

Ellis Sandoz

Philosophical and Religious Dimensions of the American Founding

The foundation of the American regime was deeply influenced by the rationalist mood of Enlightenment thought, primarily in its English and Scottish aspects. But it began and remained more fundamentally an antimodernist recovery and rearticulation of Western and English constitutionalism on the classical and medieval patterns identified with the seventeenth century of Sir Edward Coke, a principal figure of the Elizabethan Renaissance, and of John Locke, himself a principal enlightener. Moreover, all aspects of the political, constitutional, and philosophical debate were strongly conditioned by an ethics and ontology grounded in the ample range of religious convictions of an American Protestant Christianity dominated by Dissenter or Nonconformist perspectives.

While (given the empirical evidence) all of these elements certainly cannot be homogenized or blended into a perfect harmony and generalized as such, there still remained significant consensus or near agreement on fundamental principles sufficient to sustain independence, fight the revolution, and conclude with the Constitution. This process soon was capped by adoption of the Bill of Rights (a condition of ratification in some states) that affirms natural and traditional liberties of persons and states by placing them beyond the

ordinary reach of majorities. There is no attempt here to deny differences of many kinds, even multitudinous and profound differences. But one must concede that without some sort of effective consensus to structure the new community and to allow its organization for political action in history, there could have been no founding and there would be no United States of America. The thrust of this essay considers several aspects of this consensus and glances at its religious and philosophical underpinnings.

Since novelty and revolution mesmerize contemporary consciousness, the relative lack of novelty in the American founding seems counter-intuitive and requires emphasis at the outset. The institutional forms were new in degree, but the underlying theory was often very old and highly traditional. There is thus a strong contrast with much of our contemporary world and its recent past.

Ellis Sandoz is professor of political science at Louisiana State University and is director of the Eric Voegelin Institute for American Renaissance Studies. He is the author *A Government of Laws: Political Theory, Religion and the American Founding* (LSU Press); and he edited and introduced *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730-1808* (Liberty Press).

To begin with, the conceptions of human existence and of comprehensive reality prevailing during the American founding were not *ideological* in the strict sense of the term. By this at least the following is meant.

The American Founders (as a rule) did not hold out the promise of a humanistic *transformation* of time and the world as a goal within the reach of action and revolution—apart from the traditional Christian faith in the transfiguration of the world at the end of time as consistent with eschatological expectation of the Parousia, the Second Coming of Christ.

The founding was not significantly infected by the radical humanistic egophanic rebellion that supplants God through the apotheosis of “Autonomous Man” as the center and ground of reality. To the contrary, a transcendental-immanent worldview is reflected in the core of the American Founders’ thought, as is plainly expressed in the Declaration of Independence’s proclamation that “all men are Created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.” Perhaps the most persuasive expression of this orientation in reality is voiced in Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Man* (1734). Evoked there is the millennial image of the great chain of being with man the middle link, an image whose genesis lies in the distant antiquity of Anaximander’s *apeiron* as developed by Plato and Aristotle. Pope wrote so compellingly as to make the poem favorite reading for 18th century Americans:¹

Vast Chain of being! which from God began,
Natures aethereal, human, angel, man,
Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,
No glass can reach; from Infinite to thee,
From thee to nothing.

The founding was not “utopian” in expectation nor in the assessment of the world. Thus the reality of the American Founders,

while distinctly hopeful, was nonetheless considered a stable site of human striving in nature and in a process of history governed by beneficent and responsive providence, a time when fallible human beings might seek the joys of life and anticipate the bliss of salvation and eternal beatitude. *Reality* itself was conceived as the four-fold “Man, God, World, and Society” of classical philosophy and traditional understanding. To again illustrate from Pope’s picture of human reality:

Plac’d in this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise and rudely great,
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the stoic pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act or rest;
In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reas’ning but to err;...
Chaos of Thought and Passion all confus’d,
Still by himself abus’d, or disabus’d;
Created half to rise, and half to fall,
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of Truth, in endless error hurl’d;
The glory, jest and riddle of the world.²

Government under such conditions was pronounced (by James Madison in *Federalist* No. 51) the “greatest of all reflections on human nature.” Because human beings are neither angel nor brute but in between, capable of virtue and inclined to vice. The first task of government is to control the governed; the second task is to oblige the rulers to control themselves. “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition.”

We are thus reminded of the cautious view of man as flawed and sinful, graced with reason but inclined to follow passion and selfish interest. Madison’s language in that place of all places in *The Federalist Papers* (No. 51) may be more fully quoted. For there the core constitutional innovation of separation of powers and system of checks and balances is explained as the means of attaining a government of laws and not of men—even though, paradoxically, there are only human beings available

to rule. The underlying analysis for the constitutional mechanisms is sketched as follows:

The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but *experience* has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions.³

Finally—and deserving of utmost consideration—there is the ubiquitous criterion of *experience* just encountered in the passage from *Federalist* No. 51. *Experience*, illumining the present and future by the light and lessons of the past, is *the* cardinal touchstone of validity. It also is the one that indelibly distinguishes the American Founders from those they ironically helped greatly to inspire, the soon-to-appear Jacobin revolutionaries of France inebriated with utopian rationalism. By comparison the American Founders were a sober lot. Thus, in August, 1787, during the Convention, John Dickinson famously observed that “experience must be our only guide. Reason may mislead us.”⁴ Perhaps nothing better marks the mind of the American Founders than this conviction. It runs like a thread through all of their deliberations. Rule of law grounded in both natural and historical jurisprudence distinguishes American constitutionalism, as does also a political order devoted to *salus populi* and to the protection of every individual person’s life, liberty, and property within the limits

of possibility.⁵

What, indeed, may be possible can be decided only by prudential judgment anchored in experience. Briefly to dwell on this bedrock principle, we find Publius in *The Federalist Papers* using such phrases as these: “Let *experience*, the least fallible guide of human opinions, be appealed to” (No. 6); “the best oracle of wisdom, *experience*” (No. 15); “*Experience* is the oracle of truth; and where its responses are unequivocal they ought to be conclusive and sacred” (No. 20); “Let us consult *experience*, the guide that ought always to be followed whenever it can be found” (No. 52); “*experience* is the parent of wisdom” (No. 72).⁶

