

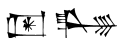
Political Sermons
of the American
Founding Era,
1730–1805

Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730–1805

V O L U M E 1

Edited by Ellis Sandoz

S E C O N D E D I T I O N



Liberty Fund
INDIANAPOLIS

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To the Pulpit, the *Puritan Pulpit*, we owe the moral force which won our independence.

John Wingate Thornton

This principle, that a whole nation has a right to do whatever it pleases, cannot in any sense whatever be admitted as true. The eternal and immutable laws of justice and morality are paramount to all human legislation. The violation of those laws is certainly within the power of a nation, but it is not among the rights of nations.

John Quincy Adams

Contents

VOLUME 1

Foreword	xi
Acknowledgments	xxiii
Editor's Note to the 1998 Edition	xxv
Editor's Note	xxvii
Bibliographic Note	xxxiii

Chronology 1688–1773	3
----------------------	---

1 GOVERNMENT THE PILLAR OF THE EARTH [1730] Benjamin Colman	7
2 NINEVEH'S REPENTANCE AND DELIVERANCE [1740] Joseph Sewall	25
3 THE ESSENTIAL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES OF PROTESTANTS [1744] Elisha Williams	51
4 BRITAIN'S MERCIES, AND BRITAIN'S DUTIES [1746] George Whitefield	119
5 CIVIL MAGISTRATES MUST BE JUST, RULING IN THE FEAR OF GOD [1747] Charles Chauncy	137
6 THE MEDIATORIAL KINGDOM AND GLORIES OF JESUS CHRIST [1756] Samuel Davies	179
7 THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE [1760] Samuel Dunbar	207
8 THE SNARE BROKEN [1766] Jonathan Mayhew	231
9 AN HUMBLE ENQUIRY [1769] John Joachim Zubly	265
10 AN ORATION UPON THE BEAUTIES OF LIBERTY [1773] John Allen	301
11 AN APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY [1773] Isaac Backus	327

	Chronology 1774–1781	369
12	SCRIPTURAL INSTRUCTIONS TO CIVIL RULERS [1774] Samuel Sherwood	373
13	A CALM ADDRESS TO OUR AMERICAN COLONIES [1775] John Wesley	409
14	A CONSTITUTIONAL ANSWER TO WESLEY'S CALM ADDRESS [1775] Anonymous	421
15	AMERICA'S APPEAL TO THE IMPARTIAL WORLD [1775] Moses Mather	439
16	THE CHURCH'S FLIGHT INTO THE WILDERNESS [1776] Samuel Sherwood	493
17	THE DOMINION OF PROVIDENCE OVER THE PASSIONS OF MEN [1776] John Witherspoon	529
18	THE BIBLE AND THE SWORD [1776] John Fletcher	559
19	GOD ARISING AND PLEADING HIS PEOPLE'S CAUSE [1777] Abraham Keteltas	579
20	DIVINE JUDGMENTS UPON TYRANTS [1778] Jacob Cushing	607
21	A SERMON ON THE DAY OF THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION [1780] Samuel Cooper	627
22	A SERMON PREACHED AT LEXINGTON ON THE 19 TH OF APRIL [1781] Henry Cumings	657
	Chronology 1782–1788	683
23	A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE DEVIL, AND GEORGE III, TYRANT OF BRITAIN [1782] Anonymous	687
24	DEFENSIVE ARMS VINDICATED [1783] A Moderate Whig [Stephen Case?]	711
25	A SERMON PREACHED ON A DAY OF THANKSGIVING [1784] George Duffield	771

26	A SERMON ON OCCASION OF THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE NEW-HAMPSHIRE CONSTITUTION [1784] Samuel McClintock	789
27	A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE A CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH [1784] William Smith	815
28	THE DANGERS OF OUR NATIONAL PROSPERITY; AND THE WAY TO AVOID THEM [1785] Samuel Wales	835
29	A SERMON ON A DAY APPOINTED FOR PUBLICK THANKSGIVING [1787] Joseph Lathrop	865
30	THE DIGNITY OF MAN [1787] Nathanael Emmons	883
31	THE PRINCIPLES OF CIVIL UNION AND HAPPINESS CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED [1787] Elizur Goodrich	909
32	THE REPUBLIC OF THE ISRAELITES AN EXAMPLE TO THE AMERICAN STATES [1788] Samuel Langdon	941
33	A CENTURY SERMON ON THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION [1788] Elhanan Winchester	969

