

"Independence Hall: Independent from God?"

By Chaplain Todd DuBord, M.Div.



From the desk of:
Todd A. DuBord
Chaplain of Top Kick Productions

9/11/10

Mrs. Cindy McLeod
Superintendent of Independence National Historical Park
143 S. Third Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Mrs. McLeod:

My name is Todd DuBord and I am the chaplain for the Chuck Norris enterprises. I was a part of a tour group of roughly 50 people who were on a north-eastern American heritage tour in July 2010 (“The Next Great Awakening tour”¹), which took us from Boston to Washington, D.C. And Independence Hall in Philadelphia was on our visitation list.



Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Before the trip, seeing Independence Hall, where both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were debated and adopted by our founders, was going to be one of the greatest highlights for me. As a lover of early American history and our republic, how could it not be? Unfortunately, it ended being the low point of the trip, because of the historical and particularly religious revisionism our group heard from a National Park Service (NPS) tour guide there. With over 2 million visitors alone in 2009,² it is my great concern that a plethora of people and students have already heard these same distortions and half-truths about our founders’ religious views and practices.

Just for the record, let me say that I'm not some extremist, but a concerned citizen who sincerely wishes to help rectify these religious historical revisions and omissions that 100 or so of us visitors heard in the Independence Hall tour, so that the tours can be the best they can be and Americans can learn accurate views of America's history, especially as it pertains to the founders and framers of the Declaration of Independence and our Constitution. It is with that heart and mind that I write to you: to sincerely help.

By the way, though I possess our NPS tour guide's name, I'm hesitating to give it here, as I wish him no public humiliation (and can give it to you in private). I do wish an overall correction in the NPS guide training that is respectfully and obviously deficient (evidenced by his presentation). And while an administrative overseer might be tempted to say that what we experienced was an "isolated circumstance," the gap of religious knowledge was so large that, as a trainer of others for twenty plus years, I know it is symptomatic of a greater systemic deficiency in either your training materials and/or the training of the guides themselves.



Independence Hall

Let me explain what actually occurred during the initial part of our tour of Independence Hall—something which I should mention that 25 other witnesses in our group, all of whom were shocked and upset by what they heard, were and are willing to sign an affidavit that they too experienced.

Our tour group of roughly 50 people from various parts of the country was split up into two groups, which were, in turn, combined with other visitors from all over the country too (including students and children) for the tour of Independence Hall. I was with the first half of our group going in as guests, including Dr. Jim Garlow (a well-known national figure who is also Senior Pastor of the large Skyline Wesleyan Church in San Diego and the Chairman of Renewing American Leadership--<http://www.torenewamerica.com/jim-garlow-bio>). Garlow was one of our tour guides along with David Barton, an early American historian from www.wallbuilders.com and a holder of one of the largest

personal collections of pre-1812 artifacts from the Revolutionary period (though Barton was not a part of our first group going into Independence Hall).

As we were ushered into Independence Hall for a teaching about our founders (before seeing the actual rooms in which the two critical American documents were drafted), we were seated in a room with several rows of inclined seating facing each other on each side of the room, with a long center area for the NPS guide to walk up and down. As we entered, our NPS tour guide stood waiting for us to be seated.

During his welcome, one small point that flowered somewhat later in the presentation was when he said, “We are going to talk about history, history, history and absolutely no discussion of religion or politics.” It took a moment for us visitors to get that he was being somewhat sarcastic, as we were obviously in a place of great political history. Some slowly snickered, while others looked a little confused (as I was) about the statement, because it sounded somewhat serious too. His quip that we would not discuss religion would later become obvious to be almost somewhat of a wish.

There was little question from the outset that he was very well versed in the history and presentation of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence. As a teacher and lover of history myself, I knew that he was no rookie to this tour. He told us quite an elaborate history on the building, the founders and the documents produced therein. And then he referred to the central wall on which was a large copy of John Trumbull’s painting, “The Declaration of Independence,” which you know depicts (most of) the signers of that founding document and the presentation of the draft to Congress (an event that actually took place on June 28, 1776, but not the signing of the document--which took place later).

The NPS guide began to ask visitors in the audience to name the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence (and point them out in the portrait—an exercise somewhat in futility, knowing most couldn’t get past the obvious signers like Jefferson, Franklin and others, etc.).



John Trumbull's painting, "The Declaration of Independence"

Actually, the NPS tour guide used a bit of sarcasm but also smacked a bit arrogant in his back-and-forth questioning, respectively chiding visitors who guessed wrong regarding the identity of the signers—by name or by placement in the portrait. When a guest incorrectly identified a signer, but nevertheless named some founder from the era, the NPS guide would tell where and what that person was doing during the Revolutionary period (despite that he was not a signer). So it was clear that he was obviously very well educated on the founders. This back and forth questioning and instruction went on for quite some time.

Near the end of the presentation, before actually going into the rooms where the founding documents were debated and adopted, he asked if there were any further questions. Being a religious teacher, and not hearing anything about the religious affiliation of all these signers, I simply raised my hand and asked the question, "I know that we're not supposed to discuss religion and politics [to which several chuckled because of the NPS guides opening statement], but can you tell me about these men's religious affiliation?" (As I asked the question, I pointed back to the founders' portraits in Trumbull's painting).

I must confess to you that, in the 25 years I've attended a myriad of classes and presentations from my professional degrees to annual seminars, I have not seen such a quick personal transition in demeanor and presentation. The NPS guide went from being an expert on the founders to someone who was fumbling to formulate his words and get even a coherent and accurate sentence about our founder's religion. It struck me from his initial utterances on their religious views that he knew very little if anything about the real issues at all—and that made me wonder how many presentations he had done over the years to school children and guests from all over the country and world without ever discussing the founders' religious nature with any accuracy. And, lastly, it instantly made me think that there must be very little actual training on the issue—or at least it made me wonder.

The response that proceeded from the NPS guide in answering my question was often the typical rhetoric and sound bites that I've heard through the years from any uninformed skeptical antagonist.

Let me give you five examples of what the NPS guide said (from notes I was taking as he spoke and that I verified from witnesses afterward). I will later reiterate each and explain from history why they are incorrect.

- (1) "There is no record that George Washington ever attended church!"³
- (2) While the NPS guide physically hunched over, mimicked and mocked one carrying and swinging an oversized bible in his hand, he said to the crowd: "Even if I said the founders were Christians, how could we really know? Just because people carry a big ol' Bible in their hand, they can still be atheists!"
- (3) "Most of these men owned slaves. How could good Christians do that?"
- (4) "We know that Benjamin Franklin was a deist."
- (5) "We don't really know for sure about their religion. It's open for interpretation. You'll have to do your own study on that."

It was bad enough he retorted with only, and I mean only, negative comments on the founders' religious views and practice, but that they were also jaded lies or half-truths used to attack and undermine their

faiths. In the very house in which they adopted a Creator-filled Declaration of Independence, not one positive comment was made about any one of the founders' Christian faiths.

The audience reaction was instantaneous shock--many were upset and even gasped that he was speaking so derogatorily about these founders and the/their Christian faith. You could see it on everyone's faces. Dr. Jim Garlow was so disgusted by the presentation that he immediately defended the founders' faiths by starting with the words, "Now, wait just a minute, that book on the table there in the portrait is a bible and most of these men were devout sincere Christians. We have proof of that!" (But rather than publicly rebuke or disrespect him, as the NPS did to our founders and many of our own faiths, Garlow and me--as well as others--spoke to the guide in private after, to no avail I might add.)

Because of the apparent awkwardness this NPS guide created and felt, maybe because he was not expecting that the audience would react negatively to what he said, he quickly quipped to us all that "we need to move to the next room"—and off we jetted through the doors. People instantly began to chatter in disgust about his disdain and religious antagonism toward the founders. I kept wondering what other religious rubbish about our founders in countless presentations has come from this and other NPS guides to even hundreds of thousands of school children and people from other countries, who come to this historic site every year to learn the "accurate" history of our republic.

Personally, I caught up with the NPS guide and privately talked to him for a little bit, and he was obviously nervous about the few of us that respectfully took question with what he shared. I asked him if the NPS guides were trained on the founders, he emphatically said, "Yes." I replied in surprise, "On their religious beliefs and practices?" He retorted while looking away, "We're trained on the founders." I couldn't help but think, "I'd love to see the religious training materials!" (Something I'm formally asking even now if you could and would please send a copy to me--please).



Inside Independence Hall

Like I said, I don't want to be a critic. I want to be a helper. As a public figure, I've been at the end of criticism and don't believe it should ever stop there. And though I assume (and hope) that you have many more competent historians on the premises than even I, I would like to save them some time by presenting, for example, what is said at other historic sites about these same founders—for example from a video on the religious devotion of George Washington that plays repeatedly in a loop for visitors all day, every day, at Mt. Vernon, George Washington's estate. I will do so by examining the five statements above that the NPS guide made while on our tour, and why they don't accurately reflect the truth or the beliefs of our founders. I certainly don't intend to school you or others there, who likely even know more about America's religious history than I present below. I truly only want to help you and those who train the NPS guides at the Independence Hall to expand, revise or fine tune their training materials, if needed, so that children and adults at the historic park get an accurate picture of our founders—as I know you and others want too. In fact, if it helps, please feel free to use this treatise in part or entirety. I don't consider myself the pinnacle of any religious history teaching, but this below information is available from original documents and scholarly resources even on such government websites as the Library of Congress.

