

THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDERS OF OUR CONSTITUTION

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INTRODUCTION.

The founding of our country took place between two “Great Awakenings,” that of the 1740s and that which began about 1800. Recently Evangelical writers have registered the claim that the American Revolution developed from the ideas of the first “Awakening” later to be consolidated in the second “Awakening.” This essay presents the opposite point of view, that our Revolution represented an Enlightenment faith reacting strongly against the revivalistic passion to reduce life to a few absolutes “revealed” in scriptures and to depreciate human nature as “sinful,” incompetent alone to organize life private and civic. Our American Revolution did include both religious and political ideas to be sure but in a buoyant, distinctly liberal faith at the opposite end of the religious spectrum from what is known today as either Evangelical or Fundamentalist.

Opposed to the revivalistic “Awakenings” was the faith of our country’s founders, heralding a confidence that humanity is competent to live with moral integrity, spiritual insight, and to govern through covenants based in liberty and reason. Three ministers, four presidents, a pamphleteer, a printer, a merchant and a doctor formed the leadership core of the American Revolution and promulgated the ideas essential to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

There were others of orthodox faiths as well, but it was the liberals who set the context in which all worked. Together they were shocked with the revivalistic excesses of the mid-eighteenth century. The notions of “sinners at the hands of an angry God” or original sin or predestinarian fatalism or even petitionary prayers to an intervening God, were subversive of the faith which undergirded American freedoms.¹ The need for independence from England gave them the opportunity to propose principles of a free faith and to establish them in the enduring institutions of a free society. Today our institutions are more mature and elaborate but the same dis-ease is felt on every hand.

It was not only the dreaded stamp act of British mercantilism, “taxation without representation,” that troubled the founders. There were chaotic forces on the frontier, irresponsible stirrings from within American society itself which threatened to undermine the very ideals and the fledgling institutions based upon them.

Who were the founders of our country? And what were the great principles of freedom which they established? Revolutions do not just happen. Our Revolution developed out of a climate of faith, out of widely-shared beliefs, which Americans perceived were threatened by forces external and internal, forces which could not be ignored if the American spirit were to prevail. Six great principles were enunciated and modeled in the lives of our leaders: liberty, independence, reason, character, openness and pluralism. These were the truths put forth as “self evident,” for which our founders were willing to sacrifice their lives in order to establish. And of the dozens of key persons, who can we name as central and representative? Certainly we must include Jonathan Mayhew, Charles Chauncy, John Hancock, John Adams, Tom Paine, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush, Joseph Priestley, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Of course there were others and we will mention some of them but to know the free faith which is the basis for our democratic system, we must meet these.

1. LIBERTY.

Each year in Boston, the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company² elected one of the town's ministers to preach for them. In 1775 it was John Lathrop of the Old North Church who was selected. Members quietly filled the ancient church which had stood at the head of North Square since 1676. The Governor, General Gage, now had over 4,000 troops under his command. British soldiers were everywhere. The atmosphere was charged as the minister mounted his pulpit and surveyed a meetinghouse filled with his townspeople. He minced no words:

Should the British administration determine fully to execute the laws of which we complain, we have yet to fear the calamities of a long civil war. Americans, rather than submit to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for any ministry or nation, would spill their last drop of blood. Those principles which justify rulers in making war on rebellious subjects justify the people in making war on rebellious rulers. War is justifiable when those in government violate law and attempt to oppress and enslave the people.³

Lathrop was stating what the people knew they soon must be prepared to defend, that they already possessed in their own attitudes and in their institutions the liberties and independence the colonial authorities under King George III were bidding to take away from them. For the young minister the issue was clear and boldly stated. For his hearers, great sacrifices lay just ahead.

Every child who reads Longfellow's poem⁴ knows that on April 18, 1775 the lanterns were hung in "the North Church tower," that the minute men were warned and the battles of Lexington and Concord ensued the next morning. What is not known by the typical tourist visiting Boston today is the tragic fate of the Old North Church, razed to the ground by the British who called it a "nest of traitors."⁵

Meanwhile, the soldiers of occupation, several blocks away, were hard at work tearing down the steeple of the West Church so that it too could not be used for signaling. Here the first sermons for American liberty had been articulated back as far as 1750 by their minister, Jonathan Mayhew.

It is blasphemy to call tyrants and oppressors, God's ministers.⁶

Mayhew believed that the power of God was limited by the laws of nature and therefore how much more are the powers of a king or even of a Parliament across the sea.

The power of the Almighty King is limited by law; not indeed, by acts of Parliament, but by the eternal laws of truth, wisdom, and equity; and the everlasting tables of right reason; -- tables that cannot be repealed, or thrown down and broken like those of Moses.⁷

Here we see the crux of his understanding of liberty, the right of private judgment. We must rely on the laws of "truth, wisdom and equity," discovered through the use of reason. We must rely upon ourselves and the competence of our natures, of free inquiry, of common sense. We must question, ask of inherited ideas, how do we know that creeds, dogmas, political systems are true or right?

. . . that he suspends his judgment entirely concerning the truth or falsehood of all doctrines; and the fitness or unfitness of all actions: 'till such time as he sees some reason to determine his judgment one way rather than the other. He does not bring his old prejudices and prepossessions to determine the point; but comes prepared, by an unbiased mind, to receive the impressions of reason, and of reason only.⁸

Liberty was not seen as political, or scientific, or religious only. Liberty was universal and the groundwork being laid by this revolutionary preacher was to bear fruit across the board in all aspects of life. Mayhew rejected the trinity as unscriptural and rejected the notion of special election where some are alleged as predestined to be saved and others

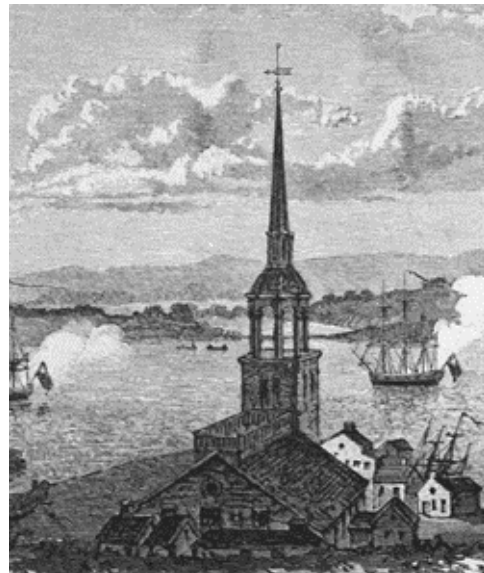
are alleged as predestined to be damned. He looked at revelation and reason and decided that reason was to be trusted. And he compared the natural order with claims for supernatural intervention and decided that we can progressively understand the natural order. The religious revolution and the political revolution were continuous. It would be impossible to fully appreciate our American Revolution without an understanding of both its aspects.

Mayhew rejected the idea of a Divine Right of Kings. He questioned why Parliament should decide what beliefs should be legal for the people to hold. Our liberty reserves the right of judgment for the individual, not for Parliament, or Church or the English King.

