

Founding Fathers Quotes

"The country's first two presidents, George Washington and John Adams, were firm believers in the importance of religion for republican government." --[official Library of Congress statement](#)

"...both the legislators and the public considered it appropriate for the national government to promote a nondenominational, nonpolemical Christianity." --[official Library of Congress statement](#)

Have you ever read a quote that seemed to show that our Founders weren't Christians?
[Click here](#) to see an example of a quote taken out of context, and a tutorial on examining these quotes!

Early Years

The First Charter of Virginia (granted by King James I, on April 10, 1606)

• We, greatly commending, and graciously accepting of, their Desires for the Furtherance of so noble a Work, which may, by the Providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the Glory of his Divine Majesty, in propagating of Christian Religion to such People, as yet live in Darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true Knowledge and Worship of God...
Instructions for the Virginia Colony (1606)

Lastly and chiefly the way to prosper and achieve good success is to make yourselves all of one mind for the good of your country and your own, and to serve and fear God the Giver of all Goodness, for every plantation which our Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted out.

William Bradford

- wrote that they [the Pilgrims] were seeking:
- 1) "a better, and easier place of living"; and that "the children of the group were being drawn away by evil examples into extravagance and dangerous courses [in Holland]"
- 2) "The great hope, and for the propagating and advancing the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world"

The Mayflower Compact (authored by William Bradford) 1620 | [Signing of the Mayflower painting](#) | [Picture of Compact](#)

"Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and combine our selves together..."

John Adams and John Hancock:

We Recognize No Sovereign but God, and no King but *Jesus!* [April 18, 1775]

John Adams:

"The general principles upon which the Fathers achieved independence were the general principals of Christianity... I will avow that I believed and now believe that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God."

- “[July 4th] ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty.”

–John Adams in a letter written to Abigail on the day the Declaration was approved by Congress

"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. **Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.**" --October 11, 1798

"I have examined all religions, as well as my narrow sphere, my straightened means, and my busy life, would allow; and the result is that the Bible is the best Book in the world. It contains more philosophy than all the libraries I have seen." December 25, 1813 letter to Thomas Jefferson

"Without Religion this World would be Something not fit to be mentioned in polite Company, I mean Hell." [John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, April 19, 1817] | **photographs of this letter: [Page 2](#).... [page 1](#).... [page 3](#)... [page 4](#)**
[click here to see this quote in its context and to see John Adams' quotes taken OUT of context!](#)

Samuel Adams: | [Portrait of Sam Adams](#) | [Powerpoint presentation on John, John Quincy, and Sam Adams](#)

“ He who made all men hath made the truths necessary to human happiness obvious to all... Our forefathers opened the Bible to all.” ["American Independence," August 1, 1776. Speech delivered at the State House in Philadelphia]

“ Let divines and philosophers, statesmen and patriots, unite their endeavors to renovate the age by impressing the minds of men with the importance of educating their little boys and girls, inculcating in the minds of youth the fear and love of the Deity... and leading them in the study and practice of the exalted virtues of the Christian system.” [October 4, 1790]

John Quincy Adams:

- “Why is it that, next to the birthday of the Savior of the world, your most joyous and most venerated festival returns on this day [the Fourth of July]?” “Is it not that, in the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birthday of the Savior? That it forms a leading event in the progress of the Gospel dispensation? Is it not that the Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemer's mission upon earth? That it laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity”?

--1837, at the age of 69, when he delivered a Fourth of July speech at Newburyport, Massachusetts.

“The Law given from Sinai [The Ten Commandments] was a civil and municipal as well as a moral and religious code.”

John Quincy Adams. *Letters to his son*. p. 61

Elias Boudinot: | [Portrait of Elias Boudinot](#)

“ Be religiously careful in our choice of all public officers . . . and judge of the tree by its fruits.”

Charles Carroll - *signer of the Declaration of Independence* | [Portrait of Charles Carroll](#)

" Without morals a republic cannot subsist any length of time; they therefore who are decrying the Christian religion, whose morality is so sublime and pure...are undermining the solid foundation of morals, the best security for the duration of free governments."