Examining the five key statements made by the NPS guide at Independence Hall



George Washington statue in front of Independence Hall,
where he presided over the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

(1) “There is no record that George Washington ever attended church!”

Nothing could be further from the truth. Washington attended Christ Church (the first Episcopal Church) just a few blocks away from Independence Hall with Betsy Ross, John Adams (our 2nd president), Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush, Robert Morris and many other signers of our founding

documents.⁴ He also had reserved pews at two churches in Virginia, at Pohick Church near Mount Vernon and one at Christ Church in Alexandria.⁵

Washington was a very spiritual man and his various acts and declarations throughout his life proclaim that. The NPS guide could have cited any of a number of examples in Washington's life and even presidency.

For example, after pledging the presidential oath of office on April 30, 1789, Washington uttered the additional words, "So help me God." (A declaration most U.S. presidents have subsequently repeated). Washington then kissed the bible afterwards and proclaimed, "we ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the external rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained..."⁶

Just after being sworn in on the Bible as America's first U.S. President, Washington and other leaders in our republic participated in a two-hour worship service at St. Paul's Chapel (Anglican). While New York served as the capital for the new nation, President Washington weekly attended St. Paul's for two years.



St. Paul's Chapel (New York)



George Washington's pew at St. Paul's Chapel

In his First Inaugural Address, Washington gave great praise to God and declared his and the republic's dependence upon Him for all to hear: "Such being the impressions under which I have, in obedience to the public summons, repaired to the present station; it would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official Act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the Universe, who presides in the Councils of Nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that his benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the People of the United States, a Government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes: and may enable every instrument employed in its administration to execute with success, the functions allotted to his charge. In tendering this homage to the Great Author of every public and private good I assure myself that it expresses your sentiments not less than my own; nor those of my fellow-citizens at large, less than either. No People can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the Affairs of men more than the People of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency."⁷

President Washington signed a Thanksgiving Proclamation on October 3, 1789, which set aside Thursday, November 26 as a day "to be devoted...to the service of that great and glorious Being."

On May 12, 1779, Washington once addressed some Delaware chiefs among the Lenape Indians,⁸ who desired to train their young people in American schools, saying, "You do well to wish to learn our arts and ways of life, and above all, the religion of Jesus Christ. These will make you a greater and happier people than you are. Congress will do everything they can to assist you in this wise intention."

As General of the Continental armies, Washington supported religious freedom and practice, but he did insist at times that Sunday worship ceremonies be observed by his troops.

Though debated among scholars, as a minister myself, I find it compelling that the diary of Rev. Nathaniel Randolph Snowden (a story he said he heard from Isaac Potts, who was 26 years old in 1777) documented how Washington was seen praying in Valley Forge: "*In that woods pointing to a close in view, I heard a plaintive sound as, of a man at prayer,. I tied my horse to a sapling and went quietly into the woods and to my astonishment I saw the great George Washington on his knees alone, with his sword on one side and his cocked hat on the other. He was at Prayer to the God of the Armies, beseeching to interpose with his Divine aid, as it was ye Crisis, and the cause of the country, of humanity and of the world.*"⁹ Based upon all Washington said about God, how could we not believe he was daily entreating the Creator at such a critical time in the life of the republic?

Of all Washington's speeches on religion and morality, however, one stands out among all others: his "Farewell Address" as president. If last words are the most memorial among humans and leaders, it sure

seems this passionate admonition for the future state of the republic was peculiar if Washington were merely nominally religious:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked: Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation deserts the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.¹⁰

At very least, the NPS guide could have conveyed any of the content in the video display that plays on a continuous loop at the now historic park of Mt. Vernon, George Washington's estate. It plays the following non-stop for visitors going through the museum and educational center. As their website explains,¹¹ the display is titled, "George Washington and Religion," and is "shown on the wall above the reconstructed church pew in the 'Gentleman Planter Gallery,' where visitors learn about the role religion played in Washington's life and his encouragement of religious expression." The short video production is flanked by displays of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer on the walls right next to it.

The footage explains the following, with the voice of an actor as George Washington every time quotations appear below. It opens with the words:

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports." [A quote from Washington's farewell address as president]

Then there's a slight pause with the words on the screen "George Washington and religion." Then the narrator proceeds with the following paragraphs:

George Washington was raised in the Anglican Church, the official church of Virginia and the other southern colonies. As in other Virginian families of this period, he appears to have received his spiritual education from his mother using the family bible and other religious works at the time.

He was a member and vestryman of Pohick Church and Christ's Church in Virginia. When he married Martha Dandridge Custis in 1759, it was in a Christian ceremony. At Mt. Vernon, their family home, the couple was known to say grace at meal times, and they provided a religious education to Martha's children and grandchildren.

*As president, Washington acknowledged the presence of a Divine hand in the fate of the nation by promoting the celebration of a Day of Thanksgiving: "I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be."*¹²

During the Revolutionary War, General Washington encouraged the religious convictions of his troops and asked the Continental Congress to support payment for clergymen of many faiths [or denominations] to tend to the spiritual needs of the men. "While we are contending for our own liberty, we should be very cautious of violating the rights of conscience in others, ever

considering that God alone is the Judge of the hearts of men, and to him only in this case are they answerable."¹³

*Washington believed that political and religious freedom went hand-in-hand, and he encouraged the new republic to embrace religious tolerance: "[For you, doubtless, remember that I have often expressed my sentiment, that] every man, conducting himself as a good citizen, and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience."*¹⁴

*Washington tried to set an example by worshipping with different sects: Presbyterian, Quakers, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Congregationalists and Baptists. In a famous letter to Touro Synagogue, he made it clear that religious tolerance in a new nation was not for Christians alone: "May the children of the stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants; while every one shall sit [in safety] under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid."*¹⁵

*It is clear in Washington's writings that he was a deeply spiritual man, with a strong belief that a benevolent power was acting in his life and in the founding of the United States: "Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency."*¹⁶

It is no surprise that, on the wall above President Washington and his wife Martha's tombs, are engraved the biblical words of Jesus from John 11:25: "I am the Resurrection and the Life, sayeth the Lord. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

How excellent is that Mt. Vernon summary of Washington's religious passion and convictions? And how different it is from the short, skeptical and tart lie that the group of 100+ guests heard from the NPS guide at Independence Hall: "George Washington didn't even attend church!"?

If that explanation of Washington's Christian and religious commitment is good enough for Mt. Vernon to play non-stop throughout each day as myriads of visitors watch, is it too much for NPS guides at Independence Hall to learn and teach the same things without rabbit trailing down a negative, antagonistic and false road about Washington's religious beliefs and practice?



(2) While the NPS guide physically hunched over, mimicked and mocked one carrying and swinging an oversized bible in his hand, he said to the crowd: “Even if I said the founders were Christians, how could we really know? Just because people carry a big ol’ Bible in their hand, they can still be atheists!”

Why this NPS guide physically illustrated this point with such a sense of disdain and disrespect, I will never know. But it was simply unbecoming of any NPS guide to mock not just the founders but anyone who carries a bible, of all places in Independence Hall.

As you know, the fact is there wasn’t an atheist in the group of founders. Benjamin Franklin himself wrote atheism was virtually non-existent in those days. As Franklin’s explained in his 1787 pamphlet¹⁷ for those in Europe thinking of relocating to America highlighted,

To this may be truly added, that serious religion, under its various denominations, is not only tolerated, but respected and practiced. Atheism is unknown there; Infidelity rare and secret; so that persons may live to a great age in that country without having their piety shocked by meeting with either an Atheist or an Infidel. And the Divine Being seems to have manifested his approbation of the mutual forbearance and kindness with which the different sects treat each other; by the remarkable prosperity with which he has been pleased to favor the whole country.

Some retort in opposition that the Constitution is godless. That it makes no mention of God. They allege the Founders and Framers were trying to establish a secular state. Nothing could be further from the truth.

First, the founders’ already declared God’s central place in the Declaration of Independence, six of which signed it as well as the U.S. Constitution. Second, the Constitution describes the framework for a working government. It didn’t require the terms “God” or “Creator” as much as terms like the “executive branch” and “congress.” And the Declaration of Independence already established the new republics dependence upon a Creator. The Constitution didn’t need to restate what the Declaration of Independence already did: that our Founders believed in a Creator and were basing their republic upon his personage and works. Third, the Framers did in fact debate religious inclusion in the Constitution. That’s why the First Amendment was added to it. They established a sacred not secular state, through which its citizens were free to live out their own religious convictions.