The hereditary, indefensible, divine right of kings, and the doctrine of non-resistance, which is built upon the supposition of such a right, are altogether as fabulous and chimerical, as transubstantiation; or any of the most absurd reveries of ancient or modern visionaries. These notions are fetched neither from divine relation, nor human relation . . .⁹

It is clear that Democracy as a faith had a religious foundation. It is not based in the revivalism of a Jonathan Edwards, a James Davenport or a George Whitefield but rather in the confidence and reason of a Jonathan Mayhew who opposed the pessimism and orthodoxy of the first “Great Awakening.” “God is not on the loose,”¹⁰ Mayhew proclaimed. Just as “nature” and “nature’s God”¹¹ were not capricious, so too churches and governments should involve the participation of all in a rule of law, each member and each citizen with a right of private judgment. Liberty could not coexist with predestination. Each citizen must have a free will, an independent participation. Each person must be open to new truth or else liberty, as a basis for participation, would have no meaning in the forming of the emerging future for society.

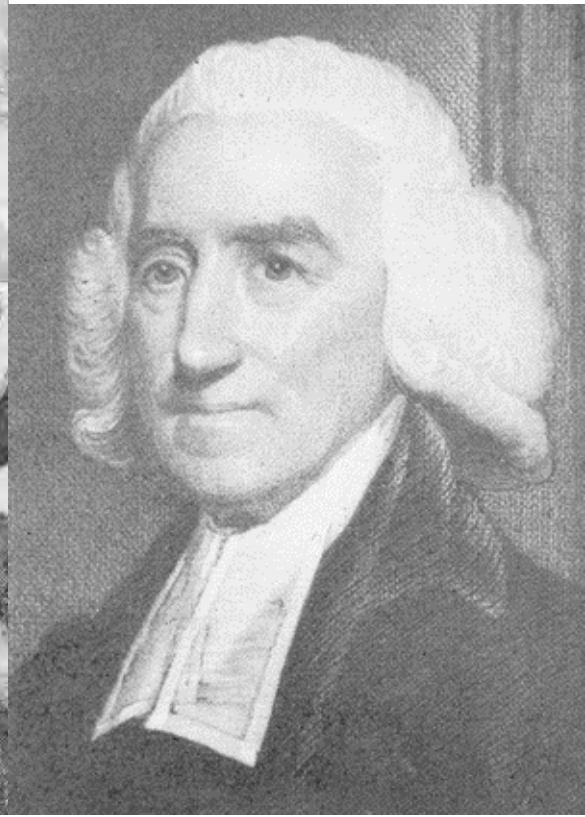
Government is both the ordinance of God, and the ordinance of men: of God, in respect to his original plan, and universal Providence; of man, as it is more immediately the result of human prudence, wisdom and concert.¹²



(left) North, after 1714, Old North Church, North Sq., Boston. (above) West Church. In both were pioneering sermons for the right of Revolution.



John Hancock



John Lathrop



Charles Chauncy



Jonathan Mayhew

2. INDEPENDENCE.

Jonathan Mayhew's closest friend among the ministers was Charles Chauncy, of the First Church in Boston.¹³ Chauncy preached both Mayhew's ordination and his funeral sermons. And it was Chauncy who most strenuously led the reaction against the Evangelical revivals, in numerous printed sermons and books.

Chauncy's greatest objection was that the Great Awakening was filled with uncharitable judgments, as he said the itinerant preachers had "an overfond opinion of themselves, and an unchristian one of their Brethren."¹⁴ He felt they were opportunists, stirring up populations, setting people against each other, without assuming responsibility for working on a creative social outcome, without being accountable for their own actions. Chauncy had an organic view of society and opposed anarchy and mob rule.

This vision leads to the second great principle of freedom, independence, the independency of congregations, each governing its own communal life and caring for its members, and the democratic independence of societies, the self-regulating of community life through its own representatives.

Chauncy's defense of "independency" did not introduce a new idea into New England but merely defended it against external (England) and internal (itinerant revivalism) threats to her institutions. The Pilgrims had established "independency" in congregational life by bringing their church covenant with them in 1620¹⁵ and by writing their civic covenant on the Mayflower before disembarking. It reads in part:

. . . solemnly and mutually in ye presence of God, and one of another,
covenant and combine our selves together into a civill body politick, . . .
to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equall lawes, ordinances,
arts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought
most meete and convenient for ye generall good of ye Colonie . . .¹⁶

Chauncy knew the institutions of independence were largely in place: legislative, judicial, in town meetings and in the parishes. To send delegates soon to a Continental Congress and then in 1787 to write a constitution, were but extensions of a living tradition, to be protected from usurpers overseas and social chaos from within.

For example, a great concern of Chauncy's was the threat that England might send bishops to America, to make the Anglican churches state churches, and to supplant the congregationally governed churches. For him, the hierarchical bishop system of the Church of England was anti-democratic, an attempt to impose the old order, the old regime, on a new world, a world bred in democratic values. Some claim that the fear of the imposition of a bishop system, church government without representation, was as much a cause of the Revolution in New England as the imposition of the despised stamp act, "taxation without representation."

In the background of Paul Revere's famous engraving of the Boston Massacre, is the familiar shape of the Old State House. Next to it is shown Charles Chauncy's First Church, or as it was known, the Old Brick Church. An old poem included these lines:

And Charles Old Brick
Both well and sick
Will cry for Liberty.¹⁷

Chauncy was minister there from 1727 through 1787, sixty years, and so venerable a figure in the town that the British did not touch his church.

Several blocks away, the Brattle Square Church was not so fortunate, for included on its cornerstone was the name, John Hancock. British soldiers rubbed it out with their



(above) Revere's Boston Massacre with old State House and First Church in background (right) Brattle Square Church. John Hancock was chair of building committee.



(above) John Adams (right) First Church Unitarian, Quincy, MA. His church.



bayonets as they turned its interior into a barracks. Hancock, along with Sam Adams, was a Boston selectman. When the governor disbanded the legislature, the colonists created a Provincial Congress which met at the First Parish in Concord.¹⁸ elected Hancock moderator, and designated itself as the proper body to receive taxes rather than the government of the king. And of course, John Hancock was President of the Continental Congress which announced the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776. He was important for the Revolutionary cause as the wealthiest merchant in Boston, the employer of over a thousand heads of households in the town. A third of the population sympathized with the Tories, especially those in privileged positions, and another third were fence sitters, waiting to see which way the tide would turn before they committed themselves. For our Revolution to find in its leadership such a concentration of education, wealth, and competence is remarkable in the annals of revolutions, giving it a far greater chance for success.

Meanwhile, after the Boston Massacre a young lawyer, John Adams, was asked to defend Captain Preston of the British troops. For a leader of the resistance this seemed like a strange request and perhaps threatening to his credibility. Defend the enemy? He did not hesitate. It was unthinkable that anyone in Boston would be without counsel in a court of law. That, after all, was what the resistance was supporting, the protection of free institutions against attempts to subvert them to the will of authorities overseas.