VOLUME 2

Chronology 1789–1794	1001
Sermons 1790–1794	1005
Chronology 1795–1805	1301
Sermons 1795–1805	1305
Indexes	1597

Foreword

Inspiration for this collection of sermons came over a number of years as I did research on the American founders' political philosophy. I discovered that the "pulpit of the American Revolution"—to borrow the title of John Wingate Thornton's 1860 collection—was the source of exciting and uncommonly important material. What had passed for pamphlets in my reading of excerpted eighteenth-century American material often turned out to be published sermons. I began to realize that this material, showing the perspective of biblical faith concerning fundamental questions of human existence during our nation's formative period, was extraordinarily abundant and extraordinarily little known.

The rule of this collection has been to reprint unannotated editions of complete sermons that would permit their authors to speak fully for themselves. The genre is the political sermon, broadly construed so as to include a few pieces never preached that are *sermonic* in sense and tone—that is, hortatory and relating politics to convictions about eternal verities. The chief criterion for selection of the various pieces was their intellectual interest. I was looking especially for political theory in American sermons preached and then published from the onset of the Great Awakening to the beginning of the Second Awakening and Thomas Jefferson's second administration. An effort was made to diversify viewpoints denominationally, theologically, politically, geographically, and even nationally. Since only previously published materials have been selected—that is, nothing from manuscript sources has been included¹—a limitation resided in the fact that the publication of sermons in America in the eighteenth century was a specialty, if not a monopoly, of New Englanders.

To permit the religious perspective concerning the rise of American nationhood to have representative expression is important because a steady attention to the pulpit from 1730 to 1805 unveils a distinctive

¹ Whether printed or manuscript sermons are more representative is a question debated in the literature; see Donald Weber, *Rhetoric and History in Revolutionary New England* (New York, 1988), 7.

rhetoric of political discourse: Preachers interpreted pragmatic events in terms of a political theology imbued with philosophical and revelatory learning. Their sermons also demonstrate the existence and effectiveness of a popular political culture that constantly assimilated the currently urgent political and constitutional issues to the profound insights of the Western spiritual and philosophical traditions. That culture's political theorizing within the compass of ultimate historical and metaphysical concerns gave clear contours to secular events in the minds of Americans of this vital era.

Religion gave birth to America, Tocqueville observed long ago.² 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.³ Mercy Otis Warren noted in her 1805 history of the American Revolution: "It must be acknowledged, that the religious and moral character of Americans yet stands on a higher grade of excellence and purity, than that of most other nations."⁴ Of the Americans on the eve of the Revolution Carl Bridenbaugh has exclaimed, "who can deny that for them the very core of existence was their relation to God?"⁵

Although they present a range of viewpoints on many different problems over a period of seventy-five years, all our writers agree that political liberty and religious truth are vitally intertwined. And while the role of the clergy as the philosophers of the American founding has not received great attention from students of political theory, it was abundantly clear to contemporaries. Perhaps the best insight into the role of the ministry was expressed by a participant,

² Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J. P. Mayer (Garden City, N.Y., 1969), II, 432; cf. 46-47, 288-91.

³ 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.

⁴ Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution, Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations*, 2 vols., ed. Lester H. Cohen (Indianapolis, 1988), II, 686.

⁵ Carl Bridenbaugh, *Spirit of '76: The Growth of American Patriotism Before Independence, 1607-1776* (New York, 1975), 117. The argument underlying this paragraph is stated more fully in Ellis Sandoz, *A Government of Laws: Political Theory, Religion and the American Founding* (Baton Rouge, La., 1990), esp. chaps. 3 to 6; see also the Bibliographic Note herein.