Justice James Wilson, a signer of the Constitution, explained the relation between religion and law:

Human law must rest its authority ultimately upon the authority of that law which is divine....Far from being rivals or enemies, religion and law are twin sisters, friends, and mutual assistants. Indeed, these two sciences run into each other. The divine law as discovered by reason and moral sense forms an essential part of both. The moral precepts delivered in the sacred oracles form part of the law of nature, are of the same origin and of the same obligation, operating universally and perpetually.¹⁸

The Constitution assured in Article VI that a candidate didn't have to believe one particular way to be elected.¹⁹ Yet, it was also a right of free speech for government officials to advocate the election of Christians. As John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the United States, appointed by George Washington, wrote, "Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers. And it is the duty as well as the privilege and interest, of a Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers."²⁰

For the Founders, God and government were intricately linked. Even Thomas Paine, perhaps the most religiously exempt among the founders, echoed one year earlier, "Spiritual freedom is the root of political freedom....As the union between spiritual freedom and political liberty seems nearly inseparable, it is our duty to defend both."²¹

The Creator was the basis for our founders' freedom and government. He gave them their appraisal for human value. He showed them how to maintain civility in society—with religion. It is no coincidence that the Declaration of Independence begins with a spiritual emphasis: "When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature²² and of nature's God entitle them....that they are endowed by their Creator...."

And that Creator prompted them to be moral, civil and true to their word. Religion, and the morals it produced, were so critical to the life of our country that our founders believed government would collapse without it. Charles Carroll, a signer of the Constitution, wrote, "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."²³

So what was the audience at Independence Hall supposed to think in July 2010, when the NPS guide retorted: "Even if I said the founders were Christians, how could we really know? Just because people carry a big ol' Bible in their hand, they can still be atheists!"



Benjamin Franklin statue in Philadelphia

(3) “We know that Benjamin Franklin was a deist.”

Again, why would the NPS point out this one singular and particularly non-traditional religious point about Franklin’s life, what is often retorted in skeptical arenas about Franklin’s religion, when we know so much more that debates that very point? We know many, many, many other things about Benjamin Franklin too. And one of them is that, if one truly understands the religious confessions, beliefs and practices of Franklin, he or she will at least question if he was a deist at all—and if so, a very poor one, according to classic definitions.

First, Benjamin Franklin was an Episcopalian. Within roughly 50 years of his life of the revolutionary period, B. J. Lossing’s 1848 work on the *Signers of the Declaration of Independence*²⁴ (reprinted in *Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*, WallBuilder Press: Aledo, Texas, 1995), explained some early influences of Christianity upon Franklin’s life (page 105):

Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on the seventeenth day of January, 1706. His father was a true Puritan, and emigrated hither from England, in 1682. He soon afterward married Miss Folger, a native of Boston. Being neither a mechanic nor farmer, he turned his attention to the business of a soap-boiler, and tallow-chandler, which was his occupation for life.

The parents of Benjamin wished him to be a minister of the gospel, and they began to educate him with that end in view, but their slender means were not adequate for the object, and the intention was abandoned. He was kept at a common school for a few years, and then taken into the service of his

brother. The business did not please the boy... At length the harmony between himself and brother was interrupted, and he left his service and went on board a vessel in the harbor, bound for New York. In that city he could not obtain employment, and he proceeded on foot to Philadelphia, where he arrived on a Sabbath morning. He was then but seventeen years old, friendless and alone, with but a single dollar in his pocket... It is said that his first appearance in Philadelphia attracted considerable attention in the streets. With his spare clothing in his pocket, and a loaf of bread under each arm, he wandered about until he came to a Quaker meeting, where he entered, sat down, went to sleep, and slept soundly until worship was closed. He was then awakened by one of the congregation, and he sought some other place of rest.

Even as a young man in 1730, Franklin spoke of his belief in religion's role in society and government: "That wise men have in all ages thought government necessary for the good of mankind; and, that wise governments have always thought religion necessary for the well ordering and well-being of society, and accordingly have been ever careful to encourage and protect the ministers of it, paying them the highest public honors, that their doctrines might thereby meet with the greater respect among the common people."²⁵

In his book "The Greatest American," Mark Skousen explores Benjamin Franklin's evolving religious views, highlighting that while Franklin was initially a religious skeptic and considered a heretic by some, the American Revolution significantly influenced him to adopt a more theistic perspective. Skousen notes that Franklin, initially a "rational scientist" who favored "self-evident" over "sacred and undeniable" in the Declaration of Independence, later acknowledged God's role in the nation's victories.

Of course, let's not forget while Franklin lived in Philadelphia, he attended the historic Christ Church a few blocks away from Independence Hall. The Church's website notes that: "During the Revolutionary Era, Christ Church welcomed the Continental Congresses. Benjamin and Deborah Franklin and Betsy Ross were parishioners. Later, George Washington and John Adams attended services while they were the nation's Chief Executives."²⁶ In fact, the steeple on Christ Church was erected because Benjamin Franklin raised the money to build it.

But the big question is: was Franklin a deist? Though I'm not debating that he might have had some deistic tendencies, at least at some points of his early life, the key belief of a deist is the belief that God is the divine watchmaker, who just creates and "winds up" creation but then lets it go on its own course and does not intervene in it any longer. But that is not what Ben Franklin believed. He later confessed to Congress itself that he believed the Creator was very much involved and engaged in the affairs of men, including the founding of our republic. An 81-year-old Franklin echoed his belief as he appealed to the Constitutional Convention, after meeting for five weeks with no unanimity, to remember the contributing and effective nature of God and prayer:

In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for the divine protection! Our prayers, Sir, were heard; and they were graciously answered. All of us, who were engaged in the struggle, must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need its assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time; and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, That God governs in the affairs of men! And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?

We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: we shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and byword down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate

instance, despair of establishing Governments by Human Wisdom and leave it to chance, war and conquest.

I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that service.²⁷

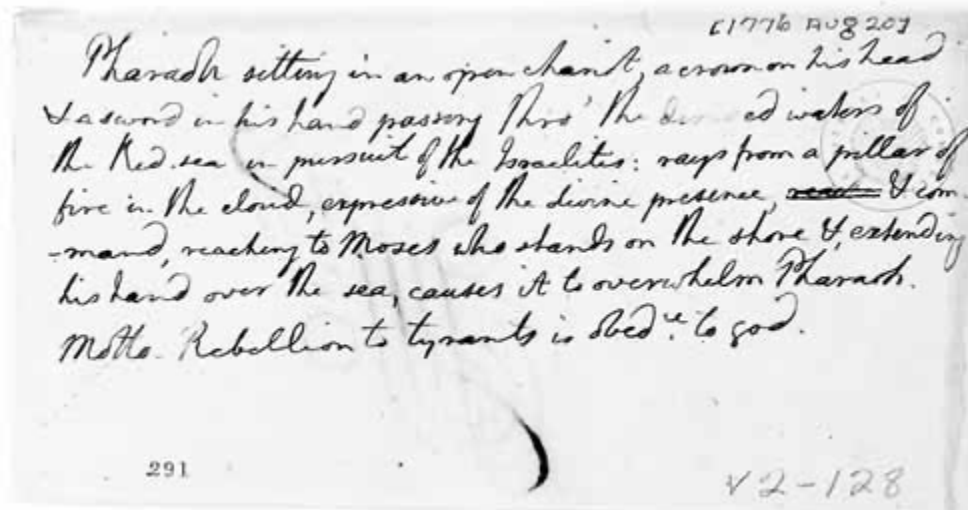
If those are the words and beliefs of a true-blue deist, I wish there were more deists flooding Washington D.C.! When Franklin said, “Our prayers, sir, were heard and graciously answered,” was he speaking of a bunch of Hindu, Buddhist or even a non-identifiable neutered Creator prayers? No, he was referring to the Creator to whom most of the founders prayed—the God of the Judeo-Christian scriptures.

Franklin’s Christian influence from a young age and based upon the solidarity of beliefs with other founders, even influenced his pro-Judeo-Christian works in political arenas. For example, on that great day of 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.”²⁸

After Thomas Jefferson first recommended an image reflecting the “children of Israel in the Wilderness, led by a Cloud by Day, and a Pillar of Fire by night...”, he later accepted Benjamin Franklin’s suggestion to adapt the Old Testament account of God’s parting of the Red Sea (see image below). Do these symbols seem like they could come from those who didn’t associate the Creator with the God of the Bible? Would we not label anyone today who would want the words on a national seal, “Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God,” as a religious extremist? Although not accepted in the final decision, these drafts reveal the religious temper and sentiment of the Revolutionary period, including among Franklin, Jefferson and Adams.



(Library of Congress)



Benjamin Franklin's description of proposed seal in his own hand (Library of Congress)²⁹

Also, in 1777, one year after the creation of the Declaration of Independence, the Second Continental Congress, of which Benjamin Franklin was a member though commissioned to France at the time,³⁰ voted to import 20,000 copies of the Bible (from "Holland, Scotland, or elsewhere") for the people of this new nation, because they could not obtain them from England during the Revolutionary War. Do we merely suppose Franklin would have opposed such an import? The Committee of Commerce recommended this to Congress because "the use of the Bible is so universal, and its importance so great" (*Journals of Congress*, Vol. 8, pp. 734-735).³¹

In the Declaration of Independence itself, while absolving their dependence upon Britain, Franklin and the rest of the signers described the One upon whom they would earnestly trust and depend upon with their sacred honor: "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."³² "Firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence"? Does "firm reliance" sound like questionable religious conviction? And does "protection of divine Providence" sound like a distant deistic divine watchmaker?

