. George Mason and George Wythe,\* Pew 21. \*First Professor of Law at the College of William and Mary and mentor to Thomas Jefferson.

*Patrick Henry’s famous Speech which Ignited the American Revolution (excerpted):*

In St. John’s Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia, on March 23, 1775, in the presence of Washington, Jefferson and the other members of the Second Virginia Convention, the torch of Liberty was kindled by the inspired words of Patrick Henry:

**Mr. President:**...They tell us, sir, that we are weak, unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house?...Sir, we are not weak, if we make a proper use of **the means which the God of nature hath placed in our power.** Three millions of people, **armed in the Holy cause of Liberty,** and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. **There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations; and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us...**Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? **Forbid it, Almighty God!** I know not what course others may take; but as for me, *give me liberty or give me death!*

**“The United States a Christian Nation” – Treaties by U.S. Supreme Court Justice David J. Brewer (1890-1910) (excerpted):**

Finally, Supreme Court Justice David J. Brewer wrote a Treaties entitled *The United States a Christian Nation*, hereunder excerpted. This brilliant American statesman dealt with the subject from every conceivable aspect – academic, educational, legal, constitutional, cultural, economic, executive, biblical and symbolic – leaving no stone unturned:

We classify nations in various ways, as, for instance, by their form of government. One is a kingdom, another an empire, and still another a republic. Also by race. Great Britain is an Anglo-Saxon nation, France a Gallic, Germany a Teutonic, Russia a Slav. And still again others are heathen, and still others are Christian nations. **This Republic is classified among the Christian nations of the world.** It was so formally declared by the Supreme Court of the United States. In the case of Holy Trinity Church vs. United States, 143 U.S. 471, that Court, after mentioning various circumstances, added, “these and many other matters which might be noticed, add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that **this is a Christian nation.**” (Unanimous opinion, Feb. 29, 1892)....  
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