Reverend William Gordon of Roxbury, Massachusetts, who wrote the celebrated *History of the American Revolution*. "The ministers of New England being mostly congregationalists," Gordon wrote,

are from that circumstance, in a professional way more attached and habituated to the principles of liberty than if they had spiritual superiors to lord it over them, and were in hopes of possessing in their turn, through the gift of government, the seat of power. They oppose arbitrary rule in civil concerns from the love of freedom, as well as from a desire of guarding against its introduction into religious matters. . . . The clergy of this colony are as virtuous, sensible and learned a set of men, as will probably be found in any part of the globe of equal size and equally populous. . . . [I]t is certainly a duty of the clergy to accommodate their discourses to the times; to preach against such sins as are most prevalent, and to recommend such virtues as are most wanted. . . . You have frequently remarked that though the partizans of arbitrary power will freely censure that preacher, who speaks boldly for the liberties of the people, they will admire as an excellent divine, the parson whose discourse is wholly in the opposite, and teaches, that magistrates have a divine right for doing wrong, and are to be implicitly obeyed; men professing Christianity, as if the religion of the blessed Jesus bound them tamely to part with their natural and social rights, and slavishly to bow their neck to any tyrant. . . .⁶

Whatever the differences among them, all the sermon authors take as their reality the still familiar biblical image of Creator and creation, of fallen and sinful men, striving in a mysteriously ordered existence toward a personal salvation and an eschatological fulfillment. They knew that 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 a person's faith in Christ, which yields assurance of Beatitude. The relationships are variously symbolized by personal and corporate reciprocal covenants ordering individual lives, church communities, and all of society in

⁶ William Gordon, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Establishment of the United States of America, including An Account of the Late War*, 3 vols., 2d ed. (New York, 1794), I, 273–74. See the study of Gordon's *History* in Lester H. Cohen, *The Revolutionary Histories: Contemporary Narratives of the American Revolution* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1980). Apparently overlooked by Cohen is the rare and important volume by [Bernard] Hubley, *History of the American Revolution* (Northumberland, Pa., 1805). Projected as a two-volume work, only the first volume, of 606 pages, appeared, covering the years 1773 to 1775 (Evans 137105; Huntington 7593).

multiple layers productive of good works, inculcating divine truth and attentiveness to providential direction according to the “law of liberty” of the sovereign God revealed in the lowly Nazarene.⁷ The picture that thus emerges is not merely parochially Puritan or Calvinistic but Augustinian and biblical.

The varieties of spiritual belief fundamental to the writers represented herein cannot be explored here, but some background can be indicated. For though our concern is with *political* sermons—and thus exceptional expressions of the faith of a people who looked to the eternal beyond for the perfect fulfillment of their pilgrimage through time in partnership with God—the *spiritual root* of that collaborative enterprise directed by Providence requires a word or two of clarification. Of course, the political background is the direct movement of disparate British colonial societies toward independent nationhood, federally organized under a Constitution that preserves the essentials of English liberty under law. It was a passage of history that involved the concerted effort of military force evinced in the Revolution and the articulation of the principles of free government; these principles inspired creation of a national community and became the grounds of a political orthodoxy called republican and constitutional government. Momentous developments crescendoed with British adoption of the Stamp Act of 1765, leading in little more than a decade to the decision for independence in 1776, which demanded eight years of fighting and formally ended with the signing of the peace treaty in Paris in 1783. The Federal Convention in 1787 provided a barely accepted Constitution, one immediately embellished by a Bill of Rights, that became the supreme law of the land in 1791. By the beginning of Jefferson’s second term, the institutional arrangements had been tested and operations refined, the first party system had emerged, and the country had doubled in size thanks to the Louisiana Purchase. But another strand of history accompanies, interacts with, and gives roots to this familiar progress, one that is less known and lacks the direct line of development just rehearsed.

⁷ 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.”

The revolution in the spiritual life of America began within a decade of the preaching of the first sermon reprinted here, that of the celebrated Benjamin Colman in Boston in 1730. It is called the Great Awakening. There is reason to suppose that the two lines of development are intimately, even decisively, connected. 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.⁸ It reached from Georgia to New England and affected every stratum of society. Since the earthquake of 1727 that Benjamin Colman alludes to in his sermon, however, there had been a quickening of religious impulses. The Awakening was a spiritual earthquake, one that, as Alan Heimert and Perry Miller write, "clearly began a new era, not merely of American Protestantism, but in the evolution of the American mind."⁹ A turning point and crisis in American society, it rumbled and echoed through the next decades.