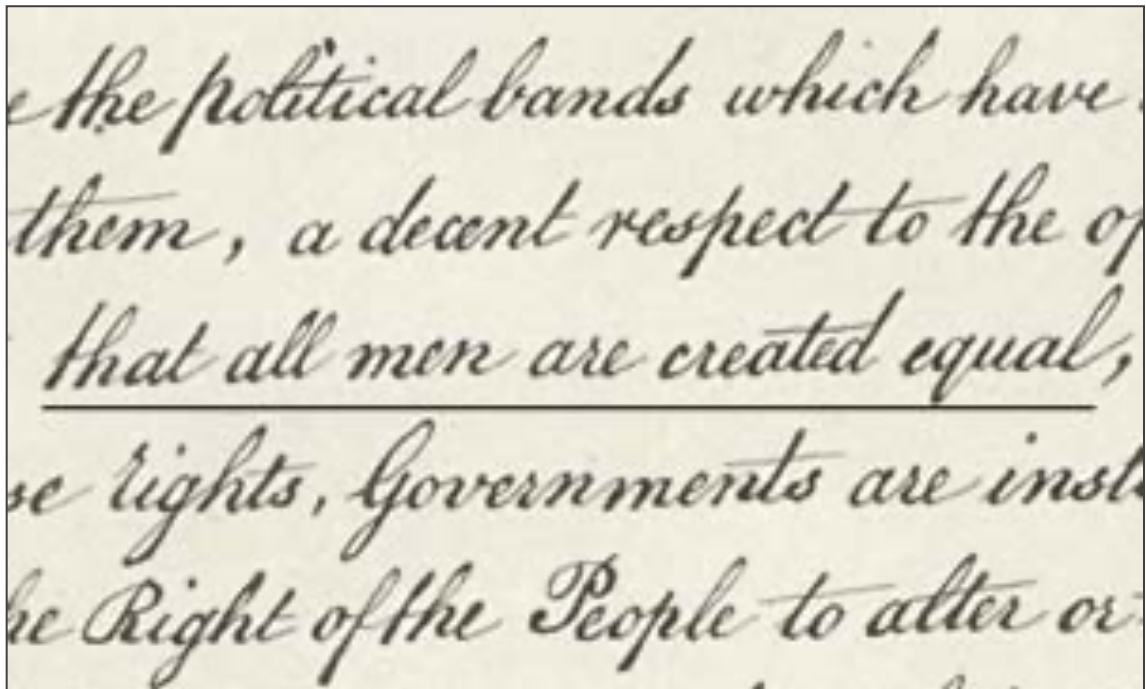
Did Franklin struggle with certain orthodox Christian tenets? Absolutely. And that struggle continued in some ways until his death, just a few years after the construction of the U.S. Constitution. Case in point. On March 1, 1790, just roughly a month before Franklin's death, he wrote the following in a letter to Ezra Stiles, president of Yale University, who had asked him his views on religion: "As to Jesus of Nazareth, my opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the system of morals and his religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is likely to see; but I apprehend it has received various corrupt changes, and I have, with most of the present dissenters in England, some doubts as to his divinity; tho' it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it, and I think it needless to busy myself with it now, when I expect soon an opportunity of knowing the truth with less trouble...."³³

With regard to the NPS guide, the point here is: with Franklin's Christian upbringing, his congressional appeal and testimony of an intervening God during the Revolution, the production of biblical portraits for U.S. seals, congressional colleagues' requests to import bibles, attending Christ Church with his wife Deborah, calling Christianity "the best the world ever saw or is likely to see," and his autographed affirmation in the "firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence" for the republic, why would any NPS guide choose to teach a packed audience only on Franklin's deistic tendencies when his Christian sentiment and work was so much broader?

One thing is certain: As professor Dr. Thomas S. Kidd [concluded](#), "If Franklin truly was a deist, he wasn't a very good one. Doctrinaire deists believed in a distant Creator, one who did not intervene in

human history, and certainly not one who would respond to prayers. Yes, Franklin questioned basic points of Christianity, including Jesus' divine nature. Yet his childhood immersion in the Puritan faith, and his relationships with traditional Christians through his adult life, kept him tethered to his parents' religion. If he was not a Christian, he often sounded and acted like one." (See much more evidence about Franklin's Christian faith [here](#).)

By the way, the Independence National Historic Park official website curriculum material for teachers about Benjamin Franklin's life (a whopping 56 pages for K-12 grades) does not mention one iota about Franklin's religious background, beliefs, contributions, attendance at church, etc.³⁴



"All men are created equal" from the Declaration of Independence

(4) "Most of these men owned slaves. How could good Christians do that?"

The signers of the Declaration of Independence agreed that, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Most early Americans believed humans were the highest creation of God. Their views were based in the Bible and expressed in the Declaration of Independence. That is why our forefathers called all Americans to uphold the worth of all men, women, and children in our founding documents and their writings.

The Founders believed equality would give legs to freedom. As John Adams said, "We should begin by setting conscience free. When all men of all religions...shall enjoy equal liberty, property, and an equal chance for honors and power...we may expect that improvements will be made in the human character and the state of society."³⁵

Of course there are those who vehemently disagree. Some fight to demonstrate that our Founders didn't mean what they said when they spoke about being "created equal." Others say our Founders said what they meant, but were unable to get over cultural prejudices. Both groups base their objections upon the alleged basis that many of the Founders owned slaves, were what we today would label chauvinistic, were indifferent to the poor, and condoned the mistreatment of Indians, etc.

I don't have enough room to address all these objections. Nor do I feel a necessity to defend every action of our Founders or their humanity. They didn't treat one another perfectly back then. In many ways they failed to meet their own expectations. But, as George Washington wrote, "We must take human nature as we find it. Perfection falls not to the share of mortals."³⁶ That includes all of us. Imperfections riddle us all. We all fall short. As Protestants, our forefathers believed that too.³⁷

Our Founders also believed there was something inherent in humanity that called it to a higher purpose. Doing wrong didn't take away from the fact that they could do better. The presence of prejudice didn't negate their desire for equality. The Declaration was not a guarantee that everyone would always be treated as equals. Equal rights are one thing—equal treatment is another. It took decades before culture would conform to their ideals. Even today we still seek to practice what they preached.

The Declaration of Independence, however, set the course upon which America would sail. Though culture would have to catch up to their creeds, inherent within that founding document was the equality for slaves, women,³⁸ poor, Indians, and even the unborn. As John Adams wrote,

The dons, the bashaws, the grandees, the patricians, the sachems, the nabobs, call them by what names you please, sign and groan and fret, and sometimes stamp and foam and curse, but all in vain. The decree is gone forth, and it cannot be recalled, that a more equal liberty than has prevailed in other parts of the earth must be established in America.³⁹

What matters here is the fact that the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, and believed in its contents for the founding and future of America. That document announced to the whole world that America was established upon the biblical belief that "all men are created equal." So valued was the entire human race that George Washington declared, "We have, probably, had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation."⁴⁰

Our Founders led the way, warts and all. They even confronted their own biases. For example, while slavery was considered a cultural norm, most Founders wrestled with it as a trespass before the Almighty and humanity.

George Washington: "There is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it."⁴¹

John Adams: "Every measure of prudence, therefore, ought to be assumed for the eventual total extirpation of slavery from the United States....I have, through my whole life, held the practice of slavery in...abhorrence."

Benjamin Franklin: "Slavery is...an atrocious debasement of human nature." (His final public act before his death was signing a memorial to Congress recommending the dissolution of the slavery system.)

Alexander Hamilton: "The laws of certain states...give an ownership in the service of Negroes as personal property....But being men, by the laws of God and nature, they were capable of acquiring liberty—and when the captor in war...thought fit to give them liberty, the gift was not only valid, but irrevocable."

James Madison: "We have seen the mere distinction of color made in the most enlightened period of time, a ground of the most oppressive dominion ever exercised by man over man."⁴²

Our Founders' struggle for equality made a difference. Their Great Experiment worked. In just one century America would taste the fruit of respect for all religious beliefs, women's suffrage, and the abolition of slavery.

More than merely a foundation for our government and morality, the religious fabric of our nation served as the basis for human worth and equality. They believed that, if we quit viewing life through the grid of a Creator, intentionally or not, we will cheapen human value, regard one another as unequal, mistreat one another, and increase immorality and uncivil behavior in society. They were right.

So to answer the NPS guide at Independence Hall in July, “Most of these men owned slaves. How could good Christians do that?” Because, in the words of George Washington, “Perfection falls not to the share of mortals.” And that includes NPS guides who distort history and try to demonize our founders’ characters based solely on an accepted cultural practice of the time which they themselves wanted to dissolve.

By the way, though it is very scant, it was good to see the Independence training materials for teachers (K-12) on your website mention: “In the 1830s, many abolitionists were visiting Philadelphia or living there and they were starting to visit the Pennsylvania State House where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were created, and where the State House Bell was on display. This Bell had an inscription (words written on it) from the Bible: “Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof”. They decided to use this Bell that had hung in the State House when the founders declared that “all men are created equal” as a symbol for FREEDOM for those who still were not equal and did not have any liberty in America: the enslaved Africans. They began printing images of the Bell on their writings, and they renamed it The Liberty Bell.”⁴³

But, as I noted in my preceding content, there was much abolitionist belief and work by our founders prior to the 1830’s. It would be nice to see any of it added to these website student materials.



Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, with the biblical admonition from Leviticus 25:10 etched around the top

(5) “We don’t really know for sure about their religion. It’s open for interpretation. You’ll have to do your own study on that.”

That uncertain statement was a peculiar response coming from the NPS guide, who clearly conveyed with certainty to the audience that day that he had mastered the essentials about the signers and framers.

In response to his comments, “We don’t really know for sure about their religion. It’s open for interpretation,” consider first everything I’ve already written in the preceding pages. Secondly, for him to overly generalize about the founders as if they were unclear or obtuse about their religious passion, belief and often dogmatism is clearly a complete oversight of their actions and written and oral testimonies. As I’ve already detailed, even with the most debatable founders like Washington, Franklin and Jefferson, we

have clear evidence of their pro-Judeo-Christian belief, inclinations and work—even in the political arenas.

Even Thomas Jefferson, hailed as the great separatist who fought against the tyranny of religious denominational sectarianism in the state (and vice versa), nevertheless endorsed the use of government buildings (like the Capitol) for church services, weekly attended the church services there while president, signed a treaty with the Kaskaskia Indians that allotted federal money to support the building of a Catholic church and to pay the salary of the church's priests, and repeatedly renewed legislation that gave land to the United Brethren to help their missionary activities among the Indians. Can you imagine any president doing so today? He would be labeled a radical, who doesn't respect or obey the separation of church and state!

Let me remind the NPS guides what we do know. Many today may not realize that there was an active clergy (Presbyterian minister John Witherspoon) among the signers of the Declaration of Independence. And two others had been previously ministers. Others were sons of clergy. Virtually all were Protestant Christians. Most signers of the Constitution were also Protestant Christians, except two, Carroll and Fitzsimons, who were Roman Catholics.

Among the signers of the Declaration of Independence alone, Christian confessions or affirmations of faith can also be easily found among the writings, speeches or actions of most, including Samuel Adams, Josiah Bartlett, Benjamin Franklin, Elbridge Gerry, John Hancock, Samuel Huntington, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas McKean, John Morton, Robert Treat Paine, Benjamin Rush, Roger Sherman, Richard Stockton, Thomas Stone, John Witherspoon, Oliver Wolcott, etc.⁴⁴

The same is true of the writings, actions and/or practices of the signers of the Constitution, like Gunning Bedford, Jacob Broom, Charles Carroll, John Dickinson, Alexander Hamilton, John Hart, William Samuel Johnson, James Madison, James McHenry, Gouverneur Morris, William Paterson, Roger Sherman, etc.⁴⁵ (Remember, these don't include a long list of others who influenced, aided the influence, ratified or defended the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution).

M.E. Bradford, late history professor at the University of Dallas, discovered that at least 50, perhaps 52, of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention professed to be orthodox, Trinitarian believers who were in good standing at various Christian churches. Bradford found that there were 28 Episcopalians, 8 Presbyterians, 7 Congregationalists, 2 Lutherans, 2 Dutch Reformed, 2 Methodists, 2 Roman Catholics, and only 3 Deists.⁴⁶

Even according to "Founders: A Brief Overview" on the National Archives Experience website⁴⁷ and "Signers of the Constitution: Biographical Sketches," National Park Service website,⁴⁸ "Williamson, Madison, Ellsworth, and possibly others had studied theology but had never been ordained." Abraham Baldwin was a minister. Often these men were influential in the creation of their home state constitutions, and every state constitution was created with recognition, allegiance to and/or dependence upon Almighty God.⁴⁹

Virtually every signer received an education (public or otherwise) that was steeped in the Judeo-Christian religion. As you know, most of our early prestigious universities in America were embedded in theological training (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, etc.). It is estimated that nearly half (24 of 56) of the signers of the Declaration of Independence had eighteenth-century equivalents of bible college or seminary degrees.⁵⁰



Christ Church in Philadelphia

John Witherspoon, another signer of the Declaration of Independence, explained the sentiment of most of the founders, when he explained these patriotic qualities: "He is the best friend to American liberty, who is most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion, and who set himself with the greatest firmness to bear down on profanity and immorality of every kind. Whoever is an avowed enemy of God, I scruple not to call him an enemy to his country."⁵¹

Our second President John Adams, who assisted Thomas Jefferson in drafting The Declaration of Independence, delivered these words on October 11, 1798 in a military address, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

And to what religion was Adams referring? He gave us an answer when he wrote, "The general principles on which the Fathers achieved independence were the only Principles in which that beautiful Assembly of young Gentlemen could Unite...And what were these general Principles? I answer, the general Principles of Christianity, in which all these Sects were united."⁵²

How much clearer can it be? America was founded as a Christian nation, even though it provided a legal religious openness for the practice of all other faiths. Our children and grandchildren must understand these things about our history. And if their teachers or NPS guides won't teach them, then their parents and grandparents must.

Even the Library of Congress website⁵³ readily confesses and teaches that on the intricate inter-workings of Congress and Christianity:

Although the Articles of Confederation did not officially authorize Congress to concern itself with religion, the citizenry did not object to such activities. This lack of objection suggests that both the legislators and the public considered it appropriate for the national government to promote a nondenominational, nonpolemical Christianity.

Congress appointed chaplains for itself and the armed forces, sponsored the publication of a Bible, imposed Christian morality on the armed forces, and granted public lands to promote Christianity among the Indians. National days of thanksgiving and of "humiliation, fasting, and

prayer" were proclaimed by Congress at least twice a year throughout the war. Congress was guided by "covenant theology," a Reformation doctrine especially dear to New England Puritans, which held that God bound himself in an agreement with a nation and its people. This agreement stipulated that they "should be prosperous or afflicted, according as their general Obedience or Disobedience thereto appears." Wars and revolutions were, accordingly, considered afflictions, as divine punishments for sin, from which a nation could rescue itself by repentance and reformation.

The first national government of the United States was convinced that the "public prosperity" of a society depended on the vitality of its religion. Nothing less than a "spirit of universal reformation among all ranks and degrees of our citizens," Congress declared to the American people, would "make us a holy, that so we may be a happy people."



Inside Christ Church—visitors checking out the pew of George Washington, John Adams, etc.

No wonder James Madison, the principle author of the Constitution and our fourth president, wrote in *Memorial and Remonstrance*, 1785: "It is the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage, and such only, as he believes to be acceptable to him. This duty is precedent both in order of time and degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society. Before any man can be considered as a member of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governor of the Universe."

By the way, while it was good to see in the teacher-training materials on Independence website (in the article "Daily Life and Diversity in 18th Century Philadelphia") some inclusions on Bishop William White (rector of several churches in Philadelphia, chaplain of the continental congress, etc), the historical content was again very, very scant as to the religious background, beliefs, practices and contributions of the founders. About the most reported is: "Christ Church started in 1695 as an Anglican Church of England and is still in use today as an Episcopal Church. Its members included signers of the Declaration of Independence, colonial leaders, and everyday citizens. Many famous people are buried in its burial ground, including Ben Franklin."



George Washington statue and Independence Hall

Conclusion

When America's founders debated and adopted the Declaration of Independence in Independence Hall in Philadelphia, they unanimously affirmed that we were "endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights." 250 years later I'm certain they'd be shocked to hear any NPS tour guide in Independence Hall of all places teaching visitors that they (the founders) were a bunch of atheists, non-religious or even quasi-religious citizens and leaders.

The question is, as the unfortunate courses of other historic parks and monuments (see other stories at www.NationalTreasures.org or detailed in Chuck Norris's *New York Times* bestseller "Black Belt Patriotism"—www.BlackBeltPatriotism.com), will Independence Hall become independent from God in its American history too? With over 2 million visitors alone in 2009,⁵⁴ over the years how many have already been taught the same lies and half-truths about our founders' religious beliefs, practice and passions?

Again, I know you might be tempted to say this is an isolated case, as I have initially heard that from other national parks who have also revised their religious history, but I would be willing to bet that, while I'm sure some tour guides hit the mark regarding America's religious history, if our NPS guide said what he did, more than you probably know are regurgitating the same skeptical and revisionist materials.

I guess what I'm asking is threefold.

First, could you please verify that the training materials for the NPS tour guides at Independence Hall include accurate religious background information on those who drafted, debated, adopted and signed the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution?

Second, could you please verify that NPS tour guides themselves are educated and equipped to talk and teach adequately about our country's and founders' rich religious heritage (which was deeply Judeo-Christian, as you know)?

Third, could you please have your website overseers reconsider the information and training materials there for visitors, teachers and students, in light of the relatively scant history given there about the influence of religion (particularly Judeo-Christianity)?⁵⁵ Again, with all the extensive religious background, influence, information and contributions of our founders on our early American republic, why not have at least one or a couple articles solely designated to "Religion and our founders" or

“Religion and our early republic” placed under the website existing categories: “Curriculum Materials”⁵⁶ and/or “Other Resources”⁵⁷?