Alexander Hamilton concludes the *Federalist* (No. 85) with a quotation from David Hume’s *Essays* (1742) which underlines this good sense from our birthright. For Hume demonstrates the abject inability of reason *alone* to guide philosophy toward truth. He thereby finds himself compelled to take account of the whole experiential horizon as context, if reason is reliably to serve inquiry and direct men toward truth and happiness. To do otherwise would be to fall into the hubris of autonomous reason that ends either in the despair or in the ataraxy of radical skepticism—or (more frequently) in the disaster of evoking autonomous Man after the fashion of generations of immanentizing ideologues from 1789 into the present.⁷ From this prudential perspective, then, Hamilton quotes Hume as follows:

To balance a large state or society whether monarchical or republican, on general laws, is a work of so great difficulty, that no human genius, however comprehensive, is able by the mere dint of reason and reflection, to effect it. The judgments of man must unite in the work: *Experience* must guide their labour: *Time* must bring it to perfection: And the *feeling* of inconveniences must correct the mistakes which they *inevitably* fall into, in their first trials and experiments.⁸

These representative sentiments signal the sober, realistic, undogmatic yet hopeful outlook of American politics at its inception. Whatever the historical lapses, they supply the standards nurtured to this day.⁹

Liberty and the truth which makes men free go hand in hand in the political and religious discourse of the American founding era. There was general agreement that political and religious truth are vitally intertwined: “Year after year the preacher reaffirmed from his high pulpit that both revelation and reason pointed to a single set of principles which outlined the best form of government.”¹⁰ Nor was this merely a Puritan or New England affair, as recent scholarship attests. Robert M. Calhoun stated in 1994 that “Evangelical political thought, discipline, and use of the Bible—among other expressions of its activity and vision—formed a coherent whole and functioned as a persuasion in the early South. It was an eclectic, improvised mixture of intellectual assumptions, behavioral norms, and Scottish common-sense teachings about the interconnectedness of all knowledge and revelation.”¹¹

The old interpretation is, with refinements, now becoming the new interpretation of scholars. Religion gave birth to America, Tocqueville long ago observed. On the eve of revolution, in his last ditch attempt to stave off impending catastrophe, Edmund Burke reminded the House of Commons of the inseparable alliance between liberty and religion among Englishmen in America. A recent student has echoed Tocqueville in dubbing America the nation with the soul of a church. Another has elevated the political sermon considered as *jeremiad* to the rank of primary symbolic form of the American mind. Yet another has exclaimed of the Americans on the eve of the Revolution, “Who can deny

that for them the very core of existence was their relation to God?”¹²

Given modern predispositions, and despite new developments, our point of departure may still have to be negative. It requires that we abandon what Perry Miller over three decades ago called “obtuse secularism” as a reflexive habit of mind so as to enter into a quite different attitude.¹³ Miller’s bristling phrase as emblematic of the prevailing climate of opinion probably still is justified. God-centered existence is not the twentieth-century commonplace among literate Britons and Americans that it was among our eighteenth-century brethren. For all the differences among them, American preachers of the eighteenth century premise an unsurprisingly biblical vision that includes a stratified, differentiated reality, an ontological Whole experienced as the *community* of being articulated into the familiar four-fold structure of God, man, world and society.¹⁴ The human and divine are tensional polarities of this reality, the one unintelligible without the other. The modern reductionist deformations of being into a contracted reality of autonomous man lodged in an equally autonomous nature do not reflect the intellectual horizon of any significant segment of the thinking public of the time, although radically secularizing influences of the French Enlightenment were pushing them that way. Thomas Paine and Ethan Allen, and the more ambiguous instance of Thomas Jefferson, rightly are adduced as evidence of the presence of such influences. But they plainly are exceptions. And even the so-called rationalistic elite probably can best be understood in *religious* terms, as historians recently have begun to argue—even from the vantage point of the ratification process near the end of the founding era. Thus, writes Stephen A. Marini in 1994,

it was primarily among Anglicans and Congregationalists and the political, economic,

military, and literary elites they dominated that a movement of Enlightenment religious liberalism burst into full flower. Thomas Jefferson, the Virginian who shared Voltaire's theological skepticism yet penned passionate defenses of an innate moral sense and committed the sayings of Jesus to memory, Benjamin Rush, the Philadelphia physician who embraced Unitarianism and Universalism while campaigning passionately for temperance reform and the abolition of slavery, and Benjamin Franklin, the transplanted Bostonian who provided the new nation with a wealth of moral aphorisms and a model of toleration by contributing to all churches of Philadelphia, epitomized the sort of *religious liberalism* that swept through America's cultural elite during the late eighteenth century.... In its advocacy of a benign Creator, a benevolent cosmos, human reason and free will, and a thoroughgoing moral optimism, Enlightenment religious liberalism supplied a powerful theological and philosophical foundation for the cosmopolitan republican culture of the 1780s.... The Deism of Paine and Ethan Allen failed dramatically to become the new American faith, especially after the French Revolution. In 1787, however, Enlightenment religious liberalism still flourished widely in America's urban churches, universities, and plantation parishes.¹⁵

Prevalent American ontology reflects the familiar biblical image of Creator and creation, of fallen and sinful men, striving willy-nilly in a mysteriously ordered historical existence toward a personal salvation and an eschatological fulfillment. These goals are themselves paradoxically attainable only through the divine grace of election, a condition experienced as the unmerited gift of God discernible (if at all) in the mode of hopeful human responsiveness called faith in Christ. The relationships are variously symbolized by personal and corporate reciprocal covenants ordering individual lives, church communities, and society as a whole in multiple layers.¹⁶