American events could be seen as part of the general rise of religious sentiment traceable in Europe between 1730 and 1760, particularly in England, where the 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 Hogarth's prints and Fielding's novels.¹⁰ Near the end of this volume's time period the so-called Second Awakening began, starting in 1800–1801 with revival camp meetings on the frontier and in the backcountry. The great political events of the American founding, thus, have a backdrop of resurgent religion whose calls for repentance and faith plainly complement the calls to resist tyranny and constitutional cor-

⁸ Alan Heimert and Perry Miller, eds., *The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1967), xiii.

⁹ *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; also Herbert L. Osgood, *American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century*, 4 vols. (1924; rpr. Gloucester, Mass., 1958), III, 407–490; and Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743–1776* (New York, 1955), 64, 150–56, 404.

¹⁰ See the biographical notes and sermons numbered 4, 13, 14, and 18 herein. On the Gin Age, see W.E.H. Lecky, *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, 7 vols. (London, 1892), II, chap. 5; also M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (1925; rpr. New York, 1964), 27–37 and *passim*; more entertainingly, see the first modern novels, Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) and, especially, *Amelia* (1751).

ruption so as to live virtuously as God-fearing Christians, and, eventually, as responsible republican citizens.¹¹

The preeminent awakener in America throughout much of this whole period was the English evangelist George Whitefield (see no. 4, herein), 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 English church,” it is Whitefield’s view of the human plight and its remedy that will best show the thrust of the Awakening as formative of the American mind. James Downey has written:

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.¹²

It is perhaps worth stressing in a secularized age that the mystic’s ascent and the evangelist’s call, although conducted in different forums, have much in common. For each seeks to find the responsive

¹¹ 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; see also, Donald Weber, *Rhetoric and History in Revolutionary New England* (New York, 1988).

¹² 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 on Whitefield*, 6 vols. (London, 1771–1772), V, 161.

place in a person's consciousness where a vivid communion with God occurs, with the consequence that this concourse becomes the transformative core for that person, who therewith sees himself as a "new man": initially in the *conversion* experience (represented as a spiritual rebirth) and subsequently in the continuing meditative nurture of the soul, pursued by every means but chiefly, in American Protestantism, through prayer, sermons, and scriptural meditation. The great cry of the awakeners was for a converted ministry, one able to revive religious communities lacking vitality and zeal, so as 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 Light, or New Side, clergy, as contrasted with their opposites (Old Light, Old Side ministers), 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 four and five times in a day that often began before dawn. They were not always treated as welcome visitors by the established clergy, with whom serious conflict sometimes arose.

It is against the experiential background of such preaching that the political teaching of the ministers of the eighteenth century is to be seen as it was powerfully displayed in crisis and revolution. From their biblical perspective, it can be said that man is a moral agent living freely in a reality that is good, coming from the hand of God: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."¹³ With the responsibility to live well, in accordance with God's commandments and through exercise of his mind and free will, 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

¹³ Genesis 1:31. This, and Psalm 119:134 ("Deliver me from the oppression of man: So will I keep thy precepts."), 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 this and the following paragraph; reprinted in Verna M. Hall, ed., *The Christian History of the American Revolution* (San Francisco, 1976), 30-43.

moral sense, created in the image of God, a little lower than the angels, and given dominion over the earth (Psalm 8; Hebrews 2:6–12), is the chief and most perfect of God's works.

Liberty is, thus, an essential principle of man's constitution, a natural trait which yet reflects the supernatural Creator. Liberty is God-given. The growth of virtue and perfection of being depends upon free choice, in response to divine invitation and help, in a cooperative relationship. The correlate of responsibility, liberty is most truly exercised by living in accordance with *truth*. Man's dominion over the earth and the other creatures, his mastery of nature through reason, is subject to no restraint but the law of his nature, which is perfect liberty; the obligation to obey the laws of the Creator only checks his licentiousness and abuse.

