

Religion in the 18th Century

The 18th century was a time of tremendous change within America's religious history. As Americans struggled to define themselves as a people and a nation, their religious beliefs transformed with them. In the 1730s and 1740s, many Americans rejected the more austere forms of Christianity for the evangelical denominations created as a result of the Great Awakening. The Great Awakening made Christianity more democratic and open while simultaneously reinforcing traditional gender and racial stereotypes. African Americans were brought to America with their own religious beliefs which many maintained, even in slavery. Some African Americans merged their own beliefs with Christianity creating new amalgamations of both faiths. The rise of Deism among many prominent Americans signaled a shift towards the secular and influenced the writing of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. In spite of this, religious belief remained high and religion played a vital role in the call and fight for independence. Numerous Americans saw the American Revolution as a religious war and saw themselves as a people covenanted with God. When writing the Constitution, the founders struggled to reconcile these ideas while maintaining the separation of church and state, an issue which has been a continued problem throughout America's history.

This guide is designed to help researchers using the Library at Gunston Hall research religion in the 18th century. It is divided into three sections: Religion in Revolutionary America, Religion and the Founders, and Religion in Virginia.

Religion in Revolutionary America

Andrews, Dee E. *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Andrews explains the origins of the early Methodist movement in America. She includes the experience of different social groups within the Methodist church and the appeal and influence the Methodist Movement had on America.

BX 8236 .A53 2000

Davis, Derek H. *Religion and the Continental Congress 1774-1789*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Davis describes the role of religion in the Continental Congress. Davis contradicts traditional views of the Continental Congress and argues that the founders did not seek to make America a religious state.

KF4783 .D385 2000

Dworetz, Steven M. *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism, and the American Revolution*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990.

Dworetz focuses on the merger between John Locke's liberalism and the American clergy in this book. He argues that the clergy used Locke's ideas to justify the Revolution and he examines the impact of Locke's ideals as a motivating force behind the war.

JC 153 .L87 D86 1990

Hoffman, Ronald and Peter J. Albert, ed. *Religion in a Revolutionary Age*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994.

This collection of eleven essays examines two themes; the role of religion in the Revolution and the role of religion in defining America's form of government. The essays study a variety of issues including the faith of women and African Americans, the rise of evangelicals, and the notion of American exceptionalism.

BR 520 .R45 1994

Lutz, Donald and Jack D. Warren. *A Covenanted People: The Religious Tradition and the Origins of American Constitutionalism*. Rhode Island: The John Carter Brown Library, 1987.

In this short book, the authors trace the religious origins of the American Revolution, Constitution, and Bill of Rights. They argue that some founders viewed the Constitution and Bill of Rights as a religious covenant with God.

JK 4 .L88 1987

Reuther, Rosemary Radford and Rosemary Skinner Keller, ed. *Women and Religion in America, Vol. 2: The Colonial and Revolutionary Periods*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983.

This collection of essays dissects the role of women and religion in the 17th and 18th centuries. The essays include a brief synopsis of the topic and end with excerpts from primary source material. Chapters 5-9 deal directly with the 18th century.

BR 515 .W648 1981

Vertical Files:

Includes articles and newspaper clippings

Religion, Anglican

Religion, Roman Catholic

Religion, General

Religion and the Founders

Holmes, David L. *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

In this short book, Holmes succulently explains the faith of the founding fathers. He begins by giving an overview of religious beliefs of the time, specifically explains the beliefs of Deists, and then explains the faith of specific founders.

BL 2747.4 .H63 2006

Jefferson, Thomas. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels*, Dickinson W. Adams and Ruth W. Lester, ed. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983.

This book presents the primary source extracts which Thomas Jefferson took from the Bible entitled *The Philosophy of Jesus* and *The Life and Morals of Jesus*. Both texts include lengthy introductions which overview the religious beliefs of Jefferson.

BS2549 .J5J43 1983

Religion in Virginia

Buckley, Thomas E, Sj. *Church and State in Revolutionary Virginia, 1776-1787.* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977.

Buckley studies the conflicts which took place in Virginia over the issue of religion in the Revolutionary period. He examines the rise of religious legislature, the interaction of the major churches, and the development of the evangelical church.

BR555 .V8B8 1977

Nelson, John K. *A Blessed Company: Parishes, Parsons, and Parishioners in Anglican Virginia, 1690-1776.* Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Nelson details the life and influence of Anglicans in Virginia from the end of the 17th century to the beginning of the American Revolution. He explains the key role the Anglican Church played in the government of Virginia and the rituals and rites practiced by Anglicans in Virginia.

BX 5917 .V8 N399 2001

Rose, Robert. *A View of Virginia by a Scottish Colonial Parson*, ed. Ralph Emmet Fall. Virginia: McClure Press, 1977.

In this primary source, Robert Rose, a Scottish parson who came to Virginia in the 18th century, outlines his daily life in the colony. This provides a first hand account of daily life and religion in Virginia during the mid-1700's.

BX5995 .R65 A33 1977

Scully, Randolph Ferguson. *Religion and the Making of Nat Turner's Virginia: Baptist Community and Conflict, 1740-1840.* Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008.

Ferguson emphasizes the role of race in the evangelical movement in Virginia. He focuses on Nat Turner and the increase of African American involvement in Baptist congregations during the 18th century.

BX6248 .V8 S38 2008