The bare externals of these relationships so regulate the visible community as to beckon everyone to open their souls to truth

and thereby enjoy in appropriate measure more perfect participation as members of the mystical Body of which Christ is Head. The communion of the faithful, those actuated by the love of God even to the contempt of self, comprises the invisible church of the regenerate (in America often the gathered, visible church itself) made one through love of God.¹⁷ The picture that emerges is not parochially Puritan or Calvinist but palpably Augustinian, thoroughly biblical, and often Arminian. Even so, it will be salutary to avoid misgivings by recalling Ralph Barton Perry's indispensable admonition against the *Fallacy of Difference* as we reflect on American religious experience with one eye on its Puritan background. He writes, "Puritanism was an offshoot from the main stem of Christian belief, and Puritans, equally with Catholics, claimed descent from St. Paul and Augustine. [Thus, it can be defined as] theocratic, congregational-presbyterian, Calvinistic, protestant, medieval Christianity."¹⁸ Even institutionally this was so. For, although Baptists and Quakers felt obliged to secede, orthodox New England Puritans gave allegiance to the Thirty-Nine Articles and remained within the national communion of the Church of England well into the eighteenth century. Although they might call themselves congregationalists, this was primarily descriptive of a form of church polity that they insisted was true to the New Testament and apostolic so that "in their heart of hearts [they] remained convinced that [theirs] was no more than the most reformed portion of the universal church."¹⁹

The intricacies of the varieties of belief cannot be much explored here, but at least a few hints must be given. For though our primary focus is on *political* dimensions—and thus exceptional expressions of the faith of a people who looked not primarily to history but to the eternal beyond—the spiritual root of that collaborative enterprise as

directed by divine Providence requires clarification.

It has been persuasively argued that a revolution in the spiritual and social life of America began with what is called the (First) Great Awakening. There is considerable reason to suppose that religious and political lines of development are intimately, perhaps decisively, linked. Narrowly construed as occurring in the years 1739 to 1742, the Great Awakening designates the outburst of religious revival that swept the colonies in those years.²⁰ It reached from Georgia to New England and affected every stratum of society. There had been a quickening of religious impulses even earlier, but the First Great Awakening was a spiritual earthquake, one that, as Alan Heimert and Perry Miller argue, “clearly began a new era, not merely of American Protestantism, but in the evolution of the American mind.”²¹ A turning point and crisis in American society, it rumbled and echoed through the next decades. Colonial life was never the same again. American events could be seen as part of the general rise of religious sentiment traceable in Europe between 1730 and 1760, particularly in Great Britain where major catalysts were the itinerant Anglican priests John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism, and their compatriot George Whitefield. These men played a large part in rescuing England from the social debauchery and political corruption associated with the Gin Age, aspects of the period portrayed in William Hogarth’s paintings and prints and in his friend Henry Fielding’s novels.²² The so-called Second Great Awakening began around 1800 as revival camp meetings on the frontier and in the back country. The great political events of the American founding, thus, have a backdrop of resurgent religiousness whose calls for repentance and faith plainly complement the calls to resist constitutional corruption and tyranny so as to live virtuously as God-fearing Christians

and, eventually, as responsible republican citizens.²³ It should be emphasized in this context, perhaps, that Stephen Marini argues for a surge in religiousness *during* the time of the American Revolution: religion prospered during the Revolution. Indeed, there was a “Revolutionary revival.” This 1994 judgment merely confirms one that Perry Miller made in 1961: “The basic fact is that the Revolution had been preached to the masses as a religious revival, and had the astounding fortune to succeed.” And in 1994 Patricia Bonomi in no way recants her 1982 and 1986 views on the thriving and increasing of religious consciousness in all parts of the American community during these same years, including the colonies and subsequent states of the Middle Atlantic and Southern regions of the country. These judgments challenge the old orthodoxy; to quote Marini:

Far from suffering decline, religion experienced vigorous growth and luxuriant development during the Revolutionary period. It occupied a prominent place in public culture and a disproportionately large number of religiously active men served in the new nation’s constituent assemblies. In a host of ways, both practical and intellectual, the church served as a school for politics.²⁴

With this perspective on the Awakening and religious development during the remainder of the century in mind, understanding the earlier surge of religiousness becomes all the more urgent. In fact, the preeminent awakener in America throughout much of this whole period was the English evangelist George Whitefield, who first visited the colonies in 1738 and made six more preaching tours of the country, and who died in 1770 one September morning just before he was to preach in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Regarded as not only the most controversial preacher of his time but as “perhaps the greatest extemporaneous orator in the history of the En-



A CAMP REVIVAL MEETING AT SING SING, NEW YORK. NOTE THE PREACHER WITH THE UPLIFTED HANDS UNDER THE CANOPY AT LEFT.

glish church,” it is Whitefield’s view of the human plight and its therapy that will best give a clue to the thrust of the awakening as formative of the American mind.

The theme of his preaching is that of evangelicals in every age: in his natural state man is estranged from God; Jesus Christ, by his death and Atonement, has paid the price of that estrangement and made reconciliation with God possible; to achieve salvation man, with the guidance and the grace of the Holy Ghost, must repudiate sin and openly identify himself with Christ. To Whitefield religion, when properly understood, meant “a thorough, real, inward change of nature, wrought in us by the powerful operations of the Holy Ghost, conveyed to and nourished in our hearts, by a constant use of all the means of grace, evidenced by a good life, and bringing forth the fruits of the spirit.” There was, of course, nothing new in this belief. Its special appeal for eighteenth-century audiences lay partly in the fact that it answered an emotional need the established Church had for too long tried to ignore, and partly in the charismatic personality of the man who revived it.²⁵

It is worth stressing in a secularized age that the *mystic’s ascent* and the *evangelist’s call*, although conducted in different forums, have a common root and purpose. For each seeks to find the responsive place in a person’s consciousness where vivid communion with God occurs. The consequence is that such communion becomes the transformative core of personal existence for the individual person who therewith feels himself a new man. Initially this is manifested in the conversion experience (understood as a spiritual rebirth) and subsequently in the continuing meditative nurture of the soul pursued by every means but chiefly, in the American Protestant horizon, through prayer, sermons, and study of the Bible. Thus, Whitefield’s words—those of an Oxford graduate and ordained Anglican priest, we may remember—can in some respects be compared with a remarkable passage in Augustine’s *Confessions* (bk. 7. 10. sec. 16) where a great mystic tells of finding his way to God:

And being thence admonished to return to myself, I entered even into my inward self, Thou being my Guide: and able I was, for Thou wert become my Helper. And I entered and I beheld with the eye of my soul, (such as it was,) above the same eye of my soul, above my mind, the Light Unchangeable. Not this ordinary light, which all flesh may look upon, nor as it were a greater of the same kind, as though the brightness of this should be manifold brighter, and with its greatness take up all space. Not such was this light, but other, yea, far other from all these. Nor was it above my soul, as oil is above water, nor yet as heaven above earth: but above to my soul, because It made me; and I below It, because I was made by It. He that knows the Truth, knows what that Light is; and he that knows It, knows eternity. Love knoweth it. O Truth Who art Eternity! and Love Who art Truth! and Eternity Who art Love! Thou art my God, to Thee do I sigh night and day....And I heard, as the heart heareth, nor had I room to doubt, and I should sooner doubt that I live, than that Truth is not....²⁶

The appeal of the evangelist is analogous to the quest of the mystic. It is to stir response to the actualizing attraction of the divine pull as far as he can, both in himself and in those with whom he communicates. The intent is to steadily find in the soul the place of communion with the divine and, thereby, eagerly to vivify the life of the spirit through ever better—more perfect—participation in the transformative experience of transcendent divine Being. Such living communion with God that is experienced as a passion in Whitefield and in the awakened Americans no less than it is in Augustine—himself a matchless preacher—lies at the heart of the Awakening and revivalism more generally as mass phenomena in eighteenth-century Britain, America, and elsewhere. Hence its power and effectiveness both personally and socially as well as historically.²⁷

The cry was for a converted ministry able to revive religious communities lacking vitality and zeal, to make the presence of God

with his people a palpable reality. Such hortatory preaching and intent were the hallmarks of the so-called New Side Presbyterians and New Light Congregationalist clergy, along with the Baptists, Quakers, Anglican-Methodists, and other evangelicals, as contrasted with their opposites who eschewed emotion and experimental religion. Many of the former, like Whitefield himself, had no church of their own but traveled the country preaching in homes and pastures or wherever they could. *Conversion*, as the criterion of election, involves a personal experience of regeneration at least somewhat along lines classically drawn by Augustine. The individual is flooded with a sense of divine presence and intense participation or union with God such as that intimated by Augustine's words: "I am the food of grown men; grow, and...be converted into Me!" A further mark is complete assurance of blessing and of feeling the embrace of Truth itself, so that the moment becomes supremely authoritative for whomever it befalls. Thus, Augustine's words convey all the energy language can bear and fall like hammer blows: "I heard, as the heart heareth, nor had I room to doubt, and I should sooner doubt that I live, than that Truth is not...."

Such robust experiences made the Awakening what it was. And it cannot be too surprising that its sociological dimensions manifested emotionalism, sometimes rising to the level of frenzy, we are told. Comparable intensity lies close to the surface of the account of such experience by the likes of an Augustine, a spiritual virtuoso of world historic stature. Such *experience*, one Virginian explained, came with surrender or an abandonment of his own efforts at reform, and with the consequent realization that "my guilt was gone, my conscience at rest, and my soul at liberty." As a church covenant stated in matter-of-fact language, the power of this freeing came through

“faith” understood not as “an act of man’s free will and power but of the mighty, efficacious grace of God.”²⁸ The criterion, thus, was “an experience of grace” which both made faith possible and succored the soul through liberation and forgiveness.²⁹ As Robert Calhoun writes, quoting George Whitefield: “The immediacy of Christ’s sacrifice brought ecstasy and the ‘indwelling of the spirit’ into the consciousness of the convert; evangelical Christianity combined Calvinist assumptions about human depravity and divine majesty with the Arminian appreciation of God’s desire to flood all humanity with grace; evangelical converts felt and communicated a contagious desire to be bonded spiritually to others.”³⁰ At the core of the evangelical political theology, Stephen Marini writes, “was ‘the necessity of the New Birth,’ the requirement that all true Christians experience an episode of conscious spiritual regeneration modeled on the accounts of the New Testament.”³¹

One concern of the preachers, however, was to maintain a balance between reason and emotion so as to avoid the opprobrium of being seen as *enthusiasts*. What concretely resulted from the kind of evocative discourse that Whitefield and his fellow evangelists practiced in proclaiming the Word, then, was a strengthening of conviction regarding fundamental truth, righteous resolve, and palpable moral reform. First encountering him in Philadelphia in 1739, Benjamin Franklin not only found Whitefield’s preaching personally moving beyond all expectation but became his printer and testified to the good he did:

[Whitefield] was at first permitted to preach in some of our Churches; but the Clergy taking a Dislike to him, soon refus’d him their Pulpits and he was oblig’d to preach in the Fields. The Multitudes of all Sects and Denominations that attended his Sermons were enormous, and it was matter of Speculation

to me who was one of the Number, to observe the extraordinary Influence of his Oratory on his Hearers, and how much they admir’d and respected him, notwithstanding his common Abuse of them, by assuring them they were naturally *half Beasts and half Devils*. It was wonderful to see the Change soon made in the Manners of our Inhabitants; from being thoughtless or indifferent about Religion, it seem’d as if all the World were growing Religious; so that one could not walk thro’ the Town in an Evening without Hearing Psalms sung in different Families of every Street.³²

It is against the experiential background of such preaching that the political teaching of the eighteenth-century preachers is to be seen as it came into powerful display in the crisis of conflict and revolution. A sketch of their views might begin with the representative statement of the famous lexicographer and biblical scholar Noah Webster, who was himself caught up in the fervor of the Second Awakening. He wrote:

It is extremely important to our nation, in a political as well as religious view, that all possible authority and influence should be given to the scriptures; for these furnish the best principles of civil liberty, and the most effectual support of republican government. They teach the true principles of that equality of rights which belongs to every one of the human family, but only in consistency with a strict subordination to the magistrate and the law. The scriptures were intended by God to be the *guide of human reason*. The Creator of man established the moral order of the Universe; knowing that *human nature*, left without a divine guide or rule of action, would fill the world with *disorder, crime and misery*.... The principles of all genuine liberty, and of wise laws and administrations are to be drawn from the Bible and sustained by its authority.... [T]here are two powers only which are sufficient to control men, and secure the rights of individuals and a peaceable administration; these are the *combined force of religion and law*, and the *force or fear of the bayonet*.