[Source: To James McHenry on November 4, 1800.]

Benjamin Franklin: | [Portrait of Ben Franklin](#)

“ God governs in the affairs of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured in the Sacred Writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. I also believe that, without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel” –*Constitutional Convention of 1787*
| [original manuscript of this speech](#)

“In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered... do we imagine we no longer need His assistance?”

[Constitutional Convention, Thursday June 28, 1787]

In Benjamin Franklin's **1749 plan of education for public schools in Pennsylvania**, he insisted that schools teach "the excellency of the Christian religion above all others, ancient or modern."

In 1787 when Franklin helped found Benjamin Franklin University, it was dedicated as "a nursery of religion and learning, built on Christ, the Cornerstone."

[Alexander Hamilton:](#)

• Hamilton began work with the Rev. James Bayard to form the Christian Constitutional Society to help spread over the world the two things which Hamilton said made America great:

(1) Christianity

(2) a Constitution formed under Christianity.

“The Christian Constitutional Society, its object is first: The support of the Christian religion. Second: The support of the United States.”

On July 12, 1804 at his death, Hamilton said, “I have a tender reliance on the mercy of the Almighty, through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am a sinner. I look to Him for mercy; pray for me.”

"For my own part, I sincerely esteem it [the Constitution] a system which without the finger of God, never could have been suggested and agreed upon by such a diversity of interests." [1787 after the Constitutional Convention]

"I have carefully examined the evidences of the Christian religion, and if I was sitting as a juror upon its authenticity I would unhesitatingly give my verdict in its favor. I can prove its truth as clearly as any proposition ever submitted to the mind of man."

John Hancock: | [Portrait of John Hancock](#)

• "In circumstances as dark as these, it becomes us, as Men and Christians, to reflect that whilst every prudent measure should be taken to ward off the impending judgments, ...at the same time all confidence must be withheld from the means we use; and reposed only on that God rules in the armies of Heaven, and without His whole blessing, the best human counsels are but foolishness... Resolved; ...Thursday the 11th of May...to humble themselves before God under the heavy judgments felt and feared, to confess the sins that have deserved them, to implore the Forgiveness of all our transgressions, and a spirit of repentance and reformation ...and a Blessing on the ... Union of the American Colonies in Defense of their Rights [for which hitherto we desire to thank Almighty God]...That the people of Great Britain and their rulers may have their eyes opened to discern the things that shall make for the peace of the nation...for the redress of America's many grievances, the restoration of all her invaded liberties, and their security to the latest generations.

"A Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, with a total abstinence from labor and recreation. Proclamation on April 15, 1775"

Patrick Henry: | [Portrait of Patrick Henry](#)

• This is all the inheritance I can give my dear family. The religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed."

—The Last Will and Testament of Patrick Henry

"It cannot be emphasized too clearly and too often that this nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religion, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason, peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here."

John Jay: | [Portrait of John Jay](#)

" 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." Source: October 12, 1816. The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay, Henry P. Johnston, ed., (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), Vol. IV, p. 393.

"Whether our religion permits Christians to vote for infidel rulers is a question which merits more consideration than it seems yet to have generally received either from the clergy or the laity. It appears to me that what the prophet said to Jehoshaphat about his attachment to Ahab ["Shouldest thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord?" 2 Chronicles 19:2] affords a salutary lesson."

The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay, 1794-1826, Henry P. Johnston

[Thomas Jefferson:](#)

" The doctrines of Jesus are simple, and tend to all the happiness of man."

“Of all the systems of morality, ancient or modern which have come under my observation, none appears to me so pure as that of Jesus.”

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

“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 a gift from 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, and that His justice cannot sleep forever.” (excerpts are inscribed on the walls of the Jefferson Memorial in the nations capital) [Source: Merrill . D. Peterson, ed., Jefferson Writings, (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1984), Vol. IV, p. 289. From Jefferson’s Notes on the State of Virginia, Query XVIII, 1781.]