Our preachers, however, understood that this gift of freedom to do right and live truly carries another possibility, rebellion and rejection, as well. 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. Unfortunately, coercive law can be inflicted in ways that are not merely just and conducive to truth, righteousness, and union with God, but not infrequently to their very opposites. This biblical understanding of the human condition is reflected in the most famous passage of *The Federalist* (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, James Madison continued, 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."

A few words may now be said about the sermon as a rhetorical and symbolic form, particularly the political sermon. It was the axiom of one of the leading figures of the New Light movement and the educator of preachers, Nathanael Emmons, "Have something to say; say it." The suggestion of terseness is misleading, however, since eighteenth-century preachers had a great deal to say. The Sunday service might typically open with a prayer that lasted an hour as measured by a glass on the pulpit; it would then be turned twice during the course of the sermon. A short break for lunch would be taken, and then the preaching would continue in the afternoon. The form of Pu-

ritan sermons followed a model taught by William Perkins's *Arte of Prophesying* (1592, translated in 1607). The principle basic to his approach was, following Augustine and Calvin, that the Bible is reflexive in the sense of providing its own explanation of its meaning in a consistent whole. This literal meaning is to be found through use of the three methods of circumstance, collation, and application. Thus, it is the task of the preacher as interpreter to place any scriptural text into its circumstances and context, collating that text with similar texts elsewhere in the scriptures, to find consistent meaning, and then to finish by conforming his preaching to the "analogue of faith." This means that any statement made had to be in harmony with or contained in the Apostles' Creed.¹⁴

The key to finding the unity of the Bible, according to William Perkins, was to begin 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, will be a stress on justification, sanctification, and true faith.

The steps in writing and delivering the sermon begin with the reading of the divine text, considered as the holy Word of God and superior to or outside of the remainder of the presentation. The text is to be read aloud to the congregation by way of "opening" the Word, for (in the Calvinist conception, at least) it is the Word and the Word alone that is the proper province of preaching. The duty of the preacher, then, is merely to "open" the one clear and natural sense of scripture, so that the Holy Spirit can move through the preacher's words into the hearers' souls to effect spiritual transformation. Thus, in Perkins's formal outline, the preacher ought:

1. To read the Text distinctly out of the canonicall Scripture.
2. To give the sense and understanding of it being read by the Scripture itself.
3. To collect a few and profitable points of doctrine out of the naturall sense.
4. To applie (if he have the gift) the doctrines rightly collected to the manners of men in a simple and plain speech.

¹⁴ My discussion at this point relies on Teresa Toulouse, *The Art of Prophesying: New England Sermons and the Shaping of Belief* (Macon, Ga., 1987), chap. 1.

This form is understood to embody the circumstances, collations, and analogies of faith previously mentioned.¹⁵ The format of Text, Doctrine, and Application remained typical of sermons, especially on such formal occasions as the political sermons reproduced here, and in the hands of the most accomplished preachers (such as Jonathan Edwards the Elder) the old form could be effective for “sustaining rigorous analysis and dramatizing the essential relationships among the Word, human intelligence, and conduct.”¹⁶ It is no surprise that a mastery of classical rhetoric is displayed in the sermons of the eighteenth century, since this was the “golden age of the classics” in America.¹⁷

Of the several vehicles for expounding political theology available to American ministers, the most venerable were the election sermons preached for 256 years in Massachusetts and 156 years in Connecticut. The practice began in Vermont in 1778 and in New Hampshire in 1784 in the sermon by Samuel McClintock (no. 26, herein). These were sermons preached annually to the governor and legislature after the election of officers. To be chosen for the task was an honor, and the sermons were published and distributed to each official with an extra copy or two for the ministers of the official's home district. It is at least arguable that a published sermon is a mark of its excellence to begin with, whatever the occasion of its utterance. (In the screening of several thousand items, the intention has been that only leading clergymen putting their best foot forward on important political matters are here represented.) One index of quality is suggested by the fact that very few of the sermons preached ever were published; thus Samuel Dunbar, an Old Light minister from Stoughton, Massachu-

¹⁵ Toulouse, *The Art of Prophecy*, 15–21, quoting William Perkins.