Adams had grown up best friends with his neighbor, John Hancock, out in Quincy. Both families were members of the First Parish,¹⁹ where John Hancock, Sr. was minister. His successor was young Lemuel Briant who in 1750 was charged with being too liberal, denying all the five points of Calvinism, including the trinity. Adams was among those of his supporters who made sure his ministry would continue uninterrupted.

Adams' religious faith was always an exact parallel and support for his political confidence and enthusiasm. In a letter to Jefferson, September 14, 1813, he wrote:

The human understanding is a revelation from its maker, which can never be disputed or doubted . . . This revelation has made it certain that two and one make three, and that one is not three nor can three by one. We can never be so certain of any prophecy, or the fulfillment of any prophecy, or of any miracle, or the design of any miracle, as we are from the revelation of nature , that is, nature's God, that two and two are equal to four . . . Can prophecies or miracles convince you or me that infinite benevolence, wisdom, and power, created, and preserves for a time, innumerable millions, to make them miserable for ever, for his own glory? . . . I believe no such things. My adoration of the author of the universe is too profound and too sincere. The love of God and his creation -- delight, joy, triumph, exultation in my own existence, though but an atom, a molecule organique in the universe -- are my religion.²⁰

In his home town, John Adams had learned first hand the duties of citizenship, first as surveyor of roads, then as selectman. When he moved to Boston, he quickly moved into the circle of revolutionary leaders, his cousin, Samuel Adams, his boyhood friend, John Hancock, James Otis, Governor Bowdoin and of course Jonathan Mayhew. He quickly became known for his comprehensive grasp of the principles which gave our Revolution its stability and strength. In due time, he became a delegate from Massachusetts to the Continental Congress and was the first to publicly write the word "Independence" without reservation. Following the events in Boston, on May 15, 1776 he wrote the preamble that committed the Congress to a policy of independence, affirming that the people could not longer

take an oath to support any government deriving its authority

from the crown.²¹

The line had been crossed! Now liberty in practice was joined with independence, the right to private judgment with the right to self-government. And Massachusetts, with Hancock as President and Adams its great proponent, had played a key role in bringing Independence to its rightful position in the revolutionary agenda. Independence for Adams meant more than being left alone by the mother country. It was something affirmed by the entire experience of creating a new society on the edge of a new world:

I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth.²²

This vision of independence was not a dry abstraction. Adams and his contemporaries were acutely aware that for the first time in history power directly derived from liberty. An independent people would write their social contract from the start. In 1776 John wrote to Abigail, his wife, that Independence Day should be celebrated

. . . as a day of deliverance . . . with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations.²³

Fifty years later, in 1826, his home city of Quincy prepared to do just this. He wrote his regrets to the master of ceremonies, for he was too feeble to attend:

A memorable epoch in the annals of the human race; destined, in future history, to form the brightest or the blackest page, according to the use of the abuse of those political institutions by which they shall, in time to come, be shaped by the human mind.²⁴

In our time we would do well to apply the principles and passion of a Mayhew or a Chauncy or an Adams to our evaluation of how their legacy fares with our leadership today!

Speaking of the sessions of the Continental Congress, Jefferson reminisced:

John Adams was our Colossus on the floor. He was not graceful, nor elegant, nor remarkably fluent, but he came out, occasionally, with a power of thought and expression that moved us from our seats.²⁵

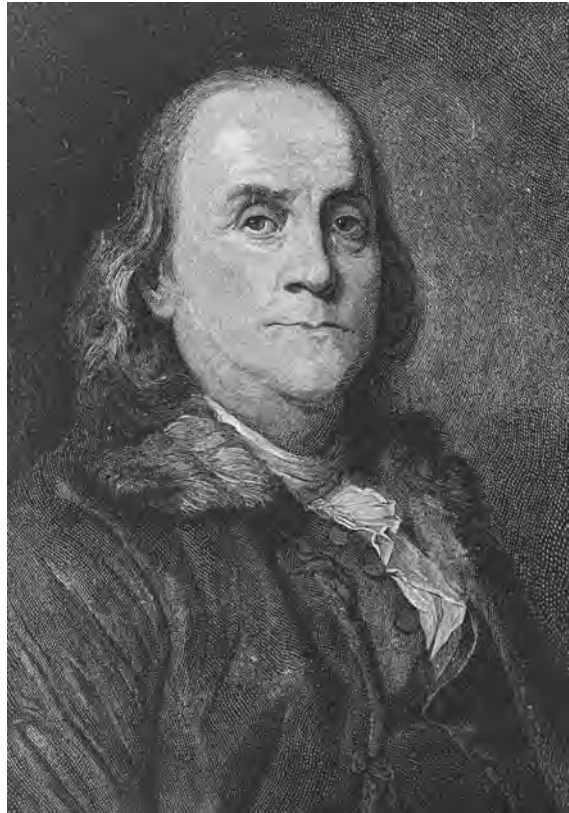
On July 4, 1826, John Adams died with his last words, "Thomas Jefferson survives."²⁶ But on the very same fourth of July, Jefferson, too, had succumbed.

3. REASON

When Ethan Allen with the Green Mountain Boys surprised the British garrison at Fort Ticonderoga, he placed his sword over Captain Delaplace's head and demanded surrender "In the name of the great Jehovah and the Continental Congress."²⁷ Clearly in the popular imagination, there was a connection between religion and independence, a faith behind freedom. The emergence of liberal democracy and liberal forms of religion was a part of the same Revolution.

In 1784 Ethan Allen wrote one of the classic works, at once Universalist, Unitarian and Deist, called *Reason the Only Oracle of Man*.²⁸ When the book was just off the press lightning struck the print shop and all but a few copies were burned. Orthodox clergy proclaimed this event as an act of god, but Allen's views spread faster than fire. Dependence upon human reason constituted one of the major principles of our freedom.

Deism directly or indirectly influenced all the leaders of Revolutionary America. It postulated a unitary view of God as a perfection of natural and moral law governing through a general Providence. Deism opposed petitionary prayer and a personal or intervening God such as orthodoxy claimed. The highest form of worship was to lead a



(pictures, above) Washington, Paine, Rush, Franklin.

moral life. The emphasis Deism placed upon reason was essential for a leadership about to assert the right of a people to apply that reason to ascertain the nature of a just society most likely to lead to universal human happiness and to write a Constitution calculated to implement that vision. In a sense, the success of Deism also spelled its demise, for the creation of the Republic, a new dramatic breakthrough overturned the assumption of a static perfectionist view of the nature of history and the nature of God. Deism gradually was absorbed into the more flexible religious traditions, Unitarianism and Universalism, already evident in Allen's time, but accomplished on a wider scale in the early decades of the next century.

After Allen's victory at Ticonderoga, another Deist and Unitarian, Maine's General Henry Knox took the cannons captured there, dragged them the full length of Massachusetts and delivered them to still another Deist, General George Washington. With this essential hardware, the siege of Boston ended the British occupation, Lord Howe sailed away and the war shifted southward.