Samuel Johnston:

- “It is apprehended that Jews, Mahometans (Muslims), pagans, etc., 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, [unless] first 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.

[Elliot’s Debates, Vol. IV, pp 198-199, Governor Samuel Johnston, July 30, 1788 at the North Carolina Ratifying Convention]

James Madison

“ We’ve staked our future on our ability to follow the Ten Commandments with all of our heart.”

“We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We’ve staked the future of all our political institutions upon our capacity...to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.” [1778 to the General Assembly of the State of Virginia]

- 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 the unsatisfactoriness [of temporal enjoyments] by becoming fervent advocates in the cause of Christ; and I wish you may give in your evidence in this way.

Letter by Madison to William Bradford (September 25, 1773)

- In 1812, President Madison signed a federal bill which economically aided the Bible Society of Philadelphia in its goal of the mass distribution of the Bible.

“ An Act for the relief of the Bible Society of Philadelphia” Approved February 2, 1813 by Congress

“It is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity toward each other.”

- 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. [Letter by Madison to William Bradford [urging him to make sure of his own salvation] November 9, 1772]

At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, James Madison proposed the plan to divide the central government into three branches. He discovered this model of government from the Perfect Governor, as he read *Isaiah 33:22*;
“For the **LORD** is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver,
the **LORD** is our king;
He will save us.”

James McHenry – *Signer of the Constitution* | [Portrait of James McHenry](#)

Public utility pleads most forcibly for the general distribution of the Holy Scriptures. The doctrine they preach, the obligations they impose, the punishment they threaten, the rewards they promise, the stamp and image of divinity they bear, which produces a conviction of their truths, can alone secure to society, order and peace, and to our courts of justice and constitutions of government, purity, stability and usefulness. In vain, without the Bible, we increase penal laws and draw entrenchments around our institutions. Bibles are strong entrenchments. Where they abound, men cannot pursue wicked courses, and at the same time enjoy quiet conscience.

Jedediah Morse: | [portrait of Jedediah Morse](#)

"To the kindly influence of Christianity we owe that degree of civil freedom, and political and social happiness which mankind now enjoys. . . . Whenever the pillars of Christianity shall be overthrown, our present republican forms of government, and all blessings which flow from them, must fall with them."

John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg | [Statue of John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg](#)

- In a sermon delivered to his Virginia congregation on January 21, 1776, he preached from Ecclesiastes 3.

Arriving at verse 8, which declares that there is a time of war and a time of peace, Muhlenberg noted that this surely was not the time of peace; this was the time of war. Concluding with a prayer, and while standing in full view of the congregation, he removed his clerical robes to reveal that beneath them he was wearing the uniform of an officer in the Continental army! He marched to the back of the church; ordered the drum to beat for recruits and over three hundred men joined him, becoming the Eighth Virginia Brigade. John Peter Muhlenberg finished the Revolution as a Major-General, having been at Valley Forge and having participated in the battles of Brandywine, Germantown, Monmouth, Stony Point, and Yorktown.

Thomas Paine:

“ It has been the error of the schools to teach astronomy, and all the other sciences, and subjects of natural philosophy, as accomplishments only; whereas they should be taught theologically, or with reference to the Being who is the author of them: for all the principles of science are of divine origin. Man cannot make, or invent, or contrive

principles: he can only discover them; and he ought to look through the discovery to the Author.”

“ The evil that has resulted from the error of the schools, in teaching natural philosophy as an accomplishment only, has been that of generating in the pupils a species of atheism. Instead of looking through the works of creation to the Creator himself, they stop short, and employ the knowledge they acquire to create doubts of his existence. They labour with studied ingenuity to ascribe every thing they behold to innate properties of matter, and jump over all the rest by saying, that matter is eternal.” *“The Existence of God--1810”*

Benjamin Rush:

- “I lament that we waste so much time and money in punishing crimes and take so little pains to prevent them...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, constitutes the soul of republicanism.” “By withholding the knowledge of [the Scriptures] from children, we deprive ourselves of the best means of awakening moral sensibility in their minds.” [Letter written (1790's) in Defense of the Bible in all schools in America]
- “Christianity is the only true and perfect religion.”
- “If moral precepts alone could have reformed mankind, the mission of the Son of God into our world would have been unnecessary.”