The Bible is the chief moral cause of all that is *good*, and the best corrector of all that is *evil*,

in human society; the *best* book for regulating the temporal concerns of men, and the *only* book that can serve as an infallible guide to future felicity.³³

This biblical perspective can be illustrated, then, by a representative exposition of the human condition and its political implications such as that sketched in Rev. Gad Hitchcock's anniversary sermon at Plymouth on December 22, 1774. He began from the premise that man is a moral agent living freely in a reality that is good as coming from the hand of God: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good."³⁴ His responsibility is to live well, in accordance with God's commandments and through exercise of one's mind and free will. Thus, man longs for knowledge of God's word and truth and seeks God's help to keep an open heart so as to receive them. Among the chief hindrances to this life of true liberty is the oppression of men, who in service to evil deceive with untruth and impose falsehood in its place proclaiming it to be true. Man, blessed with liberty, reason, and a moral sense, created in the image and likeness of God a little lower than the angels and given dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8; Hebrews 2:6-12), is the chief and most perfect of God's works. Among his perfections is his capacity freely to hold communion with God and, through this intercourse, improve in natural and moral science and perfection, controlling appetites by his superior principles and growing into full personality through acts of love, gratitude, and obedience towards God and fellow human beings. Pursuit of these authentic goods, then, defines responsibility.

Liberty is an essential principle of man's constitution, a natural trait which yet reflects the supernatural One whose image man is, and who freely created him and the world. The growth of virtue and perfection of being depends upon free choice, in re-

sponse to divine invitation and help, in a cooperative relationship. Liberty is most truly exercised by living in accord with truth and is, therefore, the correlate of responsibility. Man's dominion over the earth and other creatures therein, his mastery of nature through reason, is subject to no restraint but the law of his nature which is the perfection of liberty; his obligation to obey the laws of the Creator is only a check to licentiousness and abuse. Liberty is thus God-given. However, this gift of freedom to do right and live truly carries the opposite possibility as well, *i.e.*, rebellion and rejection. This, in turn, leads to the necessity of government to coerce a degree of right living and justice from a mankind fallen from the high road of willing obedience to the loving Father. Moreover, coercive law can be inflicted in ways not merely just and conducive to truth, righteousness, and union with God but frequently to their very opposites. This biblical understanding of the human condition is reflected, as we have seen, in the most famous passage of the *Federalist Papers* (No. 51), which turns on the sentiments that, if men were angels there would be no need for government, for what is government but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? It remains true, however, James Madison went on, that "Justice is the end of government. It is the end of civil society. It ever has been, and ever will be pursued, until it be obtained, or until liberty be lost in the pursuit."

Hence, the Royal Psalmist prays (Psalms 119:134): "Deliver me from the oppression of man: So will I keep thy precepts." The prayer is that he be delivered from human oppression *so that* he can keep the truth of God. This is thus a prayer for just and free government wherein responsibility to the civil laws conduces to the perfection of virtue and truth in concrete lives of concrete societies of men. The psalmist does not endorse, but rather, he condemns enforc-

ing evil in the name of justice and propagating lies as truth, thereby perverting reality and the lives of a people who would, then, imbibe and embody corruption. Such perversion would create an abomination standing in the holy place. It would deform everything it touched. Indeed, by such misrule not liberty but slavery is enforced, inasmuch as living in accordance with an evil will necessarily results in being enslaved to the passions of *libido dominandi*, the lust for power that is the nadir of pride (*superbia vitae*, I John 2:16) productive of tyranny or dictatorship. So to live is to abandon both God and our true selves, forfeit liberty while proclaiming it, and mutilate the divine image that animates the noble conception of man and reality reflected in Psalm 8, which is rightly called the Magna Carta of humanity. Hence, Thomas Jefferson's personal seal carried the famous motto: "*Resistance to Tyrants is Obedience to God!*"

While it seems to be true that the federal Convention did not embrace the aged Benjamin Franklin's suggestion for prayer, there is little doubt that Franklin evoked the sentiment of the country no less than of the clergy when he remarked to that great assembly, presided over by George Washington himself that

"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 labour 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."³⁵

Nathan O. Hatch has remarked that "the right to think for oneself became...the hallmark of popular Christianity" in America. Such pre-Revolutionary figures as the Pres-

byterian Rev. David Caldwell in North Carolina and the Baptist Rev. Richard Furman in backcountry South Carolina sought political truth in history and in the Bible all the while emphasizing "the autonomy of the individual conscience."³⁶ At the heart of this autonomy lay the conviction of the individual's capacity to read and understand the Bible. The consequences are incalculable. As Hatch has emphasized, for example:

Deep and powerful undercurrents of democratic Christianity distinguish the United States from other modern industrial democracies. These currents insure that churches in this land do not withhold faith from the rank and file. Instead, religious leaders have pursued people wherever they could be found; embraced them without regard to social standing; and challenged them to think, to interpret Scripture, and to organize the church for themselves. Religious populism, reflecting the passions of ordinary people and the charisma of democratic movement-builders, remains among the oldest and deepest impulses in American life.³⁷

A prime example is the message of the popular Baptist Elder John Leland, friend of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who joined them—or they him—in arguing that the *conscience* ought to be "free from human control," and insisted that "religion is a matter between God and individuals," and who roundly dismissed as snobbery and worse the contention that "the ignorant part of the community are not capacitated to judge for themselves." On the contrary, Leland asked:

Did many of the rulers believe in Christ when he was upon earth? Were not the learned clergy (the scribes) his most inveterate enemies? Do not great men differ as much as little men in judgment? Have not almost all lawless errors crept into the world through the means of wise men (so called)? Is not a simple man, who makes nature and reason his study, a competent judge of things? Is the Bible written (like Caligula's laws) so intricate and high, that

none but the letter learned (according to the common phrase) can read it? Is not the vision written so plain that he that runs may read it?³⁸

Confidence in the “natural” clarity and unity of the Bible to the ordinary intelligence is not merely a theme of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is as old as the English Bible itself, as John Wyclif stressed in the Prologue to his translation (ca. 1380).³⁹