The stage was now set for America's more passionate patriot and notorious Deist, Thomas Paine. If there had been wavering before, after Paine finished his pamphleteering the ideological foundations of our Revolution were secure. With great clarity, he reasoned in his famous *Common Sense*, published in January, 1776, that even for the most benevolent of English governments, the interests of England would be first, those of America secondary. He called for a "Continental Charter" for "the free and independent states of America." His vision was global and essential for all which was to follow:

O! Ye that love mankind. Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted around the globe. Asia, and Africa, have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.²⁹

Tom Paine, a simple English staymaker, landed on this continent in 1774, to become one of the several most important leaders of our Revolution, some claim second only to Washington. He was the first in 1777 to give our country its name, The United States of America.

At a time when the fortunes of war were desolately bleak, and in the drear landscape soldiers were half-starved and inadequately clothed, on the eve of Washington's desperate plan to cross the Delaware and surprise the Hessians at Trenton, Paine was one of his soldiers and wrote another tract, *The Crisis*:

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it Now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like Hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: 'tis dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated.³⁰

As soon as he had read it himself, Washington had it read to his army. Perhaps it was the element of surprise, or perhaps it was the inspired reasoning of the radical propagandist for liberty that won the Christmas battle.

Paine was not at all humble about the importance of his own work. In *Crisis II*, he begins:

Universal empire is the prerogative of a writer. His concerns are with all mankind,

and though he cannot command their obedience, he can assign them their duty. The Republic of letters is more ancient than monarchy, and of far higher character in the world than the vassal court of Britain; he that rebels against reason is the real rebel, but he that is in defense of reason, rebels against tyranny, has a better title to “Defender of the Faith,” than George the Third.³¹

Still we have the opposition of monarchy with democracy, the assertion of reason as a principle of faith behind freedom.

Later in his definitive work, *The Rights of Man*, he lists three forms of government: of priest-craft, of conquerors and of reason. The first he sees as the government of superstition, the second is a merging of church (clergy) and state (rulers) where the usurper claims the divine right to rule. In the third, the government rises from the people, society itself. In the government of reason the people write their own constitution and rule themselves. Power is of two kinds: “All delegated power is trust, and all assumed power is usurpation.”³²

Paine arrived in America just in time to spark our Revolution and left in 1787 to advocate his principles in England and in France. He escaped from England ten minutes ahead of the sheriff sent to arrest him for publishing the *Rights of Man* and landed in France a hero elected to the French Assembly. Then he helped write the French Constitution but got into trouble when trying to save the life of Louis XVI. What the Revolution opposed, argued Paine, was the principle of the monarchy, not the life of the monarch.

Half his last great work, *The Age of Reason*, was written inside a French prison. It begins:

I believe in one God, and no more . . .³³

It ends with the words:

I leave the ideas that are suggested . . . to rest on the mind of the reader; certain as I am, that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail.³⁴

His motivation for writing was to restore reason to religion as he had restored reason to government and to save religion from the extreme anti-clericalism and atheism of the French Revolution. So oppressive had been the French church that the people were rejecting all religion. This was as abhorrent to Paine as orthodoxy.

He had little impact on religious matters in France but in America the Evangelicals burned him in effigy, calling him an infidel. After he returned home in 1802, to spend his old age in peace and retirement, his own gardener tried to assassinate him, his town of New Rochelle, New York denied his right to vote and at his death, the Quakers nearby would not allow his burial in their cemetery. Only Thomas Jefferson, by now President, welcomed him as a guest in his home, walked arm in arm with him down a Washington street and was censored for his friendship and loyalty by nearly every newspaper in the country.

The man who had helped spark the American Revolution, who had named his country, had now stepped out too far for the masses in applying reason to religion, in a sensational way substituting the natural works of nature for the alleged works of scripture to reveal the existence and reality of God. Beginning in the period 1800 to 1810, a second wave of right wing evangelical religion was sweeping the nation, often called the “Second Great Awakening,” led by such as Timothy Dwight of Yale and the revivalist, Charles Finney. This has become a recurring pattern in American culture, for the evangelical reaction to heat up following liberal advances.

The principle of reason is perhaps the least popular of the six principles of freedom in our time as well. And Paine's *Age of Reason* did not usher in a millennium for reasonable religion. But no campaign of vilification could erase for posterity, the many elements of simple truth and plain power in his work.

Independence is my happiness, and I view things as they are without regard to place or person; my country is the world and my religion is to do good.³⁵



Thomas Jefferson and James Madison

4. CHARACTER.

The fourth great principle is character. Somehow our freedom survived a decade of war and another decade of beginnings under our new Constitution because the people trusted their leaders.

Foremost was Washington. He was not a good general and almost bungled into major defeats several times. But he was steadfast; he had complete integrity, he was fair in all his dealings and he kept his part of the bargain with those who had signed the Declaration of Independence, pledging his life, his fortune and his sacred honor to his country.

Like the other Deists in the leadership of the Revolution, George Washington did not base his behavior in any kind of fear of hellfire. He behaved rightly because it was the right thing to do. Character is an inward quality, a carefully nourished inner goodness, a reliability that can be trusted, the basis of healthy relationships and civilization. Why didn't he lie about the cherry tree, blame it on someone else, avoid accounting for his actions? Because you just don't avoid, blame or lie. Our first President set a very high standard we often wish several subsequent presidents had lived up to.

George Washington attended and supported Anglican churches either for his wife's sake or out of a sense of noblesse oblige. He never kneeled to pray, never took

communion and never affirmed the trinity. When the government was located in Philadelphia, on those occasions when he attended Christ Church (third pew right in front of the pulpit) he was used to leaving before communion and sending the carriage back after communion to pick up Martha. The priest preached a sermon on “the unhappy tendency of example . . . those in elevated stations, who invariably turned their backs upon the Lord’s Supper.”³⁶ That was the last time Washington attended on a sacrament Sunday.

There were always clergy who advocated that he resign from public office. At one point they tried to trap him into revealing his beliefs. In the words of Benjamin Rush, “the old fox was too cunning for them.” In his public speeches, he refers to “the Deity” and “Providence,” rarely to the word “God” and he never mentions “Christ.” He wrote at one point during his presidency that “The Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion.”³⁷ Later his successor John Adams, and the United States Senate confirmed this same language in the Treaty with Tripoli in 1796. Jefferson reported that Governor Morris told him Washington believed no more of the Christian system than he (Morris) did.³⁸ But Washington practiced a strict tolerance. When an army left to invade Canada in 1779, he expressly forbade any ridicule of “popery” or any attempts to burn the pope in effigy.

An example of his religious affirmations, as specific as he ever publicly delineates, can be found in his “Farewell Address:”

Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that in the course of time and things the fruits of such a plan would richly repay our temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be, that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature.³⁹

Benjamin Franklin, another steadfast and prudent force at the center of the Revolution, was more opportunistic and pragmatic as well. Perhaps it was due to his background as the son of a soap maker rather than one of the richest by inheritance in the colonies. But he was a great benefactor as printer, inventor and diplomat, as civic innovator in education, public works, libraries and philosophical societies; and of course as a central political leader.