Again, I respectfully ask you, to ponder what the NPS guide said to one hundred of us about the religion of our founders in the Independence Hall tour, and ask yourself, “Is this what we really want our adults and students who visit this historic site by the millions each year to learn?”

- (1) “There is no record that George Washington ever attended church!”
- (2) While the NPS guide physically hunched over, mimicked and mocked one carrying and swinging an oversized bible in his hand, he said to the crowd: “Even if I said the founders were Christians, how could we really know? Just because people carry a big ol’ Bible in their hand, they can still be atheists!”
- (3) “Most of these men owned slaves. How could good Christians do that?”
- (4) “We know that Benjamin Franklin was a deist.”
- (5) “We don’t really know for sure about their religion. It’s open for interpretation. You’ll have to do your own study on that.”

I appreciate your valuable time in this important matter, as I know you are taken to many things.

If you have any personal questions, don’t hesitate to contact me personally.

I eagerly await your response.

Respectfully,

Todd DuBord (M.Div.)
Chaplain for Top Kick Productions
(A Chuck Norris enterprise)
info@nationaltreasures.org
www.NationalTreasures.org

cc: Partners of Independence Hall-- <http://www.nps.gov/inde/parkmgmt/partners.htm>
Director of the National Park Service, Mary Bomar.
Director of Mt. Vernon



IN REPLY REFER TO:

A3815

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

143 S. 3rd Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

OCT 15 2010



Pastor Todd DuBord
Chaplain, Top Kick Productions
380 Main Street, Suite B
Chester, California 96020

Dear Pastor DuBord:

Thank you for taking the time to comment on your visit to Independence National Historical Park. It is our wish that everyone has a positive experience when visiting, and we appreciate the value of any negative input we receive which allows us to improve our skills.

Independence National Historical Park contains some of the most important sites related to the founding of the United States, and part of our mission is to educate visitors about these sites and ensure that visitors draw inspiration from their time here. The number, scope, and complexity of the stories that could be told on a tour of Independence Hall are enormous. Each guided tour can be only 30 minutes long, which does not afford the opportunity to cover all potential material adequately. Each ranger leads a tour in his or her own way, weaving stories and information around core topics such as the drafting of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. Our staff is taught to present tours from multiple points of view and allow visitors to draw their own conclusions or, hopefully, be inspired enough to seek out more information on their own.

Park staff receive training in subject matter content, including the historical debates over religious freedom and the significance of religion in 18th century life. Park rangers should be able to respond to most questions posed by visitors on a wide variety of topics but may not always have the time to discuss an issue at length before needing to move on to the next program. We regret that your guide may not have handled himself as deftly as we would prefer and that he was not able to get his point across in a clear and successful manner. I have spoken with the ranger involved, who identified himself to me. The upcoming training program for all park interpreters includes refresher training on this subject.

A visit to Independence Hall should reinforce the idea of liberty and respect for all people and we regret that this did not happen during your visit. I hope that your next visit to Philadelphia is a more enjoyable one.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia MacLeod". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Cynthia" and last name "MacLeod" clearly legible.

Cynthia MacLeod
Superintendent

From the desk of:
Todd A. DuBord
Chaplain of Top Kick Productions

11/30/10

Mrs. Cindy MacLeod
Superintendent of Independence National Historical Park
143 S. Third Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Mrs. MacLeod:

I am in receipt of your response letter to me, dated (by stamp only) Oct. 15, 2010. Unfortunately, it was neither sent to my return address nor an address that even exists in my town. And, if I were not to know personally the postmaster and his colleagues, I might have never received it.

Nevertheless, I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to write me back about our tour group's grievance with the National Park Service (NPS) regarding our NPS guide's historical fabrications and errors about our founding fathers at Independence Hall, Philadelphia. Our grievance and concern goes far beyond us, however, as we are concerned that the millions of others (including school children from across the nation) who visit there each year don't experience what we did.

In my previous letter to you and 30 pages of subsequent research (posted now on my website at www.CrossFireUSA.org), I exhaustively detailed a rebuttal regarding what the NPS ranger presented and why dozens of us on the tour were infuriated with his false and misleading information about our founders religious life and beliefs. Specifically, our primary grievance was based upon the following five core statements he made, before elaborating on each point:

- (6) "There is no record that George Washington ever attended church!"⁵⁸
- (7) While the NPS ranger physically hunched over, mimicked and mocked one carrying and swinging an oversized bible in his hand, he said to the crowd: "Even if I said the founders were Christians, how could we really know? Just because people carry a big ol' Bible in their hand, they can still be atheists!"
- (8) "Most of these men owned slaves. How could good Christians do that?"
- (9) "We know that Benjamin Franklin was a deist."
- (10) "We don't really know for sure about their religion. It's open for interpretation. You'll have to do your own study on that."

Again, his sentiment was bad enough in that he retorted with only, and I mean only, negative comments on the founders' religious views and practice, but that they were also lies or half-truths clearly used to attack and undermine their faiths. In the very house in which our founders adopted a Creator-filled Declaration of Independence, should we not have expected at least one positive comment was made about any one of the founders' Christian faiths?

I do not wish to disrespect you or others at Independence Hall, but it was genuinely sad to read how your letter to me softened and even sidestepped the NPS ranger's culpability by brushing over the blatant historical lies taught by him. And your letter raised further flags about the possible deficiencies in the Independence Hall training system, by stating that, though receiving some education about 18th century American religion, "Each ranger leads a tour in his or her own way,...allow[ing] visitors to draw their own conclusions."

But first, you responded in your letter, "Park staff receive training in subject matter content, including the historical debates over religious freedom and the significance in 18th century life." If that were the case, then our park ranger was obviously absent from those days of training or he received his false information from the training he was given. I can't imagine what your religious education training materials contain, if the NPS ranger's teaching was reflective of it. How else is our tour group supposed to reconcile the NPS ranger's lies about our early republic with your words that they are trained on the subject?

As a taxpayer who pays for NPS operation, I requested from you in my first letter a copy of the NPS guides' religious training materials, so that I might convey to others in the group that they are properly trained. I'll ask again as I did in the first letter: might I receive a copy of that training material, or is it confidential or all lecture material? Once trained, are the NPS rangers asked to lead the trainers on test tours, who, in turn, grill the rangers with even the hottest of questions, to assure they can handle them with tact, attitude and accuracy? Are they tested on their ability to separate personal bias from accurate historical instruction? Again, if this were done, our NPS ranger might not have got so defensive and antagonistic.

You further wrote, "Park rangers should be able to respond to most questions posed by visitors on a wide variety of topics but may not always have the time to discuss an issue at length before needing to move on to the next program." The problem is: even when he had sufficient time, our NPS ranger was unable to answer or tell the truth about a basic question about our founders' religious affiliation. If he didn't know the answers, he should have simply stated so after I asked my question (again, which he solicited during a Q&A time), instead of going on an exclusively negative diatribe against their religious lifestyles and beliefs.

In your letter, you borderline condoned and defended the NPS ranger, with whom you said you spoke personally, by writing, "We regret that your guide may not have handled himself as deftly as we would prefer and that he was not able to get his point across in a clear and successful manner." On the contrary, he was "able to get his point across clear and successful" and with so much absolute conviction and antagonism that it led all of us to engage in this grievance campaign. What's not "clear" about his above five negative statements about our founder's Christianity?

Chiefly, is your official statement of culpability really contained within the few words, “We regret that your guide may not have handled himself as deftly as we would prefer”? Do you not see how that comes across as minimizing his falsities? It further gives little, if no, assurance that what we experienced will not happen to another group in the future. Quite frankly, we assumed a person of your stature would convey a strong denunciation, rather than his quasi-defense and a nominal ordering of a “refresher” course on the subject.

Still, we’re sincerely grateful to read in your letter that the “upcoming training program for all park interpreters includes refresher training on this subject,” which I assume is the religious (and Christian) background of our founders? We are unconvinced, however, as to the impact of this “refresher” course, being that we do not know if its “refresher predecessor” or the original training contained anything different than the very distortions our NPS ranger passed on to us during our tour. In other words, what power does a “refresher” course have if the original training information is deficient? Have you had revised or updated the original training information regarding our founders’ religious affiliation, belief and practice? There is no way for us to know or be assured of that in the letter your response wrote.

We do realize, as you wrote in your letter, “The number, scope and complexity of the stories that could be told on a tour on Independence Hall are enormous...as [a tour] can be only 30 minutes long...” Again, the problem isn’t how many stories were told, but that all of them discussed about our founders Judeo-Christian belief and practice were negative, misleading and/or flat out lies and biased distortions of history. Again, having been a teacher to teachers for three decades, I can almost guarantee by the presentation alone that there is either a severe deficiency in the training regarding the religious (and Christian) education and practice of our founders, or your guides are taking liberty to invoke their own bias, despite it being false—something I fear now is not only being allowed but condoned.

This leads me to what is perhaps a sign of the systemic problem that served as a catalyst for our NPS guide’s historical distortions. You wrote, “Each ranger leads a tour in his or her own way, weaving stories and information around core topics such as the drafting of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.” Any veteran trainer knows that such directional fluidity in this context will give sway to personal bias and even the perpetuity of falsehoods from a politically-correct culture. Or do we not think that the admonition that “each ranger leads a tour in his or her own way” will be interpreted and applied as “each ranger teaches the content of a tour as he or she prefers”?

