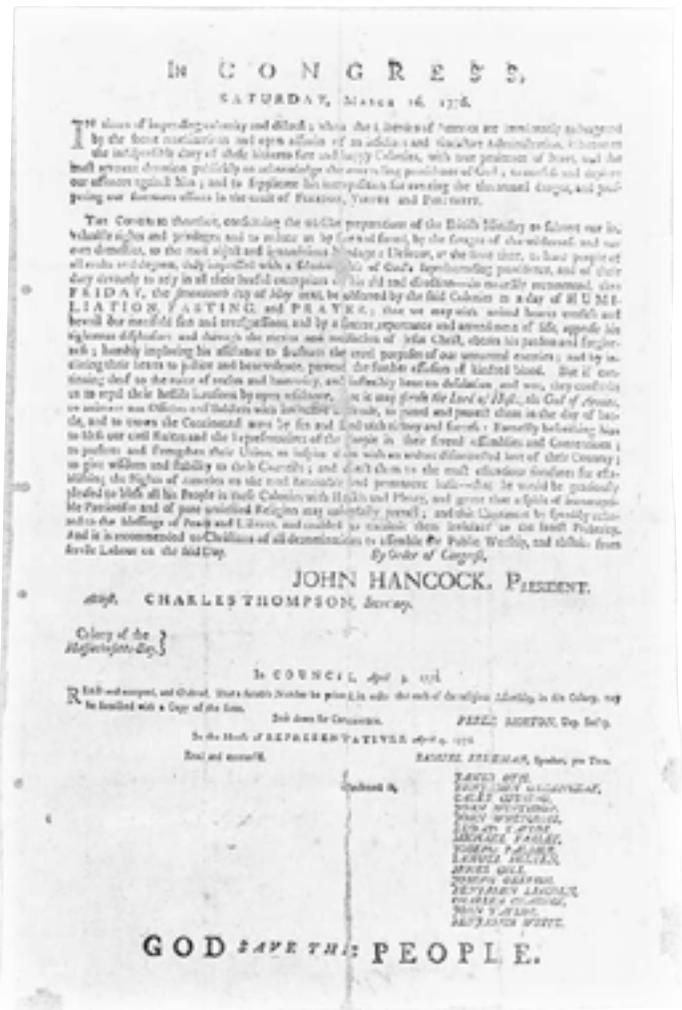


Jesus Christ and the Founding of America

By Gary DeMar

DEISM WAS so prevalent in the founding of America, then why don't the official documents reflect deistic beliefs? Congress proclaimed days of fasting and thanksgiving annually throughout the period when the War for Independence was fought. On March 16, 1776, Congress called for a "day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer" throughout the colonies. The Proclamation stated that it is the "indispensable duty of these hitherto free and happy colonies, with true penitence of heart, and the most reverent devotion, publicly to acknowledge the overruling providence of God; to confess and deplore our offences against him; and to supplicate his interposition for averting the threatened danger, and prospering our strenuous efforts in the cause of freedom, virtue, and posterity." There was the recognition of "God's superintending providence." These statements alone are enough to dispel any notion of deism. But there's more. The people were called on to bewail their "manifold sins and transgressions, and, by a sincere repentance and amendment of life, appease his righteous

displeasure, and, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, obtain his pardon and forgiveness; humbly imploring his assistance to frustrate the cruel purposes of our unnatural enemies." James H. Hutson writes that "This document is characteristic of the numerous fasts and thanksgiving day proclamations issued by Congress throughout the Revolutionary War. All contained Christian language, though not in every case a specific



THE COUNCIL and ASSEMBLY of said State, have ordered,-- that the following Proclamation of the Hon'ble Continental CONGRESS, be printed, and sent to the several religious Societies in this State, to be observed, agreeable to the Directions therein.

M. WEARE, (PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL.

E. THOMPSON, Secretary.

A PROCLAMATION
For a General THANKSGIVING,
Throughout the United-States of AMERICA.

In CONGRESS, November 1, 1777.

FORASMUCH as it is the indispensible Duty of all Men, to adore the superintending Providence of Almighty GOD, to acknowledge with Gratitude their Obligations to Him for Benefits received, and to implore such further Blessings as they stand in Need of; and it having pleased Him, in his abundant Mercy, not only to continue to us the innumerable Benefits of his common Providence; but also to bestow upon us, in the Prosecution of a just and necessary WAR, for the Defence and Establishment of our just and inalienable Rights and Liberties; particularly, in that he hath been pleased in so great a Manner to prosper the Means used for the Support of our Troops, and to crown our Arms with most signal Success;

It is therefore recommended to the Legislative or executive Powers of these several UNITED STATES, to set apart THURSDAY, the eighteenth Day of December next, for solemn THANKSGIVING and PRAYER; That at one Time, and with one Voice, the good People may express the grateful Feelings of their Hearts, and acknowledge themselves to the Service of their Divine Benefactor; and that together with their sincere Acknowledgments and Offerings they may join the penitent Confession of their manifold Sins whereby they had provoked every Favour, and their humble and earnest Supplication that GOD, thro' the Merits of Jesus Christ, would mercifully forgive and blot them out of Remembrance; that it may please him graciously to attend his Blessing on the Government of these States respectively, and prosper the public Council of the whole; to render them his Instruments, under the Providence of Almighty GOD, to secure for their United-States, the growth of all human Blessings, Independence and Peace; that it may please him to prosper the Trade and Manufactures of the People, and the Labour of the Husbandman, that our LAND may yet yield its Increase; to take Schools and Seminaries of Education, so necessary for cultivating the Principles of true Liberty, Virtue, and Duty, under his nourishing Hand; and to prosper the Means of Religion for the Promotion and Enlargement of that Kingdom which consisteth in Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.

And it is further recommended, that public Labour and Fasting, shall at certain Times hereafter, may be recommending the Purposes of this Appointment, be ordered as to Liberty on Occasion.

Extract from the Minutes.

Attest, CHA. THOMPSON, Secretary.

GOD save the UNITED-STATES of AMERICA.

EXETER: Printed by ZACHARIAH FOSTER, 1777.

invocation of the “merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.” Massachusetts ordered that a “suitable Number” of these proclamations be printed so “that each of the religious Assemblies in this Colony, may be furnished with a Copy of the same” and

that Americans petition God “to prosper the means of religion for the promotion and enlargement of that kingdom which consisteth in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.”²

added the motto “God Save This People” as a substitute for the usual “God Save the King.”¹

On November 1, 1777, the Continental Congress proclaimed a day of public thanksgiving for the recent victory at Saratoga. Congress set December 18, 1777 as a day of thanksgiving on which the American people “may express the grateful feelings of their hearts and consecrate themselves to the service of their divine benefactor” and on which they might “join the penitent confession of their manifold sins . . . that it may please God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of remembrance.” Congress also recommended

Notes

1. James H. Hutson, *Religion and the Founding of the American Republic* (Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress/University Press of New England, 1998), 52, note.
2. www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/vc006494.jpg