Unity and intelligibility of the Bible to the average person was increasingly a motif of major importance in subsequent centuries. It also was reflected in the preachers’ approach to textual exegesis from the pulpits. The assumption and basic principle, following Augustine and Calvin, was that the Bible is reflexive in the sense of providing its own explanation of its meaning in an overall consistent whole. The key to finding that unity according to William Perkins’ manual entitled *The Arte of Prophesying* (1592, translated in 1607) was to begin the mastery of the Bible by first mastering Paul’s Letter to the Romans, then, and only then, ought the student move to the remainder of the New Testament and subsequently to the Old Testament. The result of this, because of the emphases in Romans, is a stress on justification, sanctification, and true faith. Meaning is to be found through the three methods (which cannot be entered into in detail here) called circumstance, collation, and application. Thus, it is the task of the preacher as interpreter to place any text into its circumstances and context, collating it with similar texts elsewhere in the scriptures, and to find consistent meaning—then to finish the text of the sermon by conforming it and his preaching to the “analogies of faith.” This means that any statement made had to be in harmony with or contained in the Apostle’s Creed.⁴⁰

For the ordinary believer and individual person the consequences of habitual Bible reading were enormous. The reliance upon

individual judgment of the terms of eternal salvation largely based on private Bible study may be said to lie at the heart of the formation of the civic consciousness of responsible individuals. It greatly contributes to the rise of the American republican ethos and citizenry during the period leading up to independence and in the decades subsequent to it. As George Trevelyan more generally remarks, “the effect of the continual domestic study of [the Bible] upon the national character, imagination, and intelligence for three centuries—was greater than that of any literary movement in the annals, or any religious movement since St. Augustine.”⁴¹

The political implications canvassed by Alice Baldwin remain serviceable today:

Southern Presbyterian ministers based their political concepts upon the Bible. The idea of a fundamental constitution based on law, of inalienable rights which were God-given and therefore natural, of government as a binding compact made between rulers and peoples, of the right of the people to hold their rulers to account and to defend their rights against all oppression, these seem to have been doctrines taught by them all...in the South as in New England, the clergy helped in making familiar to the common people the basic principles on which the Revolution was fought, our constitutional conventions held, our Bills or Rights written and our state and national constitutions founded.⁴²

These views are re-enforced and amplified by Patricia Bonomi in 1994 in the following language:

To be sure, religious differences alone did not bring on the American Revolution.... But the striking thing about the dissenting mentality is how easily it flowed in with the emergent republican understanding of the political radicals. Habits inculcated over more than 150 years by such Nonconformist practices as the gathering of congregations, electing of leaders, and then sharing power with them under the

principle of majority rule proved far more congenial to republican forms than to the imperial alternative.... We may stop well short of proposing religious differences as the primary "cause" of the American Revolution. It may nonetheless be asserted that the state of mind in which American colonials moved toward separation is nowhere better seen than in the realm of religion.⁴³

The complexities are not to be minimized for the good reason, as Jonathan Clark has stated, that "early-modern societies [are] far more theoretically articulate than the societies which succeeded them, and their social relations were expressed to a much larger degree in terms of grand theory." Furthermore, Clark states that "In America a new and programmatic civil religion provided an evangelical impetus for society unlike any the world had seen before: at once more ethical and more materialistic, more libertarian and more deferential to the sovereignty of collective opinion."⁴⁴

Finally, as I recently have tried to summarize a part of this subject elsewhere:

The great frame of biblical symbolism is comprehended in Exodus, Covenant, and Canaan. That the American Israel understood itself as continuing this history through its pilgrimage to the American wilderness in analogy with the Mosaic adventures is well known but bears repeating. The fact that Americans organized themselves by covenants for civil as well as religious purposes and even in federations of covenants is clear; and that the Constitution itself is framed in the spirit of the covenant, compact, contract symbolism is evident. That this symbolism is indebted to Christian theory is also acknowledged, "Without the strong link that Augustine forged between consent and will, social contract theory would be unthinkable, since it defines consent in terms of will" [writes Patrick Riley]. But then, the whole sequence of biblical covenants linking consent and will lay behind Augustine. That the symbolism of Exodus can be applied to the departure of America from the British Empire through independence also is clear and in keeping with the tenor of the religious

literature of the period. That the Revolution was theorized as a just war is explicit in the resolutions of the Congress and even in Tom Paine's writings. That the fulfillment of time in the dawn of the millennium in America by establishment of *novus ordo seclorum* of Constitution and republic is a palpable hope of a faithful people and a theme that has played a role in American consciousness into the present century. Who could doubt that America is a special and favored nation? Could this not be the beginning of time transfigured into the eternal Sabbath of the Eighth Day? Such apocalyptic enthusiasm, however, was generally kept in check by the robust good sense of the Founders, and the watchful, hopeful waiting typified by President Ezra Stiles [of Yale] seems to be consonant with general sentiment.⁴⁵

It is from some such general perspective, one emphatically open to the horizon of being, that not only the ringing lines of the Declaration of Independence are to be read and understood, but also the Constitution and Bill of Rights and the order they represent—if we mean to understand them as Americans of the time did. Or at least so it seems to me. This, in turn, might serve to direct our inquiry toward the philosophical and natural law foundations of the American political and constitutional order so as to trace its sources into Renaissance, Medieval, and perhaps still earlier times. As Harold Berman lately wrote, from the religious perspective on law and Constitution, "history is a revelation of divine providence, a spiritual story of the unfolding of God's own purposes, and more particularly [it teaches] that God works in history, in part, through his elect nation...which is historically destined to reveal and incarnate God's mission for mankind."⁴⁶ Then, when we are satisfied that we have the story straight as to origins and meaning, we still have to face the question of the importance of even an essentially true account for present and future concerns—the famous *So what?*—i.e., the theoretical, political, and existential con-

sequences for the conduct of life in truth.⁴⁷

But these are tasks for another day.