You added, “Our staff is taught to present tours from multiple points of view and allow visitors to draw their own conclusions....” About what subjects? All of them? The signers’ names? Who wrote the two key documents? The history of their drafting or ratification? Who was present at the First Continental Congress? Who sat in which chair in Independence Hall? Or are you speaking reference to our founders’ religious affiliation when you say that your staff presents “multiple points of view and allow visitors to draw their own conclusions”? Because, if that’s the case, that is not what our NPS ranger did at all. It is simply unclear to what subjects or topics are you referring in the words “multiple points of view,” or are you referring to the guests’ multiple points of view? And regarding which subjects do you “allow visitors to draw their own

conclusions?” My hope is that you are not supporting the #5 statement our NPS guide made: “We don’t really know for sure about their religion. It’s open for interpretation. You’ll have to do your own study on that.”

If you are referencing the founders’ religious affiliation or church attendance, I, as one formally trained in religious history, apologetics and interpretation, can assure you that the subject is definitely no mystery. There is simply no rocket science (or advanced religious education) needed to answer my simple question to the NPS ranger: “Can you tell me a little about these founders’ religious affiliation?” If he had the most minimal education on the matter, he could have easily conveyed any part of the information that I also conveyed on page 20 of my initial letter and research to you, but he contradicted their clear, non-debatable biographical facts at every turn:

Many today may not realize that there was an active clergy (Presbyterian minister John Witherspoon) among the signers of the Declaration of Independence. And two others had been previously ministers. Others were sons of clergy. Virtually all were Protestant Christians. Most signers of the Constitution were also Protestant Christians, except two, Carroll and Fitzsimons, who were Roman Catholics.

Among the signers of the Declaration of Independence alone, Christian confessions or affirmations of faith can also be easily found among the writings, speeches or actions of most, including Samuel Adams, Josiah Bartlett, Benjamin Franklin, Elbridge Gerry, John Hancock, Samuel Huntington, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas McKean, John Morton, Robert Treat Paine, Benjamin Rush, Roger Sherman, Richard Stockton, Thomas Stone, John Witherspoon, Oliver Wolcott, etc.⁵⁹

The same is true of the writings, actions and/or practices of the signers of the Constitution, like Gunning Bedford, Jacob Broom, Charles Carroll, John Dickinson, Alexander Hamilton, John Hart, William Samuel Johnson, James Madison, James McHenry, Gouverneur Morris, William Paterson, Roger Sherman, etc.⁶⁰ (Remember, these don’t include a long list of others who influenced, aided the influence, ratified or defended the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution).

M.E. Bradford, late history professor at the University of Dallas, discovered that at least 50, perhaps 52, of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention professed to be orthodox, Trinitarian believers who were in good standing at various Christian churches. Bradford found that there were 28 Episcopalians, 8 Presbyterians, 7 Congregationalists, 2 Lutherans, 2 Dutch Reformed, 2 Methodists, 2 Roman Catholics, and only 3 Deists.⁶¹

Even according to “Founders: A Brief Overview” on the National Archives Experience website⁶² and “Signers of the Constitution: Biographical Sketches,” National Park Service website,⁶³ “Williamson, Madison, Ellsworth, and possibly others had studied theology but had never been ordained.” Abraham Baldwin was a minister. Often these men were influential in the creation of their home state constitutions, and every state constitution was created with recognition, allegiance to and/or dependence upon Almighty God.⁶⁴

Virtually every signer received an education (public or otherwise) that was steeped in the Judeo-Christian religion. As you know, most of our early prestigious universities in America were embedded in theological training (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, etc.). It is estimated that nearly half (24 of 56) of the signers of the Declaration of Independence had eighteenth-century equivalents of bible college or seminary degrees.⁶⁵

Most of the preceding information regarding America's founders' religious affiliation and practice is neither conjecturable points nor a matter of private interpretation. It is straightforward biography. For example, whether or not George Washington attended church is not debatable history—it's historical fact. He attended St. Paul's Chapel in New York, was a member and vestryman of Pohick Church and Christ's Church in Virginia, as well as Christ Church in Philadelphia, which was only blocks away from Independence Hall. (In my initial letter, I even personally transcribed for you the entire 5-minute video of Washington's Christian belief and practice, played for visitors at his estate, Mt. Vernon, in Virginia—if it is plainly taught at his own estate, shouldn't it also be so taught where he presided as president of the Constitutional Convention?). What's definitely untrue is what our NPS ranger shared in Independence Hall, "There is no record that George Washington ever attended church."

In the end, teaching on multiple points of view is fine, but when those points of view are false and misleading histories, how else are visitors to "draw their own conclusions" about what was true? Is that really the way the tours should be conducted at what you even admit in your letter is "the most important sites related to the founding of the United States"? If it wouldn't be tolerated in any of the thousands of universities across the country, should it be tolerated in one of the "most important sites related to the founding of the United States"?

Again, my main concern is content, not methodology. So, let me reiterate, that our NPS ranger was VERY well versed and educated on every other aspect (subject) of the founders he addressed via his presentation and the questions asked by the audience, except our founders' religious affiliation and practice. It was not a matter of interpretation. He completely and entirely botched that single subject. And the question we still keep asking ourselves is: how could there be such a polarization in his knowledge, education and presentation? If not having systemic origin in your training, then why has he been able to convey such religious bias and lies? And for how long has he? Or how long would he have been able to do so, if no one came along and contested what he was saying?

Lastly, if I may indulge you a moment further, I'll mention just one more point I wrote to you in my first letter, which was very important but not addressed in your response letter. While it was good to see in the teacher-training materials on Independence National Historic Park's website (in the article "Daily Life and Diversity in 18th Century Philadelphia") some inclusions on Bishop William White (rector of several churches in Philadelphia, chaplain of the continental congress, etc), the historical-religious content regarding our founders' Christian background, beliefs, practices and contributions was virtually non-existent. About the most reported is: "Christ Church started in 1695 as an Anglican Church of England and is still in use today as an Episcopal Church. Its members included signers of the Declaration of Independence, colonial leaders, and everyday citizens. Many famous people are buried in its burial ground, including Ben Franklin." Moreover, the curriculum material for teachers about Benjamin Franklin's life (a whopping 56 pages for K-12 grades) does not mention one iota about Franklin's religious background, beliefs, contributions, attendance at church, etc.⁶⁶ Any chance anything more about our founders' religious affiliation and practice can be added to your website?

Mrs. MacLeod, as I mentioned in the beginning of this letter, I sincerely don't wish to disrespect you or the NPS ranger who led our tour. And I assume that you must want the best and most accurate teachings at all the historic places under your auspices. I don't want to write a 3rd time nor be a further hindrance to you. I only wanted to address our grievances as a tour group, and, in turn, give our tour group and now a host of others across America, who have been notified of this event by media and the Internet, the assurance of clear culpability that there was a flagrant violation of the retelling of religious history at the Independence Hall. In addition, as taxpayers who pay for NPS and tours, we need the assurance that this will not happen again to others (especially school children), who may not have historians on their tour, as we did, who knew better and could offer corrections.

Unfortunately, in my own estimation and I believe most who will read it, your response letter curtails NPS culpability and assurance that a similar situation might arise again in the future for visitors touring Independence Hall. But I'll allow others to make their own judgments as they read our letters for themselves, continue to ask your rangers and tour guides questions on our founders' Christian belief and practice, etc.

I will be posting yours and my correspondence on my website and notifying various media outlets of this revisionist episode update, which they are expecting. I will also continue to encourage citizen response and accountability of Independence Hall tour guides and executives by emailing, writing and calling per the information found on your website at <http://www.nps.gov/inde/contacts.htm>, until there is a satisfactory and longstanding resolution to what we experienced.

I assure you that we want the very same thing you do—the best and most accurate tours at Independence Hall.

Respectfully,

Todd DuBord
Chaplain of Top Kick Productions
www.NationalTreasures.org

NOTE: To date, there has never been any official response from Superintendent Cindy MacLeod or any Independence Hall official to this 2nd letter from Todd

Endnotes

¹ <http://www.skylinechurch.org/images/NGAtourBrochure.pdf>

² <http://www.nps.gov/inde/parkmgmt/statistics.htm>

³ When the NPS guide started speaking his historical distortions, I quickly grabbed a piece of paper and started scribbling many statements that he was saying. I initially recollected that he said the brief falsity, “George Washington didn’t even attend church!” But then, having spoken to several others who were with me on the tour, I realized that the NPS guide’s statement actually compounded his historical distortions by teaching that George Washington not only didn’t attend church, but that there was no record or evidence to support that he did.

⁴ Though it must be said that, at one point, Washington quit partaking in the Lord’s Supper or communion. Just before it was served, Washington would get up and leave the service. Differing theories exist as to why he didn’t partake. As a pastor and biblical teacher, it is very possible that he refused to participate in the Eucharist out of respect for the divine elements and him not feeling worthy for one reason or another—maybe even from an action as far back as his battles in the Revolutionary war. Despite God’s unconditional love and forgiveness, I’ve known many through twenty years in the pastorate who refrained out of respect for one personal reason or another, but it had no bearing on the sincerity of the faith—their refrain only referenced their deep commitment all the more.