"Let the children who are sent to those schools be taught to read and write and above all, let both sexes be carefully instructed in the principles and obligations of the Christian religion. This is the most essential part of education”

Letters of Benjamin Rush, "To the citizens of Philadelphia: A Plan for Free Schools", March 28, 1787

Justice Joseph Story:

“ I verily believe Christianity necessary to the support of civil society. One of the beautiful boasts of our municipal jurisprudence is that Christianity is a part of the Common Law. . . There never has been a period in which the Common Law did not recognize Christianity as lying its foundations.”

[Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States p. 593]

“ Infidels and pagans were banished from the halls of justice as unworthy of credit.” [Life and letters of Joseph Story, Vol. II 1851, pp. 8-9.]

“ At the time of the adoption of the constitution, and of the amendment to it, now under consideration [i.e., the First Amendment], the general, if not the universal sentiment in America was, that Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the state, so far as was not incompatible with the private rights of conscience, and the freedom of religious worship.”

[Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States p. 593]

Noah Webster:

“ The duties of men are summarily comprised in the Ten Commandments, consisting of two tables; one comprehending the duties which we owe immediately to God-the other, the duties we owe to our fellow men.”

“In my view, the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government ought to be instructed...No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people.”

[Source: 1828, in the preface to his American Dictionary of the English Language]

Let it be impressed on your mind that God commands you to choose for rulers just men who will rule in the fear of God [Exodus 18:21]. . . . If the citizens neglect their duty and place unprincipled men in office, the government will soon be corrupted . . . If our government fails to secure public prosperity and happiness, it must be because the citizens neglect the Divine commands, and elect bad men to make and administer the laws. [Noah Webster, The History of the United States (New Haven: Durrie and Peck, 1832), pp. 336-337, 49]

“All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.” [Noah Webster. History. p. 339]

“The Bible was America’s basic textbook in all fields.” [Noah Webster. Our Christian Heritage p.5]

“Education is useless without the Bible” [Noah Webster. Our Christian Heritage p.5]

George Washington:

Farewell Address: **The name of American, which belongs to you,** in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of Patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. **With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion**” ...and later: **“...reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle...”** | [photo of Farewell address original manuscript](#)

“ It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and Bible.”

“What students would learn in American schools above all is the religion of Jesus Christ.” [speech to the Delaware Indian Chiefs May 12, 1779]

"To the distinguished character of patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of Christian" [May 2, 1778, at Valley Forge]

During his inauguration, Washington took the oath as prescribed by the Constitution but added several religious components to that official ceremony. Before taking his oath of office, he summoned a Bible on which to take the oath, added the words “So help me God!” to the end of the oath, then leaned over and kissed the Bible.

Nelly Custis-Lewis (Washington's adopted daughter):

Is it necessary that any one should [ask], "Did General Washington avow himself to be a believer in Christianity?" As well may we question his patriotism, his heroic devotion to his country. His mottos were, "Deeds, not Words"; and, "For God and my Country."

" O Most Glorious God, in Jesus Christ, my merciful and loving Father; I acknowledge and confess my guilt in the weak and imperfect performance of the duties of this day. I have called on Thee for pardon and forgiveness of my sins, but so coldly and carelessly that my prayers are become my sin, and they stand in need of pardon."

" I have sinned against heaven and before Thee in thought, word, and deed. I have contemned Thy majesty and holy laws. I have likewise sinned by omitting what I ought to have done and committing what I ought not. I have rebelled against the light, despising Thy mercies and judgment, and broken my vows and promise. I have neglected the better things. My iniquities are multiplied and my sins are very great. I confess them, O Lord, with shame and sorrow, detestation and loathing and desire to be vile in my own eyes as I have rendered myself vile in Thine. I humbly beseech Thee to be merciful to me in the free pardon of my sins for the sake of Thy dear Son and only Savior Jesus Christ who came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Thou gavest Thy Son to die for me."