¹⁶ Wilson H. Kinnach, “Jonathan Edwards's Pursuit of Reality,” in Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout, eds., *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience* (New York, 1988), 115.

¹⁷ An idea of this can be gained from Josephine K. Piercy, *Studies in Literary Types in Seventeenth Century America (1607–1710)*, 2d ed. (Hamden, Conn., 1969), 155–67; a more elaborate treatment is George W. Hervey, *A System of Christian Rhetoric, For the use of Preachers and Other Speakers* (New York, 1873); an “index” (or glossary) of rhetorical figures from *accismus* and *addubitatio* to *votum* and *zeugma*, is given on pp. 577–628; on the classics in America, see Richard M. Gummere, *American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963) and the books of Meyer Reinhold, who characterizes the Revolutionary period as the Golden Age of the classics, in *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage of the United States* (Detroit, 1984), 95.

setts, wrote out some eight thousand sermons during his long career but published only nine of them (see no. 7).

Besides the election sermon, the artillery sermon was also an annual affair in Massachusetts and dealt with civic and military matters. The Thursday or Fifth-day Lecture was begun by the Reverend John Cotton in Boston in 1633 and was practiced for 200 years; it was a popular event and was combined with Market Day for gathering and discussing matters of social and political interest. Election sermons were sometimes then repeated for a different audience. The Lecture was no Boston or Congregationalist monopoly, as can be seen from Abraham Keteltas's sermon preached during the evening Lecture in the First Presbyterian Church at Newburyport in 1777 (no. 19, herein). Convention sermons also were political in nature and grew out of election-day ceremonies.

There were many other opportunities for political discourse, such as the annual observation of January 30 as the execution day of the king-turned-tyrant, Charles I. Century sermons were preached to mark the Glorious Revolution's centenary, on November 5, 1788, the anniversary of William III's landing in England to secure it from popery and tyranny and to preserve traditional British liberties. The century sermon of Elhanan Winchester is included here (no. 33). Days of prayer, fasting, and thanksgiving were proclaimed for particular occasions throughout the eighteenth century and even earlier. Such times were nationally proclaimed ("recommended") at least *sixteen* times by the Continental Congress during the Revolutionary War; and the entire American community repaired to their various churches on such days of fasting, prayer, and humiliation to repent of sins, seek forgiveness, and implore God to lift the affliction of their suffering from them—the *jeremiad* form so central to American consciousness.¹⁸ Days of thanksgiving were likewise proclaimed when divine favor was experienced. The end of the war brought a great outpouring of praise and gratitude, and four sermons, nos. 24 through 27, reflect these sentiments. Such proclamations became rarer under the Constitution but did not disappear during Washington's or Adams's administrations, and their suspension during Jefferson's

¹⁸ For the text of some of these resolutions and analysis see Sandoz, *A Government of Laws*, chap. 5; for the jeremiad see Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, Wis., 1978), 176–210 and *passim*.

administration was followed by a reinstatement under James Madison. The Fourth of July regularly occasioned political sermons as well as orations. The death of Washington evoked a universal grief and countless sermons extolling the character of the American Joseph; an example is that of Henry Holcombe, a Baptist, who preached in Savannah, Georgia (no. 49). The Boston Massacre sermons and orations commemorated the events of March 5, 1770, and the "Patriots' Day" observances, as they are now called, marked the battles of Lexington and Concord in New England each year on April 19. Not only was such preaching widely attended, repeated, and published as tracts, but it was often reprinted in the newspapers as well.

This rhetorical form expressed the philosophical mean that free government is based on liberty, and liberty is founded in truth and justice as framed by eternal laws. Republicanism and virtue were far from split apart by James Madison and his colleagues at the Federal Convention, as the clergy understood our constitutional system. For these preachers and their flocks, the two remained essentially bound together. The political culture of this country was not only all the things it is most frequently said to be (I think of Bernard Bailyn's five items), but was deeply rooted in the core religious consciousness articulated above all by the preachers; theirs were the pulpits of a new nation with a privileged, providential role in world history. What America's religious consciousness consisted of in the tumultuous and triumphant years of founding is what this book will disclose.

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