He was a Deist and a Unitarian and far less reticent than Washington or Madison in letting others see his beliefs. He was a close friend of three leading English Unitarian ministers: Theophilus Lindsey, Joseph Priestley and Richard Price, attending their worship services. Five weeks before his death in 1790 he wrote to Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale, a summary of his beliefs on six questions to which he had been asked to respond:

I believe in one God, the Creator of the universe; that he governs it by his Providence; that he ought to be worshipped; that the most acceptable service we can 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 of all sound religion, and I regard them as you do, in whatever sect I meet with them. As to Jesus of Nazareth, my opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think his system of morals and his religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw, or is like to see; but I apprehend it has received various corrupting changes, and I have with

most of the present Dissenters in England, some doubts as to his divinity; though it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it..⁴⁰

In this list, he outlines the Deistic theology and ethic, departing from it in the section on Jesus, where he shows the profound influence of his friend, Priestley. His religion was a Unitarian form of Deism.

In addition, when the Universalists organized in Philadelphia, Franklin and his family attended regularly. Certainly it is clear in his writings that he did not believe in a hell or the kind of God with a character which could condemn and torment people. As he wrote to the revivalist, George Whitfield: “God who made me . . . never will make me miserable.”⁴¹ Franklin is here protecting the reputation and character of God against the allegations of the evangelist who claimed that God is angry, vengeful or punishing. In 1788 he wrote:

And with regard to future bliss, I cannot help imagining that multitudes of the zealously orthodox of different sects, who at the last day may flock together, in hopes of seeing each other damned, will be disappointed, and obliged to rest content with their own salvation.⁴²

He attended the Universalist Church in Philadelphia when it was first organized.

It is Franklin who coined the phrase, “God helps those who help themselves.” Throughout his life, as is evident in his *Autobiography*, he worked hard to cultivate virtue and goodness and to discourage random and unworthy behavior. He did not have the polish of Washington nor the fervor of Paine but he had ample exuberance.

We read in his *Autobiography* how he put considerable energy into the cultivation of a set of thirteen virtues. These he determined were most essential for the living of a moral life. Each is listed and defined:

Temperance	-	Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
Silence	-	Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
Order	-	Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
Resolution	-	Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail without fail what you resolve.
Frugality	-	Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; that is waste nothing.
Industry	-	Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.
Sincerity	-	Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
Justice	-	Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
Moderation	-	Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
Cleanliness	-	Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.
Tranquility	-	Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
Chastity	-
Humility	-	Imitate Jesus and Socrates. ⁴³

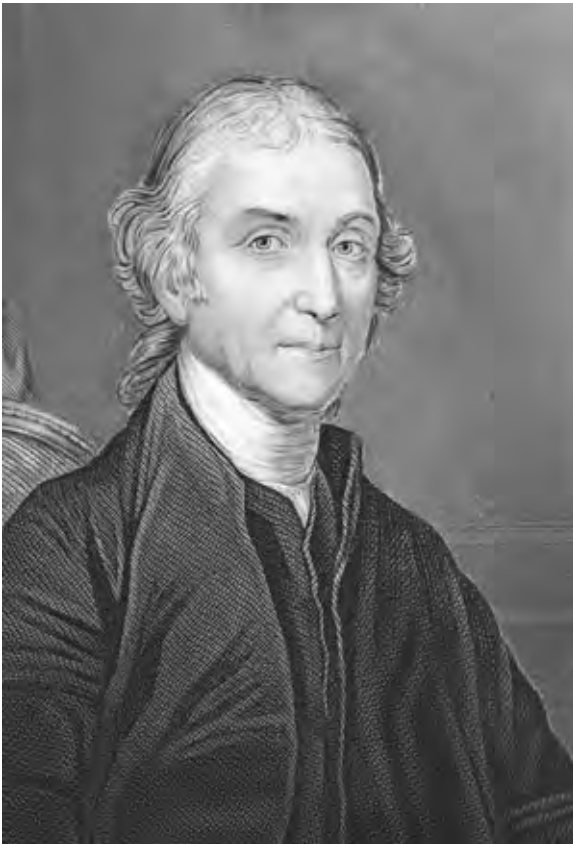
Franklin had a concept of the perfectibility of our human nature through self-discipline. He set his project up like a scientific experiment with daily check lists and progress reports. In time the compulsion for perfection gave way to a more mellow wisdom, to approximate goodness in the general character of his life. After all, even Jesus and Socrates were not perfect.

By the time he reached age forty-eight, he had created for himself an independent income so that he could retire and do as he wished which for him was public service, research and reform. When he flew his famous kite and key, lightning could have killed him. When he sailed for France, he could have been captured or killed on the high seas. When he invested every cent he owned in the Revolution he could have been ruined. When he expressed his religious views, he could have been persecuted for his beliefs. He worked, heart and soul, for humanity and for democracy.

As an old man he sat in the Constitutional Convention, meditating on the sunburst which decorated the back of George Washington's chair. Success was not certain in this new republican experiment but Franklin had a vision:

I have often in the course of the session . . . looked at that sun behind the President, without being able to tell whether it wa rising or setting. But now, at length, I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun.⁴⁴

The old man could see the work of his years coming to its fruition. After this, Congress coined "the Franklin penny" with a sun rising behind a sun-dial and the words embossed, "We are One."⁴⁵



(left) Joseph Priestley, (right) Temple of Venus, a gift of Jefferson to Madison

5. OPENNESS.

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

There are several essential principles spelled out in this Preamble to our Constitution and one remarkable omission. All authority for our Constitution rests in us, “the People.” We ordain and establish. It is not done to us by an elite or a monarchy, we are not allowed our liberty, we possess it and “ordain and establish” to keep it. No exterior authority, not even “God” or “Providence,” is invoked as a basis for our liberty. Our covenant is a means of protecting what is inherently ours, of securing it not only for ourselves but for future generations as well. And most striking of all, the Preamble points to the status of the Constitution as an imperfect document for an imperfect union. “In order to form a more perfect union” means we must always be open to new ideas. Our free society is first and foremost a process, an emergence of a new vision for humankind, always on the way toward becoming better, toward providing more justice, greater general welfare, a more thoroughgoing sense of liberty.

This theme of openness, of freedom as a process and emergence, was summarized by another of the founders, Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia:

There is nothing more common than to confound the term American Revolution with that of the late war. The American War is over, but this is far from being the case with the American Revolution. On the contrary, but the first act of the great drama is closed.⁴⁶

Rush perceived an unfinished Revolution, needing more work, more struggle, more perfection. He saw his age and the work of his generation as a great drama, breaking into history.

Of course there are always individuals who feel they need something more definite and secure than openness and change, the drama of the emergence of the new and revolutionary in history. They desire security and authority, the assurance of citing chapter and verse. Jefferson opposed all authoritarianism, even those who would turn the Constitution into a sacred document. Speaking of the great accomplishment of his generation, “constitutional laws,” he wrote:

Can they be made unchangeable? Can one generation bind another, and all others, in succession forever? I think not. The Creator has made the earth for the living, not the dead Nothing then is unchangeable but the inherent and unalienable rights of man.⁴⁷

Our constitution is grounded in our liberty. Our independence, our covenant with each other is emergent, always in process. Our freedom depends upon our openness to new truth, to the necessity of new, thoughtful responses to ever new situations. Freedom cannot be frozen. Every generation must come to know it anew, encounter it, forge new responses, breathe into it new life through its contemporary experience.