[George Washington; from a 24 page authentic handwritten manuscript book dated April 21-23, 1752]

[William J. Johnson *George Washington, the Christian* (New York: The Abingdon Press, New York & Cincinnati, 1919), pp. 24-35.]

"Although guided by our excellent Constitution in the discharge of official duties, and actuated, through the whole course of my public life, solely by a wish to promote the best interests of our country; *yet, without the beneficial interposition of the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, we could not have reached the distinguished situation which we have attained* with such unprecedented rapidity. To HIM, therefore, should we bow with gratitude and reverence, and endeavor to merit a continuance of HIS special favors". [1797 letter to John Adams]

James Wilson: | [Portrait of James Wilson](#)

Signer of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution

Supreme Court Justice appointed by George Washington

Spoke 168 times during the Constitutional Convention

"Christianity is part of the common law"

[Sources: James Wilson, *Course of Lectures* [vol 3, p.122]; and quoted in *Updegraph v. The Commonwealth*, 11 Serg. & R. 393, 403 (1824).]

Public Institutions

Liberty Bell Inscription:

" Proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all the inhabitants thereof" [Leviticus 25:10]

Proposals for the seal of the United States of America

- “Moses lifting his wand and dividing the Red Sea” –Ben Franklin



[1776 Aug 20]

Pharaoh sitting in an open chariot, a crown on his head
 & a sword in his hand passing thro' the divid ed waters of
 the Red sea in pursuit of the Israelites: rays from a pillar of
 fire in the cloud, expressive of the divine presence, ~~reach~~ & com-
 -mand, reaching to Moses who stands on the shore & extending
 his hand over the sea, causes it to overwhelm Pharaoh.
 Motto. Rebellion to tyrants is obed^{ce} to god.

291 V2-128

- “The children of Israel in the wilderness, led by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.” --Thomas Jefferson

On July 4, 1776, Congress appointed Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams "to bring in a device for a seal for the United States of America." Franklin's proposal adapted the biblical story of the parting of the Red Sea. Jefferson first recommended the "Children of Israel in the Wilderness, led by a Cloud by Day, and a Pillar of Fire by night. . . ." He then embraced Franklin's proposal and rewrote it

[1776 Aug 20], 5

~~The Prop of B. Franklin~~

Moses, standing on the shore, and extending his hand over
 the sea, thereby causing the same to overwhelm Pharaoh, who
 is sitting in an open chariot, a crown on his head & sword in his
 hand. Rays from a Pillar of Fire, ^{in the Cloud,} reaching to Moses, ^{to express}
 that he acts by the command of the Deity

Motto, Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God.

291 V2-127

Jefferson's revision of Franklin's proposal was presented by the committee to Congress on August 20, 1776.

Another popular proposal to the Great Seal of the United States was:
" Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God"; with Pharoah's army drowning in the Red Sea



[Click here for a larger image](#)

The three branches of the U.S. Government: Judicial, Legislative, Executive

- At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, James Madison proposed the plan to divide the central government into three branches. He discovered this model of government from the Perfect Governor, as he read Isaiah 33:22;

“For the LORD is our judge,
the LORD is our lawgiver,
the LORD is our king;
He will save us.”

Article 22 of the constitution of Delaware (1776)

Required all officers, besides taking an oath of allegiance, to make and subscribe to the following declaration:

- "I, [name], do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore; and I do acknowledge the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration."

New York Spectator. August 23, 1831

“ The court of common pleas of Chester county, [New York] rejected a witness who declared his disbelief in the existence of God. The presiding judge remarked that he had not before been aware that there was a man living who did not believe in the existence of God; that this belief constituted the sanction of all testimony in a court of justice: and that he knew of no cause in a Christian country where a witness had been permitted to testify without such belief.

New England Primer: | [Photograph of The New England Primer reprint](#)

Used in public and private schools from 1690 to 1900 second only to the Bible

Some of its contents:

A song of praise to God

Prayers in Jesus' name

The famous Bible alphabet

Shorter Catechism of faith in Christ