Notes

1. Pope's *Essay on Man* was favorite reading: see Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence, Kan., 1985), 164n; Agnes Marie Sibly, *Alexander Pope's Prestige in America, 1725-1835* (New York, 1949), 23-56. 2. Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, in Charles W. Eliot, ed., *English Poetry, vol. I: Chaucer to Gray* (New York, 1910), *Harvard Classics*, XL, 417-18, 424, 425. Cf. discussion and literature cited in Ellis Sandoz, *A Government of Laws: Political Theory, Religion, and the American Founding* (Baton Rouge, 1990), 223-25. 3. John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, *The Federalist*, ed. Jacob E. Cooke (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 349. Italics added. 4. Max Farrand ed., *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, Rev. Ed., 4 vols. (1937; rpr. New Haven, 1966), 2:278. 5. Cf. Sandoz, *A Government of Laws*, 116, 174, 197, 227. See also Ellis Sandoz, ed., *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730-1805* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991), xiii-xxiv and *passim*; Ellis Sandoz, ed., *The Roots of Liberty: Magna Carta, Ancient Constitution, and the Anglo-American Tradition of Rule of Law* (Columbia, Mo., 1993), 1-21; and J. C. D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty, 1660-1832: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo American World* (Cambridge, England, 1994), 296-391. 6. *The Federalist*, ed. Cooke: 32, 96, 128, 355, 489. Emphasis added. 7. The large question of autonomous Man is discussed from a range of perspectives in the following places: Ellis Sandoz, "The Politics of Poetry," *Modern Age*, 34 (Fall 1991):16-23; with respect to Hume in Donald W. Livingston, *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life* (Chicago, 1984), 20-33 and *passim*; Donald Livingston, "Notes and Discussions: A Sellarsian Hume?," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 29 (April 1991):281-90; with respect to socialism in F. A. Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism*, vol. I, *The Collected Works of F. A. Hayek*, ed. W. W. Bartley III (Chicago, 1988), 21-28, 66-88; and broadly with respect to modern political and economic liberalism in John Gray, *Beyond the New Right: Markets, Government and the Common Environment* (London, 1993), esp. 66-123. 8. From "The Rise of the Arts and Sciences" as quoted by Publius in *The Federalist*, ed. Cooke: 594; emphasis and italics as in original. Cf. David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis, 1985), 124. 9. The preceding four paragraphs are drawn from my "Philosophical Foundations of Our

Democratic Heritage: A Recollection," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 24 (Summer 1994): 669-73. 10. Harry P. Kerr, "The Election Sermon: Primer for Revolutionaries," *Speech Monographs*, 29 (March 1962): 18. Quoted from Mark A. Noll, *Christians in the American Revolution* (Washington, D. C., 1977), 152. 11. Robert M. Calhoun, "The Evangelical Persuasion," in *Revolution in a Revolutionary Age*, ed. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, 1994), 156-83 at 176. Calhoun thus generally confirms the much earlier interpretation of the influence of religion on the politics of the South provided by Alice M. Baldwin, "Sowers of Sedition: The Political Theories of Some of the New Light Presbyterian Clergy of Virginia and North Carolina," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 5 (1948): 52-76. Basic to any study of religion in the American founding remains Alice M. Baldwin, *The New England Clergy and the American Revolution* (Durham, N. C., 1928). 12. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J. P. Mayer, 2 vols. in 1 (Garden City, N.Y., 1969), II, 432; cf. *ibid.*, 46-47, 288-91; Edmund Burke, "Speech on Moving His Resolutions for Conciliation with the Colonies, March 22, 1775," in Burke, *Selected Writings and Speeches*, ed. Peter J. Stanlis (1963; rpr. Chicago, n.d.), 147-85 esp. 158-60; Sidney E. Mead, *The Nation with the Soul of a Church* (New York, 1975); Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, Wis., 1978), 176-210 and *passim*. The quotation is from Carl Bridenbaugh, *Spirit of '76: The Growth of American Patriotism Before Independence, 1607-1776* (New York, 1975), 117. 13. Perry Miller, "From the Covenant to the Revival," in *Religion in American Life*, ed. J. W. Smith and A. L. Jamison, 4 vols. (Princeton, N. J., 1961), 1:336n. 14. Cf. Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. I, *Israel and Revelation* (1956), 1, for this "primordial community" and its "quaternarian structure" which was clearly intact in the American eighteenth century, as the documents demonstrate. 15. Stephen A. Marini, "Religion, Politics, and Ratification," in *Religion in a Revolutionary Age*, ed. Hoffman and Albert, 184-217 at 196. *Emphasis added*. 16. The "law of liberty" or "perfect law of freedom" [*nomon teleion eleutherias*] of James 1:25 (cf. James 2:12 and I Peter 2:16) echoes the Johannine Christ: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make [set] you free [*eleutheroosei*]" as given in John 8:32 and reiterated in subsequent verses (8:33, 36) culminating in the great declaration: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." 17. For the bold account of the distinction between love of self and love of God (*amor sui, amor Dei*), symbols of the radical reorientation in reality marked by a person's conversion, see the classic passage in St. Augustine,

The City of God, trans. Marcus Dods, intro. by Thomas Merton (New York, 1950), 477 [Bk. XIV, Chap. 28]. 18. Ralph Barton Perry, *Puritanism and Democracy* (New York, 1944), 82-83; cf. Sandoz, *A Government of Laws*, 98-101. 19. Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (1953; rpr. Boston, 1961), 464. 20. See Alan Heimert and Perry Miller, eds., *The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1967), xiii. A generally contrasting perspective to that of Miller, Heimert, and of the present essay is given in Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990). Valuable for the canvass of some of the historiographic perspectives at issue here is the review of Clark's *The Language of Liberty* by Jack P. Greene, "Why Did They Rebel?" in *Times Literary Supplement* (June 10, 1994):3-6. 21. *Ibid.*, xiv; cf. Perry Miller, "The Great Awakening from 1740 to 1750," *Encounter* (The Divinity School, Duke University, Durham, N. C., March 1956), 5-9. 22. See the biographical notes and sermons numbered 4, 13, 14, and 18 in Sandoz, ed., *Political Sermons of the American Founding*. 23. A fine concise account of the relationship of the Great Awakening to political developments is given by William G. McLoughlin in "'Enthusiasm for Liberty': The Great Awakening as the Key to the Revolution," in Jack P. Greene and William G. McLoughlin, *Preachers & Politicians: Two Essays on the Origins of the American Revolution* (Worcester, Mass., 1977), 47-73. 24. Marini, "Religion, Politics, and Ratification," in *Religion in a Revolutionary Age*, ed. Hoffman and Albert, 188, 193. Perry Miller, "From the Covenant to the Revival," in *Religion in American History: Interpretive Essays*, ed. John M. Mulder and John F. Wilson (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1978), 145-61 at 157. 25. James Downey, *The Eighteenth Century Pulpit: A Study of the Sermons of Butler, Berkeley, Secker, Sterne, Whitefield and Wesley* (Oxford, 1969), 155, 157, internal quote cited from J. Gillies, ed., *Works of Whitefield*, 6 vols. (London, 1771-1772), 5:161. 26. *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. E. B. Pusey, with a foreword by A. H. Armstrong, Everyman Ed. (London, 1907), [Bk. VII, Chap. 10], 132-34; cf. 219-27 [Bk. X, Chaps. 17-26]. The "It" of Augustine's meditation receives powerful development in Eric Voegelin's late writings when he speaks of the "It-reality": "To denote the reality that comprehends the partners in being, i.e., God and the world, man and society, no technical term has been developed, as far as I know, by anybody. However, I notice that philosophers, when they run into this structure incidentally in their exploration of other subject matters, have a habit of referring to it by a neutral 'it.' The It referred to is the