⁵ Though committed to church attendance, Washington’s diaries tell us that he would not always attend church services on Sundays due to his multiple public and private responsibilities as well as bad weather.

⁶ http://www.pbs.org/georgewashington/milestones/inaugural_address_about.html

⁷ http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/american_originals/inaugtxt.html

⁸ George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington*, John C. Fitzpatrick, editor (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), Vol. XV, p. 55, to the Delaware Indian Chiefs on May 12, 1779.

⁹ <http://www.ushistory.org/valleyforge/washington/prayer.html>

¹⁰ Washington, George. Farewell Address, 1796. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp

¹¹ <http://www.mountvernon.org/visit/plan/index.cfm/pid/885/>

¹² http://wilstar.com/holidays/wash_thanks.html

¹³ Letter from George Washington to Benedict Arnold, *September 17, 1775*

¹⁴ **Letter to the United Baptist Churches in Virginia, May 10, 1789**

¹⁵ <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/haven-haven.html>

¹⁶ First Inaugural Address-- http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/american_originals/inaugtxt.html

¹⁷ Franklin, Ben. “Information to those who would remove to America,” 1787

¹⁸ Barton, David. “Affidavit in Support of the Ten Commandments” from Wall Builders

<http://www.wallbuilders.com/LIBissuesArticles.asp?id=87>

¹⁹ Article VI of Constitution: “...no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.”

²⁰ To Jedidiah Morse on February 28, 1797. It is interesting to note that, though a majority of Americans continue to claim to be Christians, a Gallup Poll discovered 45 percent of us would support an atheist for president. Jones, Jeffrey, “Some Americans Reluctant to Vote for Mormon, 72-Year-Old Presidential Candidates,” Gallup Poll, 2/20/07 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/26611/Some-Americans-Reluctant-Vote-Mormon-72YearOld-Presidential-Candidates.aspx>

²¹ Thomas Paine, *Thoughts on Defensive War*, 1775

²² Justice James Wilson, a signer of the Constitution, explained the relation between natural law and nature’s God: “As promulgated by reason and the moral sense, it has been called natural [law]; as promulgated by the Holy Scriptures, it has been called revealed law. As addressed to men, it has been denominated the law of nature; as addressed to political societies, it has been denominated the law of

nations. But it should always be remembered that this law, natural or revealed, made for men or for nations, flows from the same divine source; it is the law of God....What we do, indeed, must be founded on what He has done; and the deficiencies of our laws must be supplied by the perfections of His."

Barton, David. "Affidavit in Support of the Ten Commandments," Wall Builders

<http://www.wallbuilders.com/LIBissuesArticles.asp?id=87>

²³ To James McHenry, on November 4, 1800,

²⁴ George F. Cooledge & Brother: New York

²⁵ Benjamin Franklin, On that Odd Letter of the Drum, 1730

²⁶

http://www.christchurchphila.org/Historic_Christ_Church/Church/Church_History_and_Those_Who_Attended/86/

²⁷ Franklin, Benjamin. "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin," p. 389. This was a motion by Franklin to start each day of the convention with daily prayers, particularly because after five weeks of meeting, the Constitutional Convention was experiencing gridlock and divisions. James Madison recollected that "Hamilton & several others expressed their apprehensions that however proper such a resolution might have been at the beginning of the convention, it might at this late day, 1. bring on it some disagreeable animadversions. & 2. lead the public to believe that the embarrassments and dissensions within the Convention, had suggested this measure."

http://www.beliefnet.com/resourcelib/docs/21/Benjamin_Franklins_Request_for_Prayers_at_the_Constitutional_1.html So it was later said by Dr. Franklin ("Memoirs") that: "The convention, except for the three or four persons, thought prayers unnecessary." But it was only because his constituents believed the public would believe, that after meeting for five weeks and still not being in harmony over their congressional work, the motion for daily prayer would accentuate their disagreements in the public's eyes—so they agreed to keep their prayers to a private matter.

²⁸ <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel04.html>

²⁹ <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/f0402as.jpg>

³⁰ <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/franklin-congress.html>

³¹ [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=lljc&fileName=008/lljc008.db&recNum=360&itemLink=r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DO)

[bin/ampage?collId=lljc&fileName=008/lljc008.db&recNum=360&itemLink=r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DO](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=lljc&fileName=008/lljc008.db&recNum=360&itemLink=r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DO)
[CID+@lit\(jc00897\)\)%230080361&linkText=1](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=lljc&fileName=008/lljc008.db&recNum=360&itemLink=r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DO) This biblical import was affirmed by the thirteen Colonies by a narrow 7-6 vote, but it was not enacted upon by Congress, probably because Robert Aitken (1734-1802), a Philadelphia printer and the first to publish a Bible in this U.S., was already busy printing the New Testament in 1777, which would also be followed in 1778, 1779, and 1781. (At first the committee thought domestic productions too expensive, only to learn in the end that it was being done by Aitken at less cost than it would be to import).

³² http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html

³³ Carl Van Doren. *Benjamin Franklin*. New York: The Viking Press, 1938, p. 777

³⁴

<http://www.nps.gov/inde/forteachers/upload/Benjamin%20Franklin%20Lesson%20Plans%20Feb%202010.pdf>

³⁵ John Adams to Dr. Price, 1785. "Americans are so enamored of equality that they would rather be equal in slavery than unequal in freedom." Alexis de Tocqueville

³⁶ To John Jay, August 1, 1786.

³⁷ "It is a pity that such feelings should exist; but they are the offspring of human nature, which is not what it should be, nor what it once was." John Jay to Judge Peters Bedford, January 25, 1819.

³⁸ "Abigail Adams writes to her husband, John, who is attending the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, asking that he and the other men--who were at work on the Declaration of Independence--'Remember the Ladies.' John responds with humor. The Declaration's wording specifies that "all men are created equal." <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/naw/nawstime.html>

³⁹ To Patrick Henry, June 3, 1776

⁴⁰ George Washington to John Jay, August 15, 1786 in John Jay's Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay (Vol. 3), p. 208

⁴¹ George Washington also demonstrated the value of women for many, "Nor would I rob the fairer sex of their share in the glory of a revolution so honorable to human nature, for, indeed, I think you ladies are in the number of the best patriots America can boast." From George Washington to Annie Boudinot Stockton, August 31, 1788

⁴² West, Thomas G. Vindicating the Founders, p. 5.

⁴³ "Quest for Freedom: Abolitionists and the Underground Railroad"--

http://www.nps.gov/inde/forteachers/upload/Underground_Railroad_Lesson_Plans-3.pdf

⁴⁴ <http://www.wallbuilders.com/LIBissuesArticles.asp?id=8755>

⁴⁵ <http://www.wallbuilders.com/LIBissuesArticles.asp?id=8755>

⁴⁶ M.E. Bradford, A Worthy Company: Brief Lives of the Framers of the United States Constitution, 1982.

⁴⁷ http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_founding_fathers_overview.html

⁴⁸ http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/constitution/bio.htm

⁴⁹ http://www.usconstitution.net/states_god.html

⁵⁰ <http://www.wallbuilders.com/LIBissuesArticles.asp?id=100>

⁵¹ John Witherspoon, 1776

⁵² To Thomas Jefferson on June 28, 1813. There are many other quotes like these. For example, John Quincy Adams, America's sixth President, spoke at an Independence Day celebration in 1837, "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 corner stone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity...? Finally, Andrew Jackson, our seventh President, pointed to a Bible as he lay sick near death in 1845 and said, "That book, sir, is the rock on which our republic rests."

⁵³ <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel04.html>

⁵⁴ <http://www.nps.gov/inde/parkmgmt/statistics.htm>

⁵⁵ <http://www.nps.gov/inde/forteachers/>

⁵⁶ <http://www.nps.gov/inde/forteachers/curriculummaterials.htm>

⁵⁷ <http://www.nps.gov/inde/forteachers/otherresources.htm>

⁵⁸ When the NPS guide started speaking his historical distortions, I quickly grabbed a piece of paper and started scribbling many statements that he was saying. I initially recollected that he said the brief falsity, "George Washington didn't even attend church!" But then, having spoken to several others who were with me on the tour, I realized that the NPS guide's statement actually compounded his historical distortions by teaching that George Washington not only didn't attend church, but that there was no record or evidence to support that he did.

⁵⁹ <http://www.wallbuilders.com/LIBissuesArticles.asp?id=8755>

⁶⁰ <http://www.wallbuilders.com/LIBissuesArticles.asp?id=8755>

⁶¹ M.E. Bradford, A Worthy Company: Brief Lives of the Framers of the United States Constitution, 1982.

⁶² http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_founding_fathers_overview.html

⁶³ http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/constitution/bio.htm

⁶⁴ http://www.usconstitution.net/states_god.html

⁶⁵ <http://www.wallbuilders.com/LIBissuesArticles.asp?id=100>

⁶⁶ <http://www.nps.gov/inde/forteachers/upload/Benjamin%20Franklin%20Lesson%20Plans%20Feb%202010.pdf>