Running parallel to the political and religious themes in our Revolution were the attitudes of the scientific revolution. Just as in England the leading scientists were among the leading Whigs, so too in America scientists and inventors were also leaders in the establishment of democracy. The scientific method, the self-correcting attitudes essential to the evolution of scientific understandings is what we mean by the principle of openness. If the checks and balances of government and the participation and vigilance of the people are working, then democracy is a self-correcting process in an open society.

Benjamin Rush, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, has been called the father of American medicine. He published extensively on the causes of yellow fever, on dentistry and veterinary medicine, he anticipated some of the ideas of psychotherapy in the treatment of mental illness and he attempted to put medicine into a

rational system as opposed to the experience based practices of the past. He was the first chemistry professor in America.

In his early years he had been a Calvinist Presbyterian but later in life he went through a considerable spiritual crisis, rejected predestination and became a Universalist. He simply could not believe that a just and loving God could condemn human beings to everlasting punishment and torture. It is the task of religion to do good. Moral imperatives are their own motivations. If the mind should be used in the quest for truth in theological matters so too in moral matters.

Cultivation of the mind has the same effects in removing the mist from the moral world.⁴⁸

That happiness is the ultimate goal of life should not deter us from living rightly. In 1790 a Convention of Universalists meeting in Philadelphia asked Rush to write the draft for a statement of faith. Section two, "Of the Supreme Being," read:

We believe in one God, infinite in all his perfections; and that these perfections are all modifications of infinite, adorable, incomprehensible and unchangeable love.⁴⁹

With great energy he plunged into organizing the first anti-slavery society in America, into helping the poor, opening the first free dispensary in America, advocating temperance before anyone else and conducting medical experiments as a part of the first balloon flight in Philadelphia. He saw the entrance into flight as a new progressive step in a long succession of inventions and discoveries.

It is not surprising that when he was elected to the Pennsylvania Assembly he vigorously opposed the requirement of religious oaths of any kind for government service. He lost in Pennsylvania but when the Constitutional Convention was convened, no religious requirements of any kind were written into the United States Constitution. In fact, it was expressly forbidden not only on the Federal level but in the States as well.

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several State legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.⁵⁰

This was a new venture, the triumph of a novel principle among the governments of the world.

The emergence of the scientific method as a *modus operandi*, the emergence of liberal political institutions and the emergence of the liberal religious perspective were a single emergence, becoming a climate of opinion within which the American Revolution took place. It would be difficult indeed to cultivate a genuine openness of mind in one or two aspects of this emergence without applying the same attitude in the third as well. All three are of the same world, perceived and interpreted by the same minds. Benjamin Rush focused narrowly upon medicine at first, then because of his position in society, his political involvement followed. His scientific explorations precipitated a religious crisis in his earlier years, broadening his perspective, but it was not until much later with his participation as Universalism's most prominent layman that his world view came into a full balance.

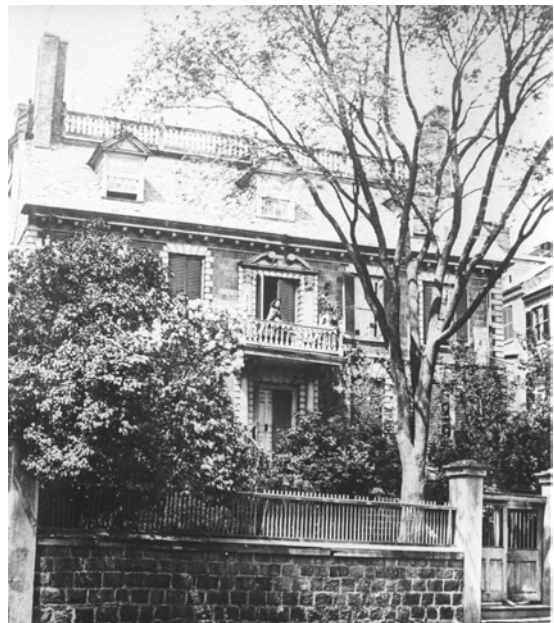
We cannot overlook the important influence of another scientist, Joseph Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen and of soda water, and a Unitarian minister. An intellectual giant, he was known to all the Founders through his political, religious and scientific writings long before becoming an American citizen. Like Tom Paine he spent only a brief time here and like Paine, he knew first hand the dangers of religious persecution. He was the

author of more than twenty-five works of theology, Bible study, history, educational theory, and science, and minister of a large Unitarian congregation in Birmingham, England. He was a close friend of Benjamin Franklin and correspondent with Rush, Jefferson and many other leaders of the American Revolution. His religious views were unpopular enough in England and illegal – strictly speaking: tolerated but not acceptable to the powers that be. He was a prominent Whig as well and an outspoken supporter of the French Revolution. Incited by the Anglican clergy, mobs in Birmingham attacked his house, destroyed his library, his book manuscripts, his furniture and all the apparatus and notes associated with his scientific experiments. He and his family barely escaped with their lives. After a dangerous stay in London, Priestley immigrated in 1794 to Philadelphia and died nearby at his home in Northumberland in 1804.

It can be said that he was the religious mentor of both Franklin and Jefferson and he was able to live his last years, peaceably, in the open society that they had helped create. His last book carries a five-page dedication to his friend Jefferson, then President. Later Jefferson confessed to Adams:

I have read Priestley's books over and over again, and I rest on them . . . as the basis of my own faith.⁵¹

(insert) Homes of some of the founders:



Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, John Hancock's home on Beacon St., George Washington's home, Mt. Vernon.



Joseph Priestley's home in Northumberland, PA; home of Henry Knox in Thomaston, ME; James Madison's Montpelier.



6. PLURALISM.

The corollary to the personal quality of openness is the societal quality of pluralism, or the protection of minorities. Groups within society have the right to associate together to concentrate and nourish their uniqueness. Thus we have the Bill of Rights, to protect citizens both in their persons and in their associations, written by James Madison on the insistence of Thomas Jefferson. In part, Jefferson wrote:

I have a right to nothing which another has a right to take away; and Congress will have a right to take away trials by jury in all civil cases. Let me add, that a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular; and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inference.⁵²

It had been Madison's view that rights were protected in the Constitution by inference. Jefferson convinced Madison it needed to be spelled out.

Pluralism came to the forefront most dramatically in the long uphill battle over freedom of religion. Most of the colonies had bequeathed to the new nation established churches, for example the Congregationalists and Unitarians in New England, the Episcopalians in the South.

The most dramatic battle took place in Virginia where two non-churchgoers, Jefferson and Madison, led the battle not just for “toleration” but for “freedom” of religion. There is a major difference.