mysterious 'it' that also occurs in everyday language in such phrases as 'it rains.' I shall call it therefore the It-reality, as distinguished from the thing-reality [apprehended through sensory perception.]" Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. V, *In Search of Order* (1987), 16. 27. The spiritual depth of American religion generally is so often passed over in favor of defining the various doctrinal beliefs and disputes that emphasis must be placed on it here, even if it cannot be widely illustrated. Whether New Light or Old Light, the eighteenth-century clergy (and their audiences) imbibed scripture with great thoroughness and profundity. They widely read such meditative literature as Augustine's *Confessions*, whose spiritual discipline they took to heart and practiced day and night. Among other "popish divines," Pascal was a favorite author of the Scottish Presbyterian John Witherspoon at Princeton, for instance; and Ezra Stiles at Yale was reading Pseudo-Dionysius as much as he was the New Testament at the end of his life, we are told. Jonathan Edwards the Elder, the greatest American mind of the age and a leading New Light, was himself a mystic. 28. The Virginian Edward Baptist and the John Corbly Memorial Baptist Church "Declaration of Faith in Practice, Being a Covenant,... November 7, 1773," quoted by Robert M. Calhoun, "The Evangelical Persuasion," *Religion in a Revolutionary Age*, ed. Hoffman and Albert, 157. 29. Lemuel Burkitt and Jesse Read, *A Concise History of the Kehukee Baptist Association* (Halifax, N. C., 1803) as quoted in Marini, "Religion, Politics, Ratification," *Religion in a Revolutionary Age*, ed. Hoffman and Albert, 211. 30. Calhoun, "The Evangelical Persuasion," 160, quoting George Whitefield, *The Indwelling of the Spirit, the Common Privilege of All Believers* (London, 1739), 1-2. 31. Marini, "Religion, Politics, and Ratification," *Religion in a Revolutionary Age*, ed. Hoffman and Albert, 215. Internal quote unattributed. 32. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, intro. by R. Jackson Wilson (New York, 1981), 132. 33. Noah Webster as excerpted in Verna M. Hall, ed., *The Christian History of the American Revolution* (San Francisco, 1976), 21; Noah Webster, preface, *The Webster Bible* (1833; facsimile rpr. Grand Rapids, Mich., 1987), v. Italics as in original. 34. Genesis 1:31. This, and Psalm 119:134 (quoted below), were the texts for the Plymouth Anniversary Sermon by Gad Hitchcock of Pembroke which was preached at Plymouth, Massachusetts, on December 22, 1774; it is the principal source of the summary given in the following three paragraphs. This sermon is reprinted in Hall, ed., *The Christian History of the American Revolution*, 30-43. 35. Benjamin Franklin in Farrand, ed., *Records of the Federal Convention*, 1:451. 36. Calhoun, "Evangelical Persuasion," *Reli-*

tion in a Revolutionary Age, 159, 162-63. Hatch is quoted from his "In Pursuit of Religious Freedom: Church, State, and People in the New Republic," in *The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits*, ed. Jack P. Greene (New York, 1987), 391. 37. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, 1989), 5. 38. John Leland's 1790 and 1791 statements, principally from *The Rights of Conscience Inalienable...or, the High-flying Churchman, Stripped of his Legal Robe, Appears a Yahoo* (New London, 1791), 8, 15-16, as quoted in Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 98. For the full text of Leland's pamphlet see Sandoz, ed., *Sermons of the American Founding Era*, 1079-99. 39. Wyclif's Bible was the first complete English version, a translation from the Latin Vulgate completed around 1384, the year of his death; it was largely the work of his pupils, Nicholas of Hereford and probably John Purvey, who did a revision. But the first complete printing of Wyclif's Bible occurred only in 1850 in the edition by Forshall and Madden. See the Prologue to Wyclif's Bible, ed. Josiah Forshall and Sir Frederic Madden, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1850), I, 2, 3. Wyclif's teachings inspired certain aspects of the later Reformers' efforts and political theory; they are suggestive, also, of themes of the New Light preachers of the eighteenth century. 40. Cf. Teresa Toulouse,

The Art of Prophesying: New England Sermons and the Shaping of Belief (Macon, Ga., 1987), Chap. 1. 41. Trevelyan as quoted by H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Idea of Covenant and American Democracy," *Church History*, 23 (1954), 126-35 at 130. Cf. Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia, 1985), 211-14. 42. Baldwin, "Sowers of Sedition," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Series, 5 (1948), 76. Cf. *The New England Clergy and the American Revolution*, 168-72. 43. Bonomi, "Dissent and Exceptionalism," in *Religion in a Revolutionary Age*, ed. Hoffman and Albert, 50-51. 44. Clark, *The Language of Liberty*, 36, 384. 45. Sandoz, *A Government of Laws*, 160-61. The internal quote is from Patrick Riley, *Will and Political Legitimacy: A Critical Exposition of Social Contract Theory in Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 5. 46. Harold J. Berman, "The Origins of Historical Jurisprudence: Coke, Selden, Hale," *Yale Law Journal*, 103 (May 1994):1651-1738 at 1722. The ellipsis omits the word *England*, but the sense equally applies to America as heir to English historical jurisprudence and common law. 47. A start is made in Ellis Sandoz, "Foundations of American Liberty and Rule of Law," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 24 (Summer 1994):605-617.

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