The first round came in 1776 when another liberal, George Mason, introduced Virginia’s Declaration of Rights into the Convention. It began, “all men are born equally free and independent.” But then on the subject of religion Mason’s language read, “all men should enjoy the fullest toleration in the exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience . . . “ Much to everyone’s surprise, James Madison objected. He felt the principle did not go far enough. “The fullest toleration” meant only that the state would not act to stop practices it officially disapproved of. Madison felt the state should have no official position. He substituted the words, “the free exercise of religion.” It is an individual’s inherent right to exercise religion not a given privilege, a “toleration.” It is no business of the state what a person’s religion is or what church he or she attends or whether or not they attend.

At the same time, Madison tried to get the Episcopal Church disestablished and to eliminate taxation to support it. He lost this battle but won a lifelong friend and ally in the process, Thomas Jefferson.

Again in 1785, Madison and Patrick Henry fought over church establishment. Henry wanted the Episcopal Church to continue as the State Church but to tax the people for the support of the Christian religion. In other words, if there were no Episcopal Church in a neighborhood, taxes would go to another church, so long as it was Christian (as defined by the state). Madison expressed his opposition:

religion . . . and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence.⁵³

Madison did not have the votes to defeat Patrick Henry’s proposals but through parliamentary maneuvers and delays the matter never came to a vote.

Finally in 1786, Madison was able to take the initiative. He introduced what is called the Statute for Religious Freedom, written by his friend, Thomas Jefferson, nine years earlier, and it passed. Finally “mere toleration” was eliminated and freedom of religion as a right was established.

Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly, That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place of ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in nowise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.⁵⁴

Now compare this principle with the published statement of Evangelical novelist and a founder of the “Moral majority,” Tim LaHaye:

We must remove all humanists from public office and replace them with pro-moral political leaders. The Bible says, “when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.” (*Proverbs* 29:2)⁵⁵

It is essential in our time to compare the assertions of groups claiming to be the guardians of American traditions with the actual historic realities which produced the great principles of freedom. We have the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution with its checks and balances and the Bill of Rights to counter and deflect the energies of the radical right, those who make assertions concerning the history and provenance of freedom in behalf of authoritarianism or tyranny of the majority.

No one was more conscious of the danger of the tyranny of the majority than “the father of the constitution,” James Madison. This danger formed the basis for his “checks and balances” strategy which prevailed at the framing of the Constitution. In *The Federalist* (51) he gives his motivations:

It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions.⁵⁶

Here we see the classic balance which created our nation. On the one hand, those who believed in original sin and innate depravity of human nature could not logically trust democratic forms at all. The divine right of kings or some authoritarian substitute was a device to accommodate the completely pessimistic view of human nature. On the other hand, total optimism about our natures would logically render government unnecessary except as a means of doing large tasks and certainly make redundant any need to protect rights and liberties. Madison stood midway between the two extremes, expressing a confidence in human nature, that at least it was capable of contracting to protect the good inclinations and to control the unwieldy and evil. Jefferson too, while his estimate of human nature was warmer than Madison’s, insisted to his friend that we could not depend upon implied protections, that we must contract to protect our liberty with a Bill of Rights.

Unfortunately we know very little of Madison’s personal religious beliefs for he had purged his personal papers from those preserved after his death. His language is Deistic, with such terms as “Universal Sovereign,” “Creator” and “the Supreme Lawgiver of the Universe” in his oratory, with an absence of any orthodox language. He was a non-churchgoer in his native Virginia and believed that:

Had the Church of England been established in the Northern Colonies as it was in Virginia, it is clear to me that slavery and subjection might and would have been gradually insinuated among us.⁵⁷

Speaking of Virginia society he wrote:

That diabolical, hell-conceived principle of persecution rages among some; and to their eternal infamy, the clergy can furnish their quota of imps for such business.⁵⁸

All that we can affirm then of Madison’s religion was a passion for removing it from the hands of government and placing its residence in the heart and conscience of the individual.

Our third and fourth presidents were both non-churchgoers though Jefferson was in attendance when Priestley gave his Philadelphia sermons in 1796. Both were firmly anti-clerical and opposed any ecclesiastical establishment. Jefferson’s idea of piety was to closet himself in the White House and with scissors-and-paste isolate the essence of the teachings of Jesus in the so-called “Jefferson Bible.” Unlike John Adams, a church member all his life, neither Jefferson nor Madison had any concept of participation in Congregational life, the prospect of living in the give-and-take of the religious community, of the stimulation and challenge of dialogue with friends for the religious journey. In Jefferson’s words:

The population of my neighborhood is too slender, and is too much

divided into other sects to maintain any one preacher well. I must therefore be contented to be a Unitarian by myself, although I know there are many around me who would become so, if once they could hear the questions fairly stated.⁵⁹

Likely he had in mind his neighbors Madison and Monroe among them.

In 1802, several events taken together symbolically mark the end of the Revolutionary period. Alexander Hamilton formed the Christian Constitutional Society which fortunately did not take hold. But the idea of a linkage of Christianity and our Constitution has always been a dangerous, if erroneous, idea. 1802 was also the year Tom Paine returned to the country he had named. He could hardly find anyone other than Jefferson, who would publicly befriend him, was nearly assassinated and after his death no cemetery would receive his remains.

It is understandable why Joseph Priestly, fleeing persecution in England, had been apprehensive of what might develop here. The country of his asylum treated him more kindly than it was to treat Paine and in 1802 in dedicating his last book to his friend, President Jefferson, he wrote:

It is the boast of this country that it has a Constitution the most favorable to political liberty, and private happiness, of any in the world; and all say that besides your great merit with respect to several articles of the first importance to public liberty in the instrument itself, you have ever been one of the steadiest friends to the genuine principles and spirit of it; and to this opinion your conduct in various public offices, and now in the highest, in this free state, gives the clearest attestation.⁶⁰

He continued, taking into account the persecution he had experienced in England, that he felt

. . . the greater satisfaction in the prospect of passing the remainder of an active life . . . under your protection . . .⁶¹

His wish was fulfilled as he died two years later in Pennsylvania.

There is a passion and a commitment to action in the faith underlying our democracy that even the vigorous right wing reactions of the next two decades could not overcome. In 1800 Jefferson wrote to Rush:

I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.⁶²

Each generation has to awaken anew to this faith, has to relive in its own originality the great principles: liberty, independence, reason, character, openness and pluralism. When the Unitarian poet, James Russell Lowell was asked the question, "How long do you think the American Republic will endure?" he replied, "So long as the ideas of its founders continue to be dominant."⁶³

This remains our challenge, that the great ideas shall continue, not as frozen icons, but alive, embodied in a living community of faith, inspired by the traditions of its struggle, vigilant and urgent, that we might secure these principles "for ourselves and our posterity."

AFTERWORD.

Since 1987 much has changed and much remains the same. The so-called "Moral Majority" at its peak in 1987 has collapsed and morphed in several directions political and fundamentalist. We now live in a world of climate change and economic fragility,

marked by the catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf and the Wall Street casino collapse. We have a new realism for liberals opposed by a congeries of retro thought and denial. The survival of liberal democracy in a context of corporate power is at stake. But the American split between “great awakenings” and liberal reform remains.

It is troubling that the religious and political right has most easily adapted to the electronic age, a development made possible by a scientific evolution many on the right oppose ideologically. In part this success is underwritten by corporate interests which fare better when “conservatives” are in power. Much of the economic discontent resulting in “tea party” gatherings is funded by corporations in front organizations. The mainstream media of course take note of tea party excesses giving them a kind of “normalcy.” Corporate ownership of media gives the liberal end of the spectrum few opportunities to frame the issues before us.

It should be mentioned that liberal religion itself has evolved philosophically since 1787. In an age of quantum physics, vast cosmic time and a well developed theory of evolution, Deism is no longer tenable. The physical world is vastly more complex than the Newtonian world view. Faculty psychology is also obsolete. We no longer have faculties for “reason,” “will,” a homunculus or “soul” in a context of burgeoning cognitive and neuroscience. And we are now a multi-faith society as never before as liberal religion strives for global perspectives spiritually and a global citizenship politically.

Explanations seemed so much simpler in 1787 and could be easily summarized for the insecure seeking authority, something to “stand on.” Now we live in a world of change, relativity and motion. Remarkably and hopefully we still have our Constitution and Bill of Rights. And we have our six great principles of freedom, reconceived of course in each generation: liberty, independence, reason, character, openness and pluralism. The story continues.

NOTES.

1. Quote of course is the title of Jonathan Edwards’ famous sermon sometimes credited with beginning the first “Great Awakening.” Based in fear it eventually exhausted itself as intensity waned.
2. Founded in 1637, this organization had long since become a social club and no longer a military organization.
3. Booth, John Nicholls, *The Story of the Second Church in Boston, Including the Old North Mystery*. Boston: the Second Church, 1959, p. 19.
4. Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, “*Paul Revere’s Ride*.” There is some disagreement as to which of the churches in the North End was the North Church referred to by the Unitarian poet. The North Church was founded in 1649 and located at the head of North Square, becoming the Old North Church when New North was founded in 1714 nearby. But usage continues long after legal names change. Christ Church was founded in 1723 and was Tory in its sympathies but claims the name today.
5. Booth, op. Cit. p. 19.
6. Mayhew, Jonathan, *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers*, Boston: D. Fowle, 1750, p. 24.
7. Mayhew, Ibid. pp. 41-42.
8. Mayhew, Jonathan, *The Right and Duty of Private Judgment Assented*, 1748, quoted in Willard C. Frank, *A Year With Our Liberal Heritage*, Tulsa: Unitarian Universalist Advance, 1984, p. 25.
9. Mayhew, *Higher Powers*, pp. 33-34.
10. Mayhew, Jonathan, quoted in Samuel A. Eliot, “A Cradle of Liberty,” *The Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society*, Vol. V, Pt II, 1937, p.6.
11. *Declaration of Independence*. July 4, 1776.



First Parish, Unitarian, In Concord, MA

Unitarian Universalist in Plymouth, MA, brought with it in 1620, the original covenant of the congregation. The Scrooby Covenant of 1606 is still in use by this church today.

16. *The Mayflower Compact*, 1620.

17. Pierce, Richard D., *The Records of the First Church in Boston 1630-1868*. Boston: Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1961, Vol. 39, p. xliii.

18. The third meeting house of the First Parish in Concord, Unitarian Universalist, is located in the same site today in Concord center.

19. Both John and John Quincy Adams with their wives are buried in a crypt beneath the porch of “the Stone Temple” of the First Parish Unitarian Universalist in Quincy.

20. Quoted in *American Pioneers of Pure Religion and Perfect Liberty* (editor and date unknown).

21. Quoted in Daniel Munro Wilson, *Where American Independence Began*, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1902, p. 89.

22. Quoted in Kenneth Umbreit, *Founding Fathers*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941, p. 114.

23. Quoted in Wilson, Op. Cit., p. 91.

24. Ibid., p. 104.

25. Jefferson, Thomas, conversation with Daniel Webster, 1824. Quoted in Saul K. Padover, ed., *Thomas Jefferson on Democracy*. New York: New American Library, 1954, p. 172.

26. Peabody, James B., *John Adams: A Biography in His Own Words*. New York: Newsweek, 1973, 2:407.

27. *The Narrative of Colonel Ethan Allen*. New York: Corinth, 1961, p. 8. (first publ in 1779).

28. Allen, Ethan, *Reason the Only Oracle of Man, or a Compenduous System of Natural Religion. Alternately Adorned with Confutations of a Variety of Doctrines Incompatible to it; Deduced from the Most Exalted Ideas Which we are Able to form of the Divine and Human Characters, and from the Universe in General*. Bennington: Haswell and Russell, 1789.

29. Paine, Thomas, *The Political Works of Thomas Paine*. Toronto: Belfords, Clarke & Co., 1879, “Common Sense,” p. 35.

30. Ibid., “The Crisis,” Number I, p. 3.

31. Ibid., “The Crisis,” Number II, pp. 10-11.

12. Mayhew, Jonathan, *A Sermon Preached in the Audience of His Excellency William Shirley, Esq., May 29, 1754*, quoted in Carl Becker, *The Declaration of Independence*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1922.

13. With about 15,000 population, the town of Boston at the time of the Revolution had eleven Congregational, three Anglican, two Baptist, one Huguenot and one Sandemonian church. Of these, ten Congregational and one Anglican church had evolved to a Unitarian position in the period 1775 to 1805. They were: First Church, Second Church or Old North, King’s Chapel, the brattle Square Church, New North Church, New South Church, New Brick Church, Federal Street Church, Hollis Street Church, West Church and the Tenth Congregational Society (two of these merged into the Old North Church).

14. Chauncy, Charles, *Seasonal Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England*, quoted in David B. Parke, ed., *The Epic of Unitarianism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1957, p. 52.

15. The Church of the Pilgrims, now known as the First Church

32. Ibid., "Rights of Man," p. 132.
33. Paine, Thomas, *Theological Works of Thomas Paine*. Boston: J. P. Mendum, 1854, "The Age of Reason," p. 27.
34. Ibid., p. 152.
35. Paine, Thomas, quoted in Fred Gladstone Bratton, *The Legacy of the Liberal Spirit*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1943, p. 122.
36. Umbreit, Kenneth, *Founding Fathers*. New York: Harper and Brothers, c. 1941, p. 326.
37. Hill, Margaret, "Must One Be Christian to be a First Rate American?", *Liberty*, Vol. 75, No. 5, September-October, 1980, p. 10.
38. Umbreit, Op. Cit. pp. 326-327.
39. Washington, George, "Farewell Address," 1796 in Richard D. Heffner, ed., *A Documentary History of the United States*. New York: New American Library, 1952, pp. 61-62.
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41. Franklin, Benjamin, "Letter to Rev. George Whitefield," June 6, 1753, in *The Theological Works of Thomas Paine*, p. 7.
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43. Sparks, Jared, Op. Cit. pp. 106-107.
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50. *Constitution of the United States of America*, VI: 3.
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53. Madison, James, "A Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments," 1785, quoted in Saul K. Paddov *The Genius of America*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, c.1960, p.107.